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### Partners in the Gospel: A Study in Dual and Multi-parish Ministry

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Concordia Seminary

Partners in the Gospel: A Study in Dual and Multi-parish Ministry

A Major Applied Project submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for  
the Doctor of Ministry Degree

by  
Paul R. Winningham

Uniontown, Missouri  
February 9, 2015

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL: A STUDY IN DUAL OR MULTI-PARISH MINISTRY

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FEBRUARY 9, 2015

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Dedicated to

My faithful wife and helper,

Diane,

who over thirty-five years ago stood before the Lord's altar  
and exchanged vows with me beneath a banner that read:

United in Love to Serve.

Her faithfulness to the Lord and to me has been a wonderful blessing.

She cheerfully stepped into the unknown with me  
as we left seminary to serve in a context  
about which we knew precious little,  
and she has tirelessly and without complaint continued to serve.

And

To the people of God at Zion and Grace  
Who have loved us, encouraged us, provided for us,  
and given of themselves so that others might grow  
in understanding ministry contexts such as this one.

“Effective administration of the circuit [the multi-church parish] is more complex than is generally assumed, even by many pastors.”

“To administer a multi-church parish requires substantial self-discipline and considerable skill on the part of the pastor.”

Robert L Wilson, *The Multi-Church Parish*, pages 50-51.

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## Abbreviations, Special Vocabulary, and Word Usage

In a specialized work such as this, certain word usages need to be noted for clarity.

References to the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, will appear as such, and shall be abbreviated as LCMS.

For the purpose of clarity, any use of the word “Call,” when referring to an official action of a congregation or church will be capitalized, to distinguish from ordinary usage. (E.g. “The church called [initiated a contact] the pastor to inquire as to his availability.” As opposed to “the congregation Called unsuccessfully three times”...or... “a Call was extended.” [official action]) The exception to this is when a quotation is involved and the word was written lower-case when referring to an official action.

Pastor or pastor? In cases where usage is indistinct, it is not capitalized. However, when referring to the Pastoral Office, or in an instance where (as in the questionnaire) one is likely to associate it with a particular occupant of the Office, it is capitalized.

For Lutherans, who understand God is at work through His Word and Sacraments, the words will be capitalized, as will references to the Gospel, the saving message of Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead to reconcile mankind unto God.

Multiple and multi, according to *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Tenth Edition) may have the meaning of “many,” “More than two,” or “more than one.” It is this last sense in which the word is employed primarily here, although on some occasions the second is employed. The literature typically uses it in this fashion, and to employ “dual” would seem to rule out more than two parishes in the discussion of the matter contained herein.

Whenever the words multiple and parish are combined, they will not be hyphenated, as in “multiple parish ministry,” unless of course, it is a direct quote from another work. However, when the partial word “multi” is combined with church or congregation, it will be hyphenated, as in “a multi-church parish.”

All responsibility for mistakes rests with me.

## Acknowledgements

A project such as this is never the work of one person. I cannot thank my wife enough for her encouragement and support throughout this task; I am truly blessed. Those whom I thank next (for a whole range of assistance yielded) are in no particular order, but they include the members of Grace and Zion, the Elders, Karen Siegel, Beth Lieble, Fran Bohnert, Nicolai Love, Jeremy Tanz, Rod Benkendorf, Jessica Krauss, Andrea Southard, Darlene and Danny Kiefer, Nick and Angie Schupp, the Concordia Seminary Library (both the circulation and reference desks), the kindly help of Concordia Historical Institute; Carla Jordan and Girard Fiehler at The Lutheran Heritage Center and Museum in Altenburg, Missouri; Vicar David Roth, my brother pastors of the Altenburg Circuit, as well as my advisor, Dr. Bruce Hartung. While a list was kept during this project, no doubt some helpful names were omitted, and for this I apologize. Your help was greatly appreciated!

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, Copyright The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, 1995. Used by permission.

## Preface

For those who have labored in out-of-the-way places, in an often misunderstood and little-appreciated setting, yet sought to serve the Good Shepherd as a faithful under-shepherd, and who likely received no specific training whatsoever, may this work at least help to push back the borders of obscurity about such ministry settings.

This project is brought to completion with the hope that yet another ray of light might illumine an important and under-researched phenomenon, the multi-church parish.

Abstract:

Problem: *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

This study employed both questionnaire and focus groups to gather both quantitative and qualitative data in this dual parish or multiple parish about the perception participants have of their own congregation, as well as the partnership they share.



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

In December of 2013, the researcher and his wife were visiting a couple of country churches off the beaten path who were a part of the Christmas Country Church Tour (of which Zion and Grace Lutheran Churches of Longtown and Uniontown, Missouri were also a part).<sup>1</sup> At one location, they inquired of the greeter as to who it was who pastored the congregation. Upon being given the name, owing to its location and size (and presuming it might be part of a dual or multiple parish setting), they inquired whether their pastor also served another congregation as well. “No, we have him all to ourselves!” came the enthusiastic reply.<sup>2</sup> With those words, she captured a very common sentiment for those who are acquainted with dual or multiple parish situations, namely, that something seems diminished when congregations share a pastor.

Yet many congregations find themselves in situations where they share a pastor. Multi-church parishes<sup>3</sup> and cooperative parishes<sup>4</sup> are two predominant models for ministry for such congregations. Robert L. Wilson, author of “The Multi-Church Parish,” in a chapter

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<sup>1</sup> The Christmas Country Church Tour brochure for 2013 indicates that twenty-four small-town and rural churches of Perry, Cape Girardeau, and Bollinger Counties participated in this coordinated, interdenominational, two-day “Christmas Open House.”

<sup>2</sup> This took place during a visit to New Salem United Methodist Church of Daisy, December 20, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Wilson, *The Multi-Church Parish* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), defines the multi-church parish as one “in which one pastor serves two or more churches,” 18.

<sup>4</sup> Cooperative parishes consist of a grouping of several churches (usually from six to twelve), the number of which is too large to be served by one pastor. They tend to be located in rural locations, they may have difficulty obtaining ministerial leadership (due to location), may receive a denominational subsidy in the early years, and tend to be affiliated with the same denomination. *Ibid.*, 70-73. (The literature review of this study will note examples of each.)

on cooperative parishes (which have an entirely different goal and authority structure than the multi-church parish) notes that “Cooperative parishes, like all finite institutions, tend not to continue indefinitely.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, after citing reasons cooperative parishes exist (quite often at the instigation or insistence at the denominational level, based upon a large-church model of ministry), Wilson notes, “[The cooperative parish] will not replace the multi-church parish as the method of providing pastors for small churches.”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, Grace and Zion are a multi-church parish and there are no plans for this to change.

## **A. The Project Introduced**

A. Problem: *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

This partnership is viewed by many as critical to the continuation of both congregations as functioning Lutheran congregations within their respective communities. The word *vision* is here used in the sense of “the act or power of seeing,” one of the definitions given by Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary.<sup>7</sup> This study attempts to discern, among other things, how the congregation members who participate in the data-gathering view their congregation, as well as how they understand and view the partnership

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>7</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, Inc., 2002), 1315 (definition 3a). Another aspect of the term “vision” is the “act or power of imagination” (definition 2a), often employed in terms of goals for the future. This study does not intend this use of the word, although certain questions on the Partner Questionnaire (chapter 4) might conceivably be employed for such.

of which their congregation is a part. For this and other reasons, there is value in seeking to discern and address current understandings and attitudes regarding the Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership.

B. Purpose: This project seeks to conduct field research (questionnaire, interviews, focus groups) which will provide both quantitative and qualitative data to serve as a tool to discern attitudes and understandings regarding the shared partnership in ministry of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches (of Uniontown and Longtown, Missouri, respectively) which can then be addressed with the goal of strengthening both the ministry and the partnership of these congregations.

Since it is unclear how the members of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches understand and value the partnership they share, the questionnaire will seek--

- To identify member understandings and attitudes regarding their own congregation.
- To identify member understandings and attitudes with respect to the Joint Parish relationship of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown, Missouri, in order that their pastor might better lead them, and furthermore--
- To ascertain how the members of Grace and Zion understand and value their partnership in ministry, so that their pastor might more insightfully pastor the multi-parish partnership of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches.

The questions for the questionnaire will fall beneath four headings, which will be further explained in chapter Four. Those headings are:

- Perceptions Regarding One's Own Congregation (OC)  
(Which best describes your thinking?)
- Awareness of the Agreement by which the Partnership Functions (PA)
- Pastoral Office and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership (PO)
- Perceptions regarding the Partnership in the Joint Lutheran Parish (PP)

There will be additional data gathered by means of focus groups, whose task it will be to wrestle with more open-ended questions. By this means, qualitative data will be gathered.

Among a gathering of pastors in leadership positions (“Circuit Counselors”) within the Missouri District of the LCMS, this researcher mentioned his desire to undertake this study. One of the pastors, now retired, asked, “Have the congregations ever considered combining or consolidating?”<sup>8</sup> It had not occurred to him that a dual parish such as the Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership is in actuality a symbiosis, which, defined in Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary is both

1: the living together in more or less intimate association or close union of two dissimilar organisms [or] 2: the intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship; esp: MUTUALISM [as well as] 3: a cooperative relationship (as between two persons or groups).<sup>9</sup>

The Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership enables the unique and separate existence of each congregation, symbiotically, in a cooperative relationship (definition 3). Is this partnership understood (the structural aspect upon which the partnership exists) by those who participate in it? Is this partnership valued (in a relational manner) by those who participate in it? This is what this study seeks to establish.

The definitions for symbiosis are not exclusive of each other, and while one might dispute the word “intimate,” each definition helps one to understand what is at work when congregations are linked in partnership, whether it is termed a “Dual (or triple or quadruple, etc.) Parish,” a “Joint Parish” (as is the subject of this study) or something entirely different.

It was clear that the pastor’s query about combination or consolidation was an innocent betrayal of unawareness as to why and how these congregations came to be linked

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<sup>8</sup> Missouri District Circuit Counselors’ Conference, held at St. Paul High School, Concordia, MO; July 16, 2013. (J. H., from a St. Louis city circuit.)

<sup>9</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 1190.

or joined. In the case of the current study, they are two congregations which have their separate identities, culture, people groups, and customs. Had the researcher chosen to reply, where would he have begun? Ministry in a dual parish or partnership arrangement occurs not for the purpose of merger, but for exactly the opposite reason: to maintain a separate identity and existence (“congregational autonomy”) within a particular ministry setting, and yet to do so with (hopefully) the full-time services of a trained and Called pastor, for the well-being of the flock that gathers around Word and Sacrament at each congregation’s location.

Congregants who are part of a dual or multiple parish arrangement can no longer say they have their pastor all to themselves. They sense something “less-than-normal” about the arrangement. Sometimes they are apologetic, or speak with fondness about “glory days” of the past (when they had their own pastor, when the pews were fuller, etc.). Many times they have felt tension as they tried to make the best of the current situation, but competed for the attention of a pastor (or competed to have a pastor).

Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown and Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown have shared a partnership (“Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish”) now for fifty-one years. By far the most basic ingredient of this partnership is that they share a pastor, while maintaining each congregation’s autonomy. While the Grace-Zion partnership is always in the background (usually on every bulletin, worship folder or newsletter, etc.), it is seldom explained, and more rarely are the components and commitments of the partnership ever explained. It is, more or less, taken for granted at this stage in their existence. Do the members understand that they are members of a congregation, *yet also members of a partnership*? Thus it can be that one might be a member of either congregation for half a

century (or even longer) and be quite unaware of the basic structure of the partnership, or the way in which the partnership benefits their congregation.

Under such an arrangement, questions come to mind, such as: Was the Joint Parish entered into willingly (gladly) or grudgingly? Why, in the first place, was this partnership formed? Is the Joint Parish viewed favorably? Do the members of Zion and Grace understand how the Joint Parish works, and what it enables? Do the members value the partnership? What about it do they value? What do they not value? Do they understand that if it goes well for the *other* congregation, this is in their best interests as well, that the partnership might continue? These and other such questions brought the researcher to identify the problem this study seeks to address, which is restated here: *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

Therefore this project seeks to help the members of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches to understand more fully the partnership they share,<sup>10</sup> to value it more highly, and to seek to encourage those attitudes and engage in such practices that educate and strengthen one another in the importance of the partnership for the functioning of these two congregations.

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<sup>10</sup> One might make the case that at its most basic level, the partnership consists of an agreement between the two congregations, codified in the “Joint Parish Guidelines.”

## **B. The Project in Theological Perspective**

What exactly is the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish (“Joint Parish”), since both Grace and Zion remain two separate congregations, each with a unique and dissimilar past? Is a Call to pastor the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish a Call to two congregations, or is it a Call to one congregation in two locations? In reality, there is no “Joint Parish congregation,” but rather, the Call is extended by a decision-making body comprised of the Voters present from each congregation [as they have authorized so by their partnership agreement] at the duly publicized Joint Parish meeting(s). This decision-making body is called the Joint Voters. On the other hand, the Joint Parish is a real entity which both congregations acknowledge when they regularly submit their financial obligations to the Joint Parish treasurer (although perhaps only the treasurers of each congregation have steady reminders of the entity).

This partnership enables the continued local autonomy (indeed, the very existence) of both congregations in their locale within distinct and separate communities. In a real world where social and economic realities have combined to the degree that in many locales a self-subsisting congregation is no longer possible (with its “own” pastor), this is the likely future of many congregations.

The researcher believes at the outset that a Call to the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish (or indeed, any call to a multi-parish setting of ministry) is, in essence, one Call to two congregations or entities, and not, as some might suppose, a Call to one congregation (entity) in two locations.

This clarification will be helpful for the following reasons—

That the occupant of the Pastoral Office in the Joint Parish not nourish a different agenda, namely one of consolidation or combination, which Grace and Zion congregations have, by their entering into the Joint Parish agreement, rejected. He must serve them as he is Called by them, unless they indicate so otherwise by the authoritative body which has Called him.

Someone who is presented with such a Call and has doubts as to the propriety of such a Call should be able to rest with confidence upon the Holy Scriptures that this is in no way contrary to any Scriptural injunction. Thus, such a person could indeed accept such a Call in good conscience and work in this (or another such as this) setting within this understanding. Furthermore, it ought to be demonstrated that such an arrangement is in no way contrary to the Lutheran Confessions, but rather, that this arrangement is indeed in proper order in the Church, and therefore valid. Key voices within the congregations' own Lutheran confession will be heard in order to reassure them that this arrangement has taken their combined wisdom and the voice of prior generations into account.

Finally, this study should be for the reassurance of the congregants themselves, who value highly their local autonomy, and desire to be conducting their affairs faithfully and in accord with both the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, according to their constitution.

Grace and Zion are Lutheran congregations, adherents to the Augsburg Confession. Out of this Confession flows Article Five (AC V) which reminds us that, "To obtain such [Christian] faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments."<sup>11</sup> The existence of two congregations beneath the umbrella agreement which

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 40



creates the Joint Parish (which in truth is *not* a congregation) presents a bit of a conundrum for some, who think in terms of a “one congregation – one pastor” model. The following doctrines might best be explored to present a defense of the current practice with this and other Joint (or Dual-/Multi-) Parish situations: The Office of the Ministry (Augsburg Confession, Article Five: AC V), The Church (Augsburg Confession, Article Seven: AC VII), and Order in the Church (Augsburg Confession, Article Fourteen: AC XIV).

The formation of the Joint Parish naturally grew out of the understanding of the importance of the Pastoral Office in the midst of these Lutheran Christians who sought not only to have a full-time trained Pastor occupying the Office of the Ministry in their midst, but also (according to the founding document) to free up for mission or ministry another Pastor, instead of insisting that they each be served by their own Pastor as single, separate congregations. (Joint Parish Guidelines, 1967 [Appendix 6], 1983 -and 2010- part II, item 2.) As honorable and as altruistic as this might sound, it may well have also been a matter of budgetary practicality, as part II, item 3 of the Guidelines points out that another reason for establishing the partnership was to “use the material resources of the members of the congregations more efficiently.”

Under the past and current guidelines, the Pastor is called on the authority of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, and installed as Pastor of Grace and Zion, not of Grace...and of Zion. It seems that there is interplay between the identified doctrines listed above, which need to be addressed in a manner so as to remove all doubt that this is a God-pleasing arrangement, and not merely a pragmatic man-made arrangement.

Nevertheless, this is a reminder of the theological significance of the Office of the Ministry, namely, the furtherance of the Christian faith, as Augsburg V points out: “To

obtain such [Christian] faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.”<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most important Scriptural topic that has direct relevance to the situation under study is that of the body. First, to what degree do the Scriptures, in their use of “body language” address the circumstances present in this multi-parish situation, and what guidance do they offer? It would seem an engagement of Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, as well as certain passages from Ephesians and Colossians can provide assistance here.

The theological resources to be consulted will begin with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Also consulted will be Franz Pieper’s Christian Dogmatics (which shaped every Pastor who has preached or taught at the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish in the past fifty years), and particularly C. F. W. Walther’s Church and Ministry, since it is so foundational to how the LCMS understands congregational authority. Additional sources will be consulted as deemed appropriate.

### **C. The Process of Gathering Data**

In order to help determine how the members understand and value the Joint Parish partnership they share, a questionnaire will be composed, administered, and compiled for the purpose of obtaining feedback to the basic inquiry and sharing that information with the members. In addition, two focus groups will be convened to consider certain questions which arise in this kind of ministry. The results of this data gathering, from both questionnaire and focus groups will be shared in a “Gospel Partnership Awareness Workshop” in which a brief history of the joint parish is shared, along with some basic

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

congregational statistics from the past half-century. The data will be shared and discussed, and positive suggestions for educating as well as action for the future will be presented.

The researcher, who serves as Pastor to Grace and Zion congregations, will formulate the questions for the Questionnaire, drawing from a bank of questions deemed helpful in the exploration of the problem under investigation. More detailed information regarding the information being sought, as well as the individual questions included as well as an explanation for its inclusion will be found in chapter four.

The information the questionnaire seeks will range from some very basic information about the participant, including congregation of membership, and distance the participant resides from the congregation in which he or she holds membership. The majority of the questions will seek to obtain quantitative data by employing Likert Scale questions to a variety of queries about one's Own Congregation (OC), both awareness of how the Joint Parish functions (Partnership Agreement – PA), as well as how one perceives the very existence and purpose of the Joint Parish. Additional questions will inquire about the Pastoral Office and Presence (PO), and Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP).

The congregation members will have the opportunity to complete a questionnaire on one of two successive weekends after worship. This should be sufficient occasion to gather a response from a significant portion of the active worshipping community. Advance notice in the weeks leading up will be given so that the congregants are aware when the Questionnaire will be offered. Record will be kept of who has completed a survey so that only one from each member is accepted. The completed questionnaires will be then forwarded to the Missouri District office, where a staff member has agreed to tabulate them and enter the data utilizing Survey Monkey software for the purpose of obtaining computer-tabulated results.

The findings of the Questionnaire will be shared with the Elders of both congregations for the purpose of considering what information is most vital to be shared with the members, and how best it might be presented. The goal will be to help as many as possible to see who the respondents are, what they know about the partnership, how they perceive their congregation and the partnership arrangement, as well as to determine what knowledge and action might contribute to the well-being and long-range stability of the partnership. This will be shared with the members of both congregations as yet another component of the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops, to be presented on two successive Sundays to encourage the highest possible overall attendance.

It will also be sought to determine through qualitative research what misunderstandings about the partnership of Grace and Zion exist, and to educate so as to address and possibly clear up those misunderstandings. It will also be sought through qualitative research what attitudes exist that hinder the well-being of the partnership so as to address any such attitudes and to encourage the most wholesome attitudes for the well-being of all involved.

This project has the potential to assist other pastors, congregational leaders, as well as district and synodical representatives to better understand the complexity of dynamics at work among congregations in partnership. According to current figures, there are 493 Multi-congregational parishes in the LCMS.<sup>13</sup>

In order to facilitate this study, it will be helpful to understand the historical context of this partnership, which will be undertaken at the beginning of chapter 3. Since the Joint Parish partnership is now over fifty-one years old (having begun in 1963), very few active

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<sup>13</sup> From figures shared July 19, 2013 from the denominational offices of the LCMS.

members experienced its birth and earliest years. It will be important to clearly explore and explain the history of the Joint Parish relationship to the current generation (as well as for future generations). In essence, this will tell who we are, and how it is that we came to be two congregations linked in partnership for Word and Sacrament ministry. Certainly then, one aspect of this project is to include the most definitive history of the founding or birth of this partnership. The documents reveal a glimpse (but by and large only include dates, names, and motions approved or declined), as do other congregational histories, but it will be important to go to the source documents for each congregation. This will not be a sum total of either congregation's history, but rather a compilation of how the Joint Parish came to be. This has the potential to be of great help in providing perspective to future pastors of the partnership, as well as to any other interested parties. This, too, will be a component of the congregational Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops.

Certainly a part of this history needs to be a look at our past as the statistics reveal it. According to Lyle E. Schaller, writing in his foreword to Robert Wilson's book, *The Multi-Church Parish*, "The historical record makes clear that the basic tendency of the vast majority of smaller congregations is either to remain on a plateau in size or to experience a gradual erosion in numbers."<sup>14</sup> One might note with a bit of sadness that he then goes on to say, "This book makes clear that numerical growth and multi-church parishes rarely go together."<sup>15</sup> Is the fate of these congregations settled by those words? Are these congregations on a one-way path toward demise? Or is there the possibility of continuance and growth?

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<sup>14</sup> Wilson, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 14.

It might be noted that in the county in which the two congregations of this study are located (Perry County, Missouri), at least seven Lutheran churches once existed that exist no longer. The list includes Holy Cross,<sup>16</sup> northeast of Friedenber; Luther Chapel,<sup>17</sup> between Longtown and Biehle; Shiloh,<sup>18</sup> in Seventy-Six near Farrar; Trinity,<sup>19</sup> Point Rest (near Menfro); Peace<sup>20</sup> in Friedenber; Mt. Zion<sup>21</sup> in Yount, and St. Paul<sup>22</sup> in Wittenber. One could argue for two additional congregations, whose ephemeral existences are recalled by few: Seelitz as well as Dresden among the original Saxon Stephanite Emigration colony.<sup>23</sup> (These congregations are plotted on a map of the county in Appendix 5.)

The purpose in noting Schaller's quote as well as the detail of the preceding paragraph is simply to point out that decline and closure of a Lutheran church is not unheard

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<sup>16</sup> *Lutheran Churches of Bois Brule & Salem Township*, (Perryville, Missouri: Perry County Historical Society (A publication of the Book Committee), 1-51. Proper name was Cross Lutheran ("The Evangelical Lutheran Cross Congregation") Church, 1883-1900.

<sup>17</sup> Larry Hoehn, *The Hoffmann-Schemel Families*, (self-published) 1982, pages 18-20. Additional information may be found in the September 1977 Quarterly publication of the St. Louis Genealogical Society (Volume X, Number 3). A census of the cemetery was done in 1988 and what could be found out about the persons from either the tombstones or published obituaries is contained in the Fall 1988 *Perry County Heritage*, pages 81-84.

<sup>18</sup> *Lutheran Churches of Bois Brule & Salem Township* (Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society: undated) 262-294. Shiloh was an active congregation from 1857 to 1918. Seventy-Six was a place name.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-222. Congregation seems to have existed prior to 1900 as a preaching station, and in December of 1900 Rev. H. H. Norden was installed as first pastor. Trinity existed until 1943, when flooding from the Mississippi River discouraged its continuance; members went to other area congregations, primarily Crosstown, according to Aug. Suelflow, *The Heart of Missouri* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House: 1954) 189.

<sup>20</sup> *Friedenberg Remembrances: A Story of Peace, Faith and Life* (Friedenberg Lutheran Historical Society Book Committee, Copyright 1988 by Martin Oswald.) 7, 37, 48. Beginning in 1840, in the home of Ferdinand Bergmann, Rev. C. F. Gruber of the Paitzdorf settlement (later called Uniontown) conducted a preaching station leading to the formation of the congregation, which continued until dissolution March 15, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> *Perry County Sesquicentennial Historical Booklet* (Perryville, Missouri: Perry County Republican), 16.

<sup>22</sup> *Forward in Faith & Freedom. Celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Saxon Lutheran Immigration to Perry County, Missouri 1839 to 1989* (Perryville, MO: Wehmeyer Printing, 1989) 70-77. St. Paul existed as a congregation from 1902 to 1987, although a Lutheran school had been established in Wittenber in connection with Trinity congregation in Altenburg in 1880, with the members remaining Trinity members until St. Paul became an independent congregation.

<sup>23</sup> Seelitz. Existed from 1840-1842, pastored by Pastor Buerger. Records have been incorporated into the Trinity, Altenburg congregation's records, on file at the Lutheran Heritage Center and Museum in Altenburg, Mo.

Dresden. Pastor C.F.W. Walther's "Camp Church," located in Perry County was part of a dual parish with Johannisber, in Cape Girardeau County, served by Rev. C.F. W. Walther prior to April of 1841. Records have been incorporated into the records of Trinity, Altenburg as well. For more, see Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (CPH, 1953), pp 445, 450, as well as Carl S. Meyer, *Moving Frontiers* (CPH, 1964), 137, 140.

of in this area, and one must not be so close-minded as to think it cannot happen in these locations. Some of these aforementioned had been self-standing congregations with their own pastor before being joined in partnership as a dual parish prior to their demise (Luther Chapel was paired with Sargent's Chapel of Bollinger County<sup>24</sup>). Is this a trend that threatens the congregations in the current study as well? How might congregations be on guard against such decline and decay? Was it through a pattern of decline that Zion and Grace became a part of the Grace-Zion Joint Parish? This may be answered as a closer look is taken at the formation of the Joint Parish. Might an awareness of ordinary trends enable a congregation to seek to become extraordinary, the exception to the rule?

A look at the history (to be presented in encapsulated form in the congregational workshop) will help reveal what the congregations once were, what they are presently, and how trends have shaped them. Do Schaller's words have special importance to which attention should be paid?

For this reason it will be important to track trends over the past fifty-five years. Thus a glimpse at the final half-decade of solitary existence prior to the formation of the Joint Parish may enable us to spot trends already in progress. Baptized as well as Communicant membership will be noted. Do the figures agree with the overall perception of themselves? Do they think of themselves as rural or small town? What were they at the founding of the Joint Parish in 1963? Are they in decline? If so, what is in their power to change? What were they at their peak, or "high water mark" for membership, and when was that? Were the congregations nearly equal in size at the founding? Since the congregations share a Pastor, they consider themselves to be "small." Are they small by any standards that may exist?

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<sup>24</sup> Brochure obtained from Sargent's Chapel Lutheran Church (ELCA) during the Christmas Church Tour.

## **D. Sharing the Gathered Data**

The Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops will have as a goal the explaining of how the partnership came to be, what it requires of the Partnered Congregations, and some of the most key things learned through a study of the data. It will seek to provide some direction for the future. It will conclude with a final evaluation (i.e., Was this a helpful experience?). Each participant will have the opportunity to respond to a number of questions in order to state how the Questionnaire, or the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop has or has not been felt to be beneficial.

This project has the possibility to assist other congregations in partnership (as well as those considering forming a partnership) by setting forth a congregational self-study model to obtain an accurate look at their past, as well as present perceptions.

## **E. The Parameters of the Project**

A number of assumptions are being employed:

- This study will depend in great part upon the willingness of the members to participate. It is important that they know that their participation is both welcomed and desired.
- It will be assumed that the responses to the questionnaires represents the honest response of the participants.
- It will be assumed that the questionnaire effectually enables the leadership team to discern awareness and attitudes which exist.
- The researcher assumes that this project may stir some interest in the matter of the partnership and how it functions, and that the participants indeed would like to learn more about the partnership, the collective attitudes, and what will benefit the partnership.
- The researcher assumes that the participants (members) of the congregations should have an interest in the agreement by which they are bound (“Partnership Agreement”).



- It is assumed that a project such as this will be beneficial for the congregations comprising the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish.
- It is assumed that the records of each congregation are complete and accurate.

The researcher, having served this dual parish partnership as pastor for nearly twenty-five years, is passionate about the important role such ministry arrangements serve in the lives of Christians who live in rural and small-town ministry settings where their congregation is no longer able to support a full-time Called pastor, quite often due to financial considerations. The researcher is convinced of the importance of localized Word and Sacrament ministry to the gathered flock of God, even in places where geographic, economic, or social factors have diminished their number or reduced their resources.

- The researcher assumes that the basic facts about the entering into or formation of the partnership are duly recorded and accessible.

Certain identifiable limitations will exist:

- Only those who fill out the Questionnaires will be accounted for in the tabulation of the results. The purpose of two weekends is to not let people miss out on the opportunity to contribute to this study by having some sort of conflict with a single date.
- It is a limitation of the questionnaire in that smaller congregations allow for less anonymity. If a person expresses an opinion in a survey or questionnaire, and that person knows what they have said will be made known, they may be hesitant to speak their mind. Sorting factors such as age or distance traveled to church may make them easily identifiable. Care must be taken to assure members that neither they nor their answers will be singled out in a negative light. Here, the good will the researcher has built up over time may reassure members that this will not be the case, and that every effort will be taken to protect their anonymity in order to secure honest and candid responses.
- At no time will anyone be able to generalize and say “They” (The people of Grace, the people of Zion, the people in general) think this way. Rather, any conclusions which are drawn should be phrased, “The respondents indicated... .”
- For someone seeking to apply this study or its findings in a different setting, it should be made clear that while it may be instructive to a degree, this study

wholly pertains to Grace and Zion congregations. And while some of the questions may have applicability in other settings, not all will (for they were crafted with Grace and Zion in mind), and therefore caution is urged. The same will be true about any conclusions drawn from the present study.

- The portion of the Partner Questionnaire in chapter 4 which deals with the Pastoral Office and Presence (PO) may well be a limitation for anyone outside the LCMS context wishing to employ it. The understanding of the Pastoral Office, a deeply held conviction within the LCMS, as well as the view of the Sacraments (“A sacred act, instituted by God [Christ], in which God Himself has joined His word of promise to a visible element, and by which He offers, gives and seals the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ”),<sup>25</sup> may not be similarly held convictions from those beyond this confession.
- Certainly a limitation is human memory and perspective. Some of the questions will require members to reflect back upon experiences and situations of the past. How those matters are recalled is not so much a matter of precision as it is a matter of perspective. Care will be taken by the researcher to balance varying (or even contrasting) perspectives when presenting, as well as to cross-check them with data whenever possible.

What can be known about the past, in particular the years leading up to and including the formation of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, will be included in records pertaining to the congregations. To the degree that these records are accurate, there will be an accurate glimpse. If the records prove to be incomplete, then various trends may not be readily discernable.

The Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership enables the unique and separate existence of each congregation within a particular geographic location within a particular community, of which each congregation is the sole Christian congregation within the boundaries of the community. When the partnership is valued, the constancy of a faithful Christian witness within the community is valued. For example, if Grace ceases, who would undertake the kind of Gospel ministry that occurs every summer when Vacation Bible School is conducted at Grace among the children and grandchildren as well as members of the community? If

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<sup>25</sup> *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 202.

one member of this symbiotic relationship of congregations fails or ceases to exist, what will this mean for the other? No one knows for certain, but it appears a diminished Gospel witness might be the result of the demise of a local place of Word and Sacrament ministry.

Another example may be seen in that each congregation possesses a cemetery; is it not to the advantage of living souls that there be an active body of Christ in the place (for care of both place and people) where their departed are laid to rest in the sure and certain expectation of resurrection?

Is it not to the blessing of souls (as well as bodies!) that there be a place, an outpost of Gospel proclamation in the midst of each place? Circumstances are such that were one or the other congregation to close its doors, certain people may not present themselves for Word and Sacrament ministry at any other place. Those who received Christ in these locations, will they be guaranteed to be strengthened in Christ as much elsewhere? Would they still not have need –unto their dying breath- to be encouraged unto love of the brethren, good works, and witness in a local setting? Thus this joint parish partnership in the Gospel, and others like it, has meaning and value far beyond what is often perceived, along with implications that are often overlooked.

Because the researcher is convinced that this partnership –and others like it- possesses unique characteristics which are valued by the partner congregations, and will persist, it is important that every effort be taken to make the best of this partnership, for the sake of the Gospel and for that sake of the people loved by God to whom and through whom that Gospel is intended in these locations. For this reason it is sought to address the problem as noted: *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership*

*in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

It will be important to explore if the Scriptures have anything to say about such an arrangement of congregations. Are there theological concerns that have been addressed by the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, or other influential voices from within the LCMS tradition?

There will be a look at the history of the congregations, especially what brought them into this partnership that has lasted over half a century. Current literature pertaining to this situation will be surveyed to see what is known and what is said about such arrangements. It may well be necessary to explore literature pertaining to rural congregational settings as well as “small” (a rather arbitrary term) congregations, for quite often partner congregations share those characteristics.

After administering the questionnaire and hosting the focus groups, attempts will be made to inform the members of what this self-perception tool teaches them, as well as to educate the members about the commitment to, the requirements of, as well as the blessings offered through the current partnership.

In evaluating this project, it will be important to keep in mind the goal: strengthening the partnership. Whatever is learned along the way that can be employed for equipping the saints and strengthening the partnership will certainly be considered for use. Where additional resources are deemed necessary toward the goal of strengthening the partnership, they will be sought.

A summary of the outcome of the project will occur, identifying conclusions that may be drawn from the project, as well as implications for ministry in the current context. It will be important to note how has the project under study impacted the way ministry is carried out in this context.

The researcher will have the opportunity to reflect upon how this experience in conducting this study has affected his life and ministry. He will also identify ways in which he has grown personally and professionally as a result of directing this project. He will then offer further recommendations regarding additional research that might be carried out, and how this might best be done. It is expected that suggestions for future educating, study, and practice for the well-being of this (as well as perhaps other) partnerships will be offered. In addition, there remains the possibility to assist other congregations who share a partnership to understand and value their partnership more fully.

All this lies ahead in seeking to discover how the members of Grace and Zion value their partnership. But first, it will be important to see if a partnership such as the current one has the Office of the Ministry in its midst and what constitutes a valid and legitimate Call to that Office. This is the exploration of Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PROBLEM IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

It is the goal of this section of the Project to demonstrate that a Call to the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish (or indeed, any Call to a multi-parish setting of ministry) is, in essence, one Call to two (or more) congregations or entities, and not, as some might suppose, Calls to each congregation (or entity) in two (or more) locations. Neither are the congregations to be lumped together and considered to be ONE congregation, for they are not. Furthermore, it shall be demonstrated that this Call –or any such like it- by right of its origin and extension, is truly a divine Call.

This will be accomplished by examining first the Scriptural analogy of the Body of Christ and noting the place of these congregations (or others such as these) within the Body of Christ, as well as the privileges and rights that belong to them as such. Both the Biblical foundation and the theological context will be explored.

Next, it will be helpful to examine more closely the doctrine of the Church, in order to demonstrate that where there is the Church (what is commonly called a congregation), there is the Office, and there exists the responsibility to fill the Office of the Ministry in the church's usual order.

And finally, it will be helpful to note some details about the Call, for where the Office of the Ministry exists, it is properly filled by means of a mediate, divine Call, for this is in accord with Order in the Church.

#### **A. Theological Rationale for this Multiple Parish Partnership.**

Grace and Zion are Lutheran congregations, adherents to the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and the [unaltered] Augsburg Confession<sup>22</sup> (along with the other symbolic confessions of the Lutheran Church). Out of this Confession flows the declaration, immediately following how a person is made “righteous before God out of grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith,”<sup>23</sup> that asserts “to obtain such faith God has instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments.”<sup>24</sup> The existence of two congregations beneath an umbrella agreement which creates the Joint Parish (which in truth is NOT a congregation) presents a bit of a conundrum for considering the Office, which is to be exercised in two congregations, for those who think only in terms of a “one congregation – one pastor” model. How is this to be squared with the Church’s confessional standard?

This exploration, which seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision the members of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves and of the partnership they share, acknowledges that one does not ordinarily consider two (or more) congregations sharing a pastor to be the norm. It is typical to think of the pastor-congregation relationship in terms of “one pastor – one congregation,”<sup>25</sup> or in larger congregations, “one congregation, one (or

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<sup>22</sup> The Augsburg Confession was presented to Emperor Charles V on June 25, 1530 in Augsburg at the Diet.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 38, 40. (Augsburg Confession, Article IV)

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Mogilka and Kate Wiskus, *Pastoring Multiple Parishes* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2009), 25. Not only do most people see this as the norm, but Roman Catholic canon law “presumes the ‘one pastor, one parish’ model.”

more) pastor(s).”<sup>26</sup> This is subtly borne out by the language employed in the LCMS Agendas. *The Lutheran Agenda* (created for use with TLH and used for the Installation of Grace and Zion’s first and all subsequent pastors) offered no alternative language other than the singular in its “Installation of a Minister.”<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, both the *Lutheran Worship Agenda* and the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* acknowledged a growing reality by employing the possibility of plurality when the pastor-elect is installed “as (a) pastor of name of congregation(s) in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>28</sup>

This study, and the clarity it will bring, will be helpful for the following reasons—

The man who is presented with such a Call and may have doubts as to the validity or the legitimacy of such a Call should be able to rest with confidence upon the Holy Scripture that this is in no way contrary to any Scriptural injunction. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that such an arrangement is in no way contrary to the Lutheran Confessions (with which he will have pledged to conform in his Installation),<sup>29</sup> but rather, that this arrangement is indeed in proper order in the Church, and therefore valid. Thus, such a person could indeed accept such a Call in good conscience and work in this ministry setting<sup>30</sup> within this understanding.

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<sup>26</sup> Perhaps this “gut feeling” is reinforced by St. Paul’s injunction to Titus: “appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.” (Titus 1:5 NIV)

<sup>27</sup> *The Lutheran Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 110-116. An example is when the officiating Minister is prompted to say, “I now...install thee as pastor of this congregation [singular] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost...” 113-114. Indeed, the rubrics state: “Installation properly takes place within the congregation [singular] to which a candidate has been [C]alled.” 110. If serving more than one congregation is a part of one’s Call, such an arrangement would appear to be outside the official norming rites of the Church by this example in its generation.

<sup>28</sup> *Lutheran Worship Agenda* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 222, 226; and *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House: 2006), 180. In acknowledgement of such multiple parish arrangements, this is also reflected in the prayer which follows, wherein God’s blessing is asked for the one “whom You have given to be pastor of this congregation / these congregations,” [LW Agenda, 227; LSB Agenda, 181].

<sup>29</sup> *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, 179, 166. Both in the rite of Installation as well as the rite of Ordination.

<sup>30</sup> Or another ministry setting such as this.



Another reason for the theological background is so that the occupant of the Pastoral Office in the Joint Parish shall not harbor a different agenda, namely one of consolidation or combination, which Grace and Zion congregations, by their entry into the Joint Parish agreement, have rejected.<sup>31</sup> He must serve them in the manner he is called by them, unless they in lawful and agreeable assembly indicate a different arrangement.<sup>32</sup>

This study should serve for the reassurance of the congregants themselves, who can be certain that the Call they have extended is of divine origin.

And finally, this study can provide a resource for a seminarian who may suddenly find himself in the position of considering a Call to a multi-parish partnership. How should he view such a Call to a multi-parish partnership, and how might a clearer view better prepare him for serving in such a Call with confidence that this is, indeed, of God?

## **B. The Congregation is the Local Expression of the Body of Christ**

To what degree do the Scriptures, in their use of “body language” address the circumstances present in this multi-parish situation, and what guidance do they offer? It would seem an engagement of Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, Colossians, as well as Ephesians can provide assistance here.

In the hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers”, the following is sung--  
“...We are not divided, all one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Indeed, on the Partner Questionnaire, administered in chapter 4, results of which are shared in chapter 5, 93 out of 114 participants (81 %) agreed that “the partnership exists so that each congregation may retain its separate identity and function.” (Item # 17, PA-1) While 17 were undecided, only 4 (3.5 %) disagreed.

<sup>32</sup> And it would seem in such an instance they would need to re-define and re-issue a Call.

<sup>33</sup> Sabine Baring-Gould, *Onward Christian Soldiers*, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: CPH, 2006), # 662, stanza 2. At least eight hymns in *Lutheran Service Book* employ this imagery.

## All One Body We...

In this well-known hymn, Sabine Baring-Gould drew the imagery of Christians as a body directly from the Scriptures. As the hymn verse notes, the whole Christian Church (Latin: *ecclesia universalis*, the church universal) possesses a certain unity, much like body parts, which, while different, share in the unity of the body. Scripture employs an analogy<sup>34</sup> whereby Christians are likened to be parts of a body, with Jesus Christ as the ever-living and ever-present Head of that body. From these passages, what can one know about this analogy, and how is one to think of the Church, and what can this teach with regard to the local congregation (Latin: *ecclesia particularis*, a [particular] congregation) within Christ's Church? We keep in mind a standard definition of a congregation: "A congregation is the assembly of believers who congregate about Word and Sacrament at a particular place."<sup>35</sup>

There are four prominent places this analogy is found, all in the writings of St. Paul, written over a span of about five years. Judging by the target audiences, this teaching about the Body would have been widespread in the thinking of Christians from the Italian Peninsula (Romans), to Achaia (I Corinthians), to Asia (Ephesians, Colossians), and perhaps anywhere else the Apostle had taught in those years.<sup>36</sup> One is cautioned against considering the "body-language" to be a mere figure of speech. For Paul, this is not theoretical, rather, it is "an indisputable reality; and into that body we have been placed as members. Through

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<sup>34</sup> Analogy is defined as, "a resemblance in some particulars between things otherwise unlike." Merriam-Webster, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Francis (Franz) Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), vol. 3, 420. Dr. Pieper served as seminary professor and president, president of the LCMS, and authored the *Christian Dogmatics* in three volumes which shaped generations of LCMS pastors.

<sup>36</sup> Gregory J. Lockwood, *I Corinthians* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 444. He notes, "The image of the body was often used by Greco-Roman authors concerned with unity for the body politic."

faith we belong to Christ; in baptism we have been fitted in with Christ and joined to Him ([Romans] 6:5), and are thereby actual members of His body.”<sup>37</sup> We are one body in Christ.

If one were to arrange the four passages in the most likely chronological order, an imprecise undertaking at best, employing dates assigned by well-used study Bibles, the order of the passages would appear as follows:

<u>Passage</u>	<u>ESV LSB<sup>38</sup> date</u>	<u>/ NIV SS<sup>39</sup> date</u>
I Corinthians 12:12-27	Early 55	55
Romans 12:4-5	55	57
Colossians 1:18, 22, 24; 2:19; 3:15	60	60
Ephesians 1:23; 3:6; 4:4-12; 5:23, 30	60	60

What follows is a glimpse of each of the relevant body-analogy passages, followed by pertinent observations drawn from the text, beginning with I Corinthians.

### I Corinthians 12:12-27

<sup>12</sup> For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. <sup>19</sup> And if they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> But now there are many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup> and those *members* of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly *members come to* have more abundant seemliness, <sup>24</sup> whereas our seemly *members* have no need of *it*. But God has *so* composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which

<sup>37</sup> Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1949), 422.

<sup>38</sup> *Lutheran Study Bible* (English Standard Version) (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 1905, 1944, 2014, and 2040.

<sup>39</sup> *Concordia Self Study Bible* (New International Version), (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 1713, 1744, 1802, and 1824.

lacked,<sup>25</sup> that there should be no division in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.<sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.<sup>27</sup> Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

(I Corinthians 12:12-27 NAS)

Observations from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 regarding the Body of Christ:

- Baptism brings us into the body, connects us to Christ. (13)<sup>40</sup>
- Baptism makes us fellow-sharers in one Spirit. (13)
- The body is one with many members. (12, 14, 20)
- The members are not what they think, but what God says of them. (15, 16)
- The various members are necessary. (17-19, 21, 22)
- God places the members in the body, as He desired. (18)
- The body cannot disown itself. (21, 22)
- The body has varying giftedness, varying honor. (22, 23)
- The body has varying strength and varying presentability. (23, 24)
- God desires no division in the body. (23)
- God desires general concern for one another. (25)

An additional subdivision may be noted in that verses 14-20 address “members of the body who feel inferior to others and may be inclined to be jealous or resentful; 12:21-26, which speaks to those who feel superior to others...”<sup>41</sup>

#### Romans 12:4-5

<sup>4</sup> “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”  
(Rom. 12:4-5 NAS)

Observations about this passage:

- God has given various gifts to be exercised accordingly. (4, 6)
- We are members of one another; we are not our own. (5)

#### Colossians 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15

<sup>18</sup> “He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.” (Col. 1:18 NAS)

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<sup>40</sup> Lockwood notes, “Baptism...is the most basic foundation for the church’s unity.” 445.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 443.

<sup>24</sup> “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.”  
(Col. 1:24 NAS)

<sup>19</sup> “and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.”  
(Col. 2:19 NAS)

<sup>15</sup> “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.”  
(Col. 3:15 NAS)

Observations from Colossians 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15 regarding the Body of Christ:

- We share a common life in Christ, our supreme Head. (1:18)
- Pride, losing sight of the Gospel, disconnects us from our Head. (2:19)
- Connection to the Head causes growth. (2:19)
- God calls the Body to peace (toward others) and thanksgiving. (3:15)

Ephesians 1:23; 3:6; 4:4-12; 5:23, 30

<sup>23</sup> “which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Eph. 1:23-2:1 NAS)

<sup>6</sup> “*to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,”(Eph. 3:6 NAS)

<sup>4</sup> *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." <sup>9</sup> (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup> And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;  
(Eph. 4:4-12 NAS)

<sup>23</sup> “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.” (Eph. 5:23 NAS)

<sup>30</sup> “because we are members of His body.” (Eph. 5:30 NAS)

Observations from Ephesians 1:23; 3:6; 4:4-12; 5:23, 30 regarding the Body of Christ:

- The church is Christ's body. (1:23)
- Mystery revealed: Gentiles and Jews are co-heirs in Christ, sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus, "members together of one body." (3:6)
- There is unity and purpose for those who are Christ's body. (4:4, 7, 11-13)
- Amazing unity: One Spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism. (4:5)
- God wills that we grow and be built up, achieving unity in the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and attain full maturity, growing up unto Him, Christ, who is the Head of the body. (4:13)
- Christ, the Head, is Savior of the body. (5:23)
- Christ feeds and cares for the church, His body. (5:30)

From these various glimpses at the "Body language" of the New Testament, one may observe much that is both descriptive as well as prescriptive for Christ's people worldwide. But each and every Christian may see himself or herself as a full member of the body of Christ, taking hold in faith of that which it declares, as well as embracing that activity in which Christ's Body ought to be engaged. These Scriptures form the basis for a fruitful congregational study on the basis of such descriptive and prescriptive matters.

What can this teach with regard to local congregations and/or multiple parish ministry situations? Certainly this is not exhaustive, but a few key points are:

The universal Church (*ecclesia universalis*) consists of countless congregations (*ecclesia particularis*) through which, by means of the Gospel and the Sacraments, saving faith in Christ has been birthed, strengthened, and sustained.

God tells the congregation (*ecclesia particularis*) what is true of them even when (from their perspective of small size or isolation) they see so little of it and can easily become discouraged.

The variety of gifts becomes more crucial as numbers of congregants dwindle, but reassured by the Scriptures, they may learn to see the glass "half-full" rather than "half-empty" as they learn that God still has gifts for them to employ in loving service.

In addition to the Body of Christ being a universal, all-embracing reality, there is also a sense in which individual congregations are each a localized “Body” of Christ. What the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write was true on a worldwide basis, although geography, time, and space make it impossible for the entire Body of Christ to gather into one this side of the new creation. However, the local congregation is where the Body of Christ reality is to be experienced by the baptized. Earlier, congregation was defined thusly, “a congregation is the assembly of believers who congregate about Word and Sacrament at a particular place.”<sup>42</sup> It is normative for each congregation to have its own leadership (according to Titus 1:5), and within each locale (*ecclesia particularis*) exists the Office of the Ministry, to be filled with one who is rightly Called. No congregation may exempt itself from that which is enjoined upon the Body, and every congregation –regardless of size- is a part of the Body, and has a responsibility to see to it that the Gospel and the Sacraments are exercised in its midst. This is a glorious identity and connection (I Corinthians 12:13) which is bestowed by the working of God through Baptism.

### **C. The Office of the Ministry, Given by God to the Church**

Under the past and current guidelines, the pastor is Called on the authority of Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish in a meeting of Voting members of both congregations; such meeting is called the “Joint Voters.” In a single service, the candidate or pastor-elect is then installed as pastor of both Grace and Zion, not merely of one or the other. Is this merely a pragmatic arrangement, or can it also be said that it is indeed a God-pleasing arrangement?

For one wishing to find in the Scriptures a prescriptive manner of filling the Office of the Ministry, there will be disappointment. In discussing this very matter, it may be noted,

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<sup>42</sup> Pieper, 420.

“Christians properly exercise great freedom in the ways they order their lives together in the church, since most of the details of such structure are neither required nor prohibited by the word of God itself.”<sup>43</sup> Because circumstances and times vary, it ought not surprise one to find that church structures and governance “can and do vary in different times and places. . . . [y]et theological insight drawn from God’s Word always guides and shapes the application of Christian liberty in matters of church polity.”<sup>44</sup>

From Reformation times, Lutheran churches “had not traditionally fostered creative reflection on church polity. Lutheran churches in Europe had largely retained inherited structures which depended explicitly or implicitly on the existing political structure.”<sup>45</sup> By and large, the territorial political rulers had the

authority to determine religious life within his domain. This arrangement supported the ecclesiastical order by means of secular authority and religious power, but also gave the church’s authorities a stake in supporting and legitimizing the existing political order.<sup>46</sup>

Early Lutherans who came to the New World found a strikingly different situation. Not only were there no political rulers or authorities to provide structure and support, but they found they “were free to (and in fact were *required* to) organize themselves in whatever ways they deemed most appropriate. . . .and new arrangements began to take shape.”<sup>47</sup>

Into this freedom entered those who would become forerunners in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, nearly seven hundred members of the Stephanite Emigration, mostly Saxons. But it was not just freedom they found; they would find a vacuum of practice and procedure in terms of church order, where no government authority dictated order nor

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<sup>43</sup> William W. Schumacher, “Thinking with Walther about the Church – Church, Congregation, Synod,” *Concordia Journal* (July 2008): volume 34, number 3: 191.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.



required compliance. But it took a very dark experience for them to discover this and to adjust accordingly. For on the journey to America, the participating clergy (of which there were four), along with five ministerial candidates and twelve lay delegates had all pledged themselves to a church order which made Rev. Martin Stephan to be their Bishop, vesting in him all authority. This they did aboard the *Olbers*, prior to stepping on American soil, on January 14, 1839.<sup>48</sup>

While a much longer story than can be told here, the heart of the matter is this: “difficulties arose; their leader was adjudged unfaithful by them and was therefore deposed.”<sup>49</sup> By the end of May, 1839, Stephan had been deposed and exiled from the community. But great spiritual distress<sup>50</sup> came upon the community, for, lacking their bishop, great doubt “began to be expressed concerning the legitimacy of [their] emigration.”<sup>51</sup> The doubt centered around the legitimacy of the pastors to claim a Call, since they had been rebels in resigning their office in Saxony. Furthermore, with no certainty about being properly Called pastors, or even being a part of the true Christian Church, could there be any confidence in the rightful administration of the Sacraments or any certainty in the pronouncement of the Absolution? Disturbed consciences abounded as did disorder and chaos.<sup>52</sup>

In the months that followed, the sinfulness of the entire matter of the emigration began to sink in, as in the words of one of the pastors, C. F. W. Walther, there had been marriages severed, aging parents in need of care had been abandoned, “the shameful idolatry

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<sup>48</sup> Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: CPH, 1964), 134-135.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-136. For a much fuller account, the reader is directed to *Zion on the Mississippi* by Walter O. Forster.

<sup>50</sup> Not to mention the great physical distress of clearing the forest and settling, all the while ill-equipped and ill-prepared for such an undertaking. Again, for the rest of the story, consult Forster.

<sup>51</sup> Meyer, 137.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-138.

with Stephan” had occurred, some had died at sea, and the wealth of some had been taken to advantage.<sup>53</sup>

So into this land of freedom, with no precedent for church polity or governance, the fledgling community floundered in despair and doubt, without the comfort and consolation of the Gospel, until God raised up a man, Rev. C. F. W. Walther, to discern clearly from the Word of God the truth that they were indeed still a part of the One Holy Christian Church and to declare so in such a way as to dispel the fog of uncertainty. This he did in the matter known as the Altenburg Debate, held April 15 and 21, 1841 at the log cabin college in Altenburg. In a series of eight theses on the Church, Walther set forth the doctrine of the Church with great clarity, of which Forster says, “this contribution may well be his greatest...of all that was to follow in his eventful life as leader of the Saxons and of the Missouri Synod.”<sup>54</sup>

What Walther developed in the Altenburg theses “became foundational for everything else he wrote on the church and the congregation throughout his career.”<sup>55</sup> Challenged by ideas which sought to locate the source of authority of the Gospel and of the Church in the Pastoral Office, Walther would then give his most profound response in *Kirche und Amt* [*Church and Ministry*] in 1852.<sup>56</sup> This did not change anything from the Altenburg debate, but rather clarified and explained the teaching more fully.<sup>57</sup> And the effect was such that “[t]he American context of religious liberty and government non-involvement in church life created this opportunity to ‘start from scratch’ and order the life of the church in a more

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<sup>53</sup> C .F. W. Walther, as quoted in Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953.), 515.

<sup>54</sup> Forster, 525.

<sup>55</sup> Schumacher, 196-197.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

thoroughly Lutheran way than had ever been possible in Europe.”<sup>58</sup> *Church and Ministry* embodies the official position of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, most recently reaffirmed at the LCMS’ 2001 Convention.<sup>59</sup>

Now it can be seen why at this juncture in this study about the pastoral office and rightly filling it, such reliance is placed upon the writings of Walther. Walther’s approach is telling, in that he presents his theses on Church and Ministry in two parts, with the first part dealing with the Church and the second part with the Ministry. For him, the order demonstrates a balance he seeks to note, namely that the Church, God’s creation, exists as the Holy Spirit, through the Word, calls and sanctifies the lost and condemned of the human race by faith in Christ. Only when there is a church does there exist the Pastoral Office of the Holy Ministry. One follows the other. It does not work the other way around. And size of congregation does not matter in this regard, for we have Christ’s promise that even if there be only two or three believers [i.e., locally],<sup>60</sup> Church exists and the Pastoral Office exists as well. (Part One, Thesis VII)

One is reminded that the Church (or any particular congregation) has not capriciously established this Office. Rather, as C. F. W. Walther pointed out in *Church and Ministry* (*Kirche und Amt*), parts II and III, “Concerning the Holy Ministry or the Pastoral Office” that “The ministry of the Word or the pastoral office is not a human office, but an office that God Himself has established.” (Thesis II)<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, he states, “The ministry is not an

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>59</sup> Resolution 7-17A, “To Affirm Synod’s Official Position on Church and Ministry” (Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Convention Proceedings, 2001), 172-173.

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 18:20.

<sup>61</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry* (*Kirche und Amt*), trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 21. “His work *Kirche und Amt* [*Church and Ministry*], first published in 1852, is the only work of Walther which our Synod has definitively and repeatedly identified as prescribing our official teaching, most recently in the 2001 Convention,” writes William W. Schumacher in “Thinking with Walther about the Church - Congregation, Synod, Church,” *Concordia Journal* (April 2008), 191.

arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time.”<sup>62</sup> So, as congregations are established, or even in decline while they exist, the Office of the Ministry exists.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, this is a reminder of the theological significance of the Office of the Ministry in its institution, namely for the establishment and furtherance of the Christian faith, as the Augsburg Confession, Article Five (AC V), points out: “To obtain such [Christian] faith God instituted the Office of the Ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the Sacraments. Through these, as means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.”<sup>64</sup> The Augsburg Confession goes on to point out: “And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.”<sup>65</sup>

The Pastoral Office, by which the means of grace “are administered by order and on behalf of Christians,” presupposes Christian congregations.<sup>66</sup> Walther addressed it this way in his second thesis, Concerning the Holy Ministry or the Pastoral Office: “The ministry of the Word or the pastoral office is not a human institution but an office that God Himself has established.”<sup>67</sup> “This office and its functions are called ‘public,’ therefore, not because they are always discharged in public, but because they are performed for the good and by the command of the congregation, just as we call civil officeholders “public servants” and their work “public service.”<sup>68</sup> It is fundamental to proper order in the church that those who carry out this office and functions are to be “regularly called.” This is in keeping with the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>63</sup> And sadly, there are times when it ceases to be in a location, as when a congregation dissolves. Two such instances were noted in the “official notices” of the “Lutheran Witness,” September 2014, 26.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 439.

<sup>67</sup> Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 21.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 440.

Augsburg Confession, Article Fourteen (AC XIV), “Concerning church government it is taught among us that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments in the church without a proper [regular] [C]all.”<sup>69</sup> Thus from the days of the Reformation, this is how Lutheran Christians have understood the importance and the divine nature of the Call.

The congregations in this study subscribe to these confessions, recognizing that, with reference to the Church, that “[i]t is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church.”<sup>70</sup> The Christian church is defined in the very next portion as “the assembly of all believers and saints... .”<sup>71</sup> Thus, they have a place and a portion within this Christian church in their locale. It is therefore a priority among them that the Gospel be preached in its purity and the Sacraments be properly administered. This, they have acknowledged, is the rightful exercise of the Office of the Ministry. In order that this office be filled with a capable and qualified pastor, they have bound themselves together by common agreement for the fulfillment of these functions and for the furtherance of true Christian faith. While Grace and Zion are independent congregations, they are a part of the Church, and they have, in as orderly manner as possible, filled that Office which God has established among every body of believers for the furtherance of Christian faith.

Thus, in recognition that the “power of the keys<sup>72</sup>...is exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the Sacraments to many persons or to individuals, depending on one’s calling,” the very purpose for the partnership becomes plain,

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<sup>69</sup> Kolb-Wengert, 46.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 92. This is the term employed in AC XXVIII, “Concerning the Power of Bishops.”

namely, for the establishment and maintenance of the Christian faith, a very God-pleasing endeavor!<sup>73</sup>

It has already been noted that there really is no “Joint Parish congregation,” but it is rather a decision-making body comprised of the Voters present from each congregation [as they have authorized so by their partnership agreement] at the duly publicized Joint Parish meeting(s). This decision-making body is called the Joint Voters. It is on the authority of the combined voting members of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, in a duly-called meeting of the Joint Voters, by which a Pastor is extended one Call to serve the two congregations.

An interesting thought in this regard is observed from the apostle Peter:

[1] So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: [2] shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (I Peter 5:1-4, ESV)

<sup>2</sup> “ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ” (I Peter 5:2)

With a present imperative verb (v2) calling for continuing action, the reader of this letter is to “shepherd the flock (singular) of God that is among you (plural).” While the flock may have characteristics by which it is subdivided [e.g., by age, location, married status, health indicator, or gender], it is God’s flock (singular). A standard passage for an Ordination or Installation,<sup>74</sup> it is worth noting then, whether a pastor’s Call is to one or more congregations, under God he is to view them as one flock, one charge to whom he pledges his service, and over which he is charged as overseer, for he is in reality serving the Lord of

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<sup>73</sup> Note I Timothy 2:4.

<sup>74</sup> *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* (St. Louis, CPH: 2006), 164 & 177, under the heading, “The Responsibilities of the Office of the Holy Ministry.”

the Church and the Lord of the Church's flock. This is to be the shepherd's (pastor's) perspective, even though the flock may think of themselves congregationally as two –or more- entities.

This partnership enables the continued local autonomy (indeed, the very existence) of both congregations in their locale within distinct and separate communities.<sup>75</sup> In a real world where social and economic realities have combined to the degree that in many locales a self-subsisting congregation is no longer possible, this is the likely future of many congregations. This Call is to a people who consist of two separately constituted congregations in two separate locations and communities, unified by their desire to sustain a Lutheran congregation and the resultant Office in their midst. And when, in the present case, such a Call is extended, the Pastor does not possess two Calls, but rather *one* Call to two congregations, who have chosen to work together for the purpose of Calling and filling the Office of the Holy Ministry that Christ has established in the local congregation. What may appear merely pragmatic in its arrangement is divine in its fulfillment. Congregations may indeed, in the freedom of the Gospel, partner together in Calling a pastor.

Armed with a proper understanding of the nature, origin, and functions of the Office of the Ministry (or the Pastoral Office), it now becomes necessary to address the means by which the Office is filled, namely, the Call.

#### **D. The Call: Where the Office of the Ministry Exists, it is Properly Filled by Means of a Mediate, Divine Call.**

When it comes to divine Calls, Lutheran theologians have noted two kinds, *immediate* and *mediate* Calls, and noted a distinction between them. “The immediate [C]all came from

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<sup>75</sup> This is not to say that each and every member or attendee is a member of the immediate local community. Indeed, the Partner Questionnaire (item # 2) would reveal a clearer picture (See chapter 5).

God directly, without any intervening aid from men.”<sup>76</sup> Regarding this, Lutheran theologian Franz Pieper wrote, “[t]he Prophets, Apostles, also Paul (Acts 22:21), were [C]alled immediately.”<sup>77</sup> So an *immediate* Call came from the Lord directly, without the intervention or mediation of men. A *mediate* Call, on the other hand, is a Call that is mediated through the Church. Scriptural examples of such *mediate* Calls are found sprinkled across the New Testament.<sup>78</sup> Thus in the New Testament one observes that elders or pastors called by the congregation have a mediate Call. Pieper notes, “It is of the greatest importance to bear in mind that the mediate [C]all is no less divine than the immediate.”<sup>79</sup> Or, to put it in the positive, “Consequently the mediate [C]all is fully [regarded] as divine as the immediate.”<sup>80</sup>

#### Biblical Examples of Mediate Calls.

In order to clarify the certainty of the mediate Call, a look at examples from Scripture will aid in seeing that while human beings act, it is truly God who is credited as at work. Human involvement in no way voids the divine origin of the Call. Six passages will be employed. They are - Acts 1:21-26; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Ephesians 4:11; and I Corinthians 12:28.

Acts 1:15-26. The replacement of Judas’ vacant apostolic office. It is Peter who addresses the gathering of about one hundred and twenty (1:15) after Christ’s Ascension, and notes the necessity that Judas be replaced, even stating the selection qualifications. After putting forward two men who met those necessary qualifications, they prayed (“show which one of these Thou has chosen”), and employed a random process, committing the result to be

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<sup>76</sup> Franz Pieper, vol. 3, 451. Examples of such would be Moses’ Call (Exodus 3:4); Aaron’s Call was confirmed by God (Numbers 17:8); Isaiah’s Call (Isaiah 6:1-9), or that of the Apostles of our Lord or of St. Paul.

<sup>77</sup> This word “immediately” is distinct from and not to be confused with the adverb of time, meaning “at once.”

<sup>78</sup> Albert H. Schweermann and others, *The Pastor at Work* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1960), 90.

<sup>79</sup> Pieper, 451.

<sup>80</sup> Schweermann, 90.



God's selection ("they drew lots for them"). Human determination put forth the two named candidates (were there more possibilities?) and even the random process employed human action. The result was the selection of Matthias, and "he was numbered with the eleven apostles," meaning that his position among the Twelve was considered to be of no less authority than that of the others, personally selected by the Lord Jesus Christ while He had been bodily among them. Matthias' Call to apostleship was a mediate Call, and was recognized by all as fully divine – God's choosing (the same verb employed in 1:2) ἐξελέξατο (from ἐκλέγομαι) just as that of the other eleven apostles.<sup>81</sup>

Acts 14:23. As a result of the work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel proclamation made by Paul and Barnabas during the first missionary journey, hearts were moved to faith, and clusters of believers –churches- was the result. On the return trip through places where the Gospel had birthed faith, they appointed leaders (πρεσβυτέρος, "presbyters" – elders) "in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:23) "One way of strengthening the churches was making provision for leadership in them."<sup>82</sup> There would be in those infant churches those who had attained sufficient

spiritual maturity to serve their fellow believers as guides and give them the further instruction and encouragement they required in the face of the hardship and persecution which they must expect as they maintained their Christian witness.<sup>83</sup>

While nothing is spoken of choosing on the part of the fledgling congregation, there is no reason to rule out their part in the selection of such leaders. Nevertheless, the selection

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<sup>81</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 44. He notes that Luke restricts the term "Apostle" to the Twelve. "The total of twelve was significant: it corresponded to the number of the tribes of Israel, and may have marked the apostles out as leaders of the new Israel."

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

was by human mediation, either of the congregation or by Paul and Barnabas, and the Call of these leaders to leadership as πρεσβυτέρος (“presbyters,” elders), accompanied with prayer and fasting (modeling what had been done at Antioch, Acts 13:1-3, although the laying on of hands is not mentioned in 14:23) is recognized as of God. One observes a mediate Call, recognized as no less than divine.

Acts 20:28. When Paul finally was enabled to preach the Gospel at Ephesus, he had a fruitful ministry of two entire years (19:10). After his departure (20:1) and further mission efforts, he was journeying to Jerusalem. Intent upon reaching Jerusalem in a timely manner, and not wishing to be delayed in Ephesus (20:16), he sent for the elders of the Ephesian church to meet with him. While we are not told the manner of selection by which these elders (πρεσβυτέρους - Acts 20:17) served, Paul admonishes them to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd (a pastoral word, ποιμαίνειν) the church of God...” (20:28 NAS). These elders serve a pastoral function, and whatever the human mediation by which they have been appointed, it is the Holy Spirit who is credited as having made them overseers. Regardless of the subdivisions by which one might consider the flock, it is singular. Again, a mediate Call recognized as no less than divine.

Titus 1:5. With the Gospel having birthed fruit (believers, churches) on the island of Crete, Paul writes to co-worker Titus, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint (καταστήσης – set, constitute, put in charge) elders (πρεσβυτέρους) in every city as I directed you...” (NAS) The manner of appointing is not given, but it is clear that in each location it will be a mediate Call by which the apostle urges Titus to fill the Office. We may also note that selection criteria –qualifications- are laid out

(verses 6-9). Such overseers will not be merely Titus' choice, or Paul's choice, but rather, "God's steward" (verse 7). No indication is given as to whether the Crete believers will have a choice in the selection process,<sup>84</sup> but the result will be "God's steward," filling the Office through a mediate Call.

In each of these four examples, while a description of divine and human activity is given, nothing prescribes precise action to be followed.

Two last passages wrap up the survey. One may note that in Ephesians 4:11, when Paul speaks of God giving the church gifts, he speaks of gifted persons ("apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers") whose gifts are to be employed for the building up of the body of Christ. We dare not overlook that these servants of the church are in place because "He (God) gave..." (4:11). It was noted above that the Ephesian church leaders were in place because "The Holy Spirit has made you overseers."<sup>85</sup> Again, mediated Callings, with God credited for filling the Office.

I Corinthians 12:28ff. Finally, it may be observed that in the listing of gifted ones in the Body of Christ of whom the Corinthian believers are aware, the apostle introduces them by saying, "God has appointed..." (ἔθετο, from τίθημι, to put or place in a particular location). None of these serve at their own initiative or their own appointing, for "God has appointed."

In each of the previous six examples, one may see that while human mediation played a role in those who served the Church, this did not preclude the acknowledgement of this being a divine arrangement.

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<sup>84</sup> Kelly, J. N. D., *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 1981, 230-231. Kelly notes that "the entire responsibility for choosing the elders seems to be left with Titus, an arrangement which was probably made necessary by the immaturity of the Cretan communities." (see 1:10-14). (Reprint of original by A & C Black (Publishers) Limited, London, 1963.)

<sup>85</sup> Acts 20:28.

Lutheran sources at the time of the Reformation refer to mediate Calls following the Biblical times. In the Smalcald Articles, examples are cited. One reads, “[W]herever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists.”<sup>86</sup> One also reads, “For formerly the people elected pastors and bishops. Then came a bishop...who confirmed the election by the laying on of hands; and ordination was nothing else than such a ratification.”<sup>87</sup> Thus the Reformers wrote, “the true Church...has the right to elect and ordain ministers since it alone has the priesthood” [i.e., the Office of the Ministry].<sup>88</sup>

[This ministry] came directly from Christ; but later Christ departed from this earth. Now a new way of sending was instituted. Which works through man but is not of man. We were sent according to this method; according to it we elect and send others, and we install them in their ministry to preach and to administer the Sacraments. This type of sending is also of God and commanded by God. Even though God resorts to our aid and to human agency, it is He Himself who sends laborers into His vineyard. Therefore let everyone [who preaches] realize that he has been sent. That is, he must know that he has been [C]alled; he dare not sneak into office furtively and without authorization. It must be done in the open. The sending is done through man, for example when a city, a prince, or a congregation [C]alls someone into office. But at the same time this person is sent by God.<sup>89</sup>

### The Mediate Call and the Present Inquiry

Flash forward to the present day and the current study, and the matter of how two (or more) congregations fill the Office of the Ministry that exists within them may be addressed with better clarity.

May two (or more) congregations Call a pastor with the intention of him occupying and exercising the Office between them? Quite often this situation arises due to either lack of sufficient finances or personnel. If one or more are small congregations, one ought to note

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<sup>86</sup> Concordia Triglotta, 523.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 525.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Martin Luther, as quoted in *Treasury of Daily Prayer* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 197. Taken from *Luther's Works*, vol. 22 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 482.

that size of congregation is not addressed, but it is to be noted, “Wherever the Church is, there is the authority [command] to administer the Gospel.”<sup>90</sup> Jesus made the presence of the Church plain when He said, “For where two or three are gathered, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20) Pieper noted, “For the Church possesses all spiritual treasures and privileges, not inasmuch as it is large or small, but inasmuch as it consists of believers.”<sup>91</sup> From this the following may be deduced: No matter how small, a congregation possesses the Office of the Ministry (or Pastoral Office), which it is duty-bound to fill.

Possessing both the Office and the responsibility to fill it, if congregations wish to be obedient to the command to administer the Gospel, and retain a Lutheran identity, then the Augsburg Confession’s fourteenth article (AC XIV) addresses them: “Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] [C]all.”<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, if factors prohibit a congregation calling a pastor solely by themselves, and the congregations choose to bind themselves together by common, lawful agreement and act by common, lawful meeting to extend a Call, then the action they have carried out is both valid<sup>93</sup> and legitimate.<sup>94</sup>

Must care be taken to reassure all involved that a mediate divine Call is valid and legitimate? Indeed. To be valid, a Call must be “issued by those whom God has given the right to do so.”<sup>95</sup> Ordinarily, this means the congregation acts in lawful assembly, in keeping with its constitution and bylaws. Customarily when a vote is taken, “the person receiving the

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<sup>90</sup> Concordia Triglotta, 523.

<sup>91</sup> Pieper, vol. 3, 452.

<sup>92</sup> Kolb-Wengert, 46.

<sup>93</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition, (Springfield, MA: 2002), 1300. Valid – having legal efficacy or force; well-grounded or justifiable; logically correct; having such force as to compel serious attention and usually acceptance.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 664. Legitimate – lawfully begotten; being exactly as purposed; accordant with law or with established legal forms and requirements; conforming to recognized rules or accepted rules and standards.

<sup>95</sup> Schweermann, 91.

majority of votes is by a subsequent resolution declared to be the unanimous choice of the whole congregation.”<sup>96</sup> The Call is valid and legitimate when a congregation has acted.

Since the Scriptures are silent in addressing a dual or multiple parish situation, and since such a situation is specified neither by prohibition nor by affirmation by the Lutheran Confessions, this falls within the realm of Christian freedom. Nothing, however, exempts them from the Scriptural mandate to do so “decently and in good order.” (I Corinthians 14:40)

From this it may be deduced: Two or more congregations may indeed bind themselves together by common agreement for the purpose of filling the Office within them with a qualified pastor. When such a Call is extended, the candidate may be reassured that this is a valid and legitimate Call. Furthermore, the congregants, having mediated the Call in proper order, in electing a qualified candidate, must consider that this action has God’s blessing. When such a candidate is installed into this Call, all may consider this to be God’s doing.

One may ask regarding what role or place ordination has in the matter of the Call. With clarity it must be spoken, “[a] candidate for ministry becomes a pastor not by his ordination, but by his [C]all and its acceptance.”<sup>97</sup> Pieper goes on to quote Luther: “The whole matter depends on whether the congregation and the bishop [i.e., the pastor whom it has Called] are in accord,” or agreement. In this case, the congregation wishes the pastor to serve them, and extends to him a Call, and the pastor then is willing to accept that Call as it has been extended to him and to serve the congregation. Pieper again addresses according to

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<sup>96</sup> *The Shepherd Under Christ*, 26. Further words are included on the importance of declaring unanimity.

<sup>97</sup> Pieper, 454-455.

the Smalcald Articles, “ordination was nothing else than such a ratification” of a Call that had been extended and agreed upon.<sup>98</sup>

After surveying instances of mediate Calls in the New Testament, it is clear that such a Call is of divine origin. For the congregations in this study, while extending a Call may entail a curious set of circumstances, some quite unlike that of a Call to a single congregation, or unlike that of the Scriptural examples, and perhaps involving concerns particular to such a setting, this does not diminish the divinity of the Call.<sup>99</sup>

### Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has clarified that local congregations are indeed both a part of the worldwide Body of Christ (*ecclesia universalis*, the church universal), as well as individual local expressions or gatherings of the Body of Christ (*ecclesia particularis*, “church particular,” or local congregation). Christ is, as always, the Head, who supplies the means of life amid sin and death with the Gospel and the Sacraments wherever the Church is to be found.

As for congregations, they are duty-bound to fill the Office of the Ministry which exists within them in a God-pleasing manner. And where the Office exists, it is properly filled by means of a mediate, divine Call. Where this has taken place, both Pastor and people may rest in confidence in Christ that His will is being done among them.

In the particular case of this multiple parish partnership (or similar ones), it is recognized that these are indeed, separate congregations (each with a unique and dissimilar past), and in no sense may they be called *one* congregation. And yet in order to fill the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 455.

<sup>99</sup> *Lutheran Service Book*, 181. Indeed, both the LW Agenda (227) and LSB Agenda acknowledge at an Installation of a Pastor that it is God who has given this man to be pastor, with the words “whom You have given,” regardless of the congregational arrangement or the mediation of the Call.

Office of the Ministry within them, they have not separately each extended a Call to a pastor, but rather have done so by common agreement in keeping with good order. Their Pastor does not possess two Calls, but one: one Call to two congregations in two locations. A Call to the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish is, theologically understood, one rightly-extended Call to serve in the Office of the Ministry to two congregations in two locations.

The next step of this study is to examine the historical context of Grace and Zion congregations, and the background which led to the formation of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership. After a review of relevant literature, the actual problem will be pursued.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PROJECT IN THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT and LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will help the reader understand more fully the historical context of the fifty-plus year partnership of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish. Unique factors were at work at the time the partnership was formed, and those factors were brought into consideration in the crafting of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership.

This chapter will also explore literature related to joint parish or dual and multiple parish settings,<sup>100</sup> as well as additional factors in common that will help the reader understand the unique circumstances involving multi-parish ministry, and the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish in particular. Resources beneath the subject areas of multiple church parishes, small congregations, small town and rural congregations, as well as pastoral change and tenure all have a place in this study for a variety of reasons which will become clearer as the literature is surveyed.

The purpose for this historical perspective is this: *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

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<sup>100</sup> Katarina Schuth, "The Changing Face of Ministry," *New Theology Review*, August 2009, 15-24. These are the terms most often used in this setting, however various authors employ other terms to describe similar realities. Schuth notes how "the terms used to identify multiple parish arrangements vary considerably. They may be called clustered, coupled, affiliated or paired, combined, linked, or twinned parishes." 17. Additional terms may include yoked or satellite congregations (Gilson & Waldkoenig), as well as cooperative parish, enlarged charge (Judy), to which might be added partnered or dual parishes.

## **A. Historical Context of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish Partnership.**

What led Zion and Grace to explore a working partnership? In some respects, the formation of a dual or multi-parish partnership is somewhat of a reversal of the process of birthing or founding a congregation. While the goal in birthing or founding is, hopefully, a self-sufficient congregation, the formation of a partnership such as the one under study is in reality a story of two formerly self-reliant congregations now choosing to lean upon one another (in a somewhat symbiotic manner) in order to possess sufficient resources for each to remain an independent congregation while retaining the services of a full-time Called pastor. This is in acknowledgement that each congregation is indeed, regardless of size, possessor of the Gospel gifts Christ has given to His church on earth, and that “[t]he ministry is not an arbitrary office, but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time.”<sup>101</sup>

In 2014, Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown, Missouri and Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown, Missouri were in the fifty-first year of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership. How did they get to this point? It is not the intent of the body of this project to present the entire history of both congregations; a reasonable (although not exhaustive) history for each congregation appears in Appendix 1 (Grace) and Appendix 2 (Zion). What shall be done here is to look closer with sufficient detail to show the factors involved in the birthing of the partnership, taking into consideration various aspects of the partnership as it relates to the congregations, to help the reader better understand how this partnership came about.

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<sup>101</sup> Walther, *Church and Ministry*, Ibid., 22.

The congregations are located five miles apart on the same highway, US Highway 61, a route that at one time was the main roadway connecting St. Louis to Memphis.<sup>102</sup> On the portion of the highway where these congregations are located, the highway is oriented in a southeast to northwesterly direction. At the time of their founding, foot, horse, and buggy were the means of transportation, and roads, where they existed, were dirt, often muddy with impassable streams during wet weather. Obviously, there was a limitation in terms of a few miles, beyond which it was impractical or impossible to travel to and from church and school. Periodically this led to the founding of new congregations (Appendix 2).

#### Progress and Change in the Community

By the early 1970s, with the completion of Interstate 55, a few miles to the west, U.S. Highway 61 ceased to be such a highly traveled route. Commerce began to dry up. Families were tending to be smaller, and farms needed to be larger to provide for a family's needs, bringing a reduction in population to the countryside. Some residents moved to larger neighboring towns where jobs were available, while others remained and commuted to work, making the towns more of a bedroom community, and no longer a full-service community. What was occurring in many rural areas of the nation was also occurring here, as millions exited farming life to non-farming life, as the rural population of the United States declined from 30.5 million total farm population to 13 million at the same time the number of workers in farming declined from 11 million to 4 million.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> In its oldest form (1786), this road was known as the "El Camino Real," or The King's Highway in English. Later it was known as Highway 25 prior to the current designation.

<sup>103</sup> Marvin T. Judy, "The Cooperative Parish in Nonmetropolitan Areas" (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1967), 7-11.

Grace Lutheran Church<sup>104</sup> (founded by Saxons influenced by the Stephanite Emigration)<sup>105</sup> had been in existence for one hundred and twenty-three (123) years at the formation of the Joint Parish, having been founded in 1840. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Longtown, founded by Bavarians (many from the Frankenberg [Friedenberg] congregation) had been in existence for sixty-six (66) years, having been formed in 1897. The circumstances of each congregation's formation are quite different, and are recounted in the brief congregational history included in Appendices 1 and 2.

Because the background of each congregation was different, even though they are close geographically, it was not altogether natural that they should have become a partnership. So how exactly did this partnership come to be? Actually it seems to have come about as a result of the convergence of a number of key happenings in the life of these two congregations.

In a special Voters' Meeting of Zion on May 6, 1962, Rev. Oscar Hemmann read a letter announcing his intention to retire, after having served the congregation since 1926, a pastorate of some 36 years. The Voters granted him a release from his Call and it was announced that his farewell sermon would be delivered May 20, 1962. In another special meeting called June 10, the Elders were given permission to contact Rev. A. M. Lohmann of Perryville "to see if he would serve as vacancy pastor."<sup>106</sup> In a meeting of October 7, 1962, a

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<sup>104</sup> Original name from the Feb. 2, 1840 founding document: "The Old Lutheran Congregation at Paitzdorf, Perry County, Missouri." With the word "Old," they wished to associate themselves with the teaching of Luther, and not with newer theological developments that distorted his teaching. It was not until 1929 that the present name, Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church [in English] was adopted.

<sup>105</sup> Additional information about the founding pastor, Rev. [Theodore] C[arl] F[riedrich] Gruber (as well as his eldest son, [Karl] T[heodore] Gruber, who served as his assistant in later years) as well as some of the circumstances of the immigration group he led can be found in Forster, *Zion On the Mississippi*, 53-56, 198, 473-483, 557; also in Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, 140, 147, 187, 189; and A. Suelflow, *The Heart of Missouri*, 17, 63.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of the Zion Voters' Assembly, June 10.

Call was extended to Rev. Ernst Mueller. This Call was returned.<sup>107</sup> On November 18, 1962, a special Call meeting was held in which Rev. Waldemar Petzoldt was Called. This Call, too, was returned, and in the January 3, 1963 Annual Voters' Meeting, a Rev. Gehle was issued the Call. This Call would also be returned. Three Calls had been extended and returned, and Zion was still without a pastor.

In early 1963, Grace, just five miles to the south, was experiencing a pastoral vacancy after the departure of Rev. Erwin Boeschen, who had served since 1949, a pastorate of some 14 years. He was given his release to accept a Call to Zion, Blackburn and Bethlehem, Mount Leonard, Missouri, in a special meeting January 6, 1963. Farewell for him would be held February 10.<sup>108</sup> Included in the minutes for the annual meeting is record of the approval to give the elders authority to contact the Rev. Keith Kiihne of Trinity, Friedheim, about serving Grace as vacancy Pastor.

Both congregations were now in need of a pastor. Their need met with an odd situation which presented itself: the number of graduates from the LCMS' seminary in St. Louis was down considerably in 1962 and 1963, and a smaller than usual graduating class was expected again in 1964. (The main reason for this is explained more fully in Appendix 3.) What was clear is that there was a shortage of available pastors.<sup>109</sup>

No further special meetings are recorded, and in the minutes for the regular Zion, Longtown, quarterly meeting for March 31 we read, "By a rising vote, the cong[regation] accepted the report of the committee for the forming of one parish with Grace of Uniontown,

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<sup>107</sup> In LCMS parlance to "return" a Call means that it has not been accepted, or has been declined.

<sup>108</sup> Minutes of the Grace Voters' Assembly, January 16, 1963.

<sup>109</sup> Carl S. Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower* (St. Louis, MO; CPH, 1965), 305. Figures show the following graduating classes from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: 1961 – 153; 1962 – 75; While the average graduating class from 1957 through 1961 averaged 159, graduation figures in the following years would be: 1963 – 92; 1964 – 105.

namely that one pastor shall serve both congregations.”<sup>110</sup> Discussion must have gone further to the consideration of Christian education, for the minutes immediately following state: “The plan of having a combined school with Uniontown [was discussed] as the most feasible, but due to a shortage of time the members felt a little more time [i.e., for discussion] was needed.”<sup>111</sup> A special meeting was set for the first Sunday after Easter (April 21, 1963).

In the Zion Special Voters’ Meeting of April 21, the congregation resolved to unite with Grace for the purpose of providing Lutheran day school education for the children. The congregation also approved paying for transportation of children going to this combined day school.<sup>112</sup> The next meeting was scheduled to be the second Sunday in May, and an invitation was extended to the Voters of Grace to have a Joint Meeting for the purpose of Calling a pastor.

The minutes of a special meeting of the [Grace, Uniontown] Voters held March 3, 1963 reveal that they were opened with prayer by vacancy pastor Rev. Kiihne, and that a ballot vote was taken “as to whether our congregation wanted to choose a committee to meet with Longtown congregation and consider some type of consolidation. The vote showed 23 yes and 10 no.” After passage, an additional motion was passed designating “the elders, president, vice-president, and school board chairman of our congregation serve on the above committee.” It was also decided that the secretary write a letter to the Longtown congregation informing them of this action.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Minutes of the Zion Voters’ Assembly, March 31, 1963. Evidently the prevailing thinking was that two congregations sharing one pastor constituted “one parish.”

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Zion Voters’ Minutes, April 21, 1963, 151.

<sup>113</sup> Grace Voters’ Minutes, March 3, 1963.

The committee gave a report to the congregation in a regular meeting March 22, 1963 of its meeting with the Longtown Lutheran Church committee. The following resolutions were adopted as recommended by the Joint Committee:

1. That both congregations remain separate and [C]all a single pastor to serve both.
2. That a joint meeting of the two congregations be held for the [C]alling of a pastor.
3. That the pastor's salary be set at \$5,000 per year.
4. That the car allowance be set at \$600 per year.
5. That we pay all utilities, including congregational share in the pension plan, with the exception of personal long-distance phone calls.
6. That the place of the new pastor's residence be left to the new pastor.
7. That we share the cost equally.
8. That the congregation at which the pastor does not reside pay 7 ½% [\$ 375 of \$ 5,000] toward the upkeep of the parsonage.
9. That each congregation have preference as to the time of service in alternating years. (Early one year; the other [congregation] early [service] the next [year].)

A motion was passed to accept the Joint Committee's complete proposal for joint calling of a pastor, including all details as mentioned above.

The committee proposals for school consolidation were discussed, and the following resolutions passed:

1. That the combined school be conducted at Uniontown.
2. That the school board of the combined school consist of the combination of present school boards, that is, three men from each congregation.
3. That the voters from both congregations meet together to [C]all the [C]alled teacher(s) of the combined school and that the lower (contract) teacher be employed by the school board.
4. That each congregation pay the equivalent of \$ 75 per child in the school to the school operating fund and that additional expense be divided, one-third paid by Longtown and two-third[s] paid by Uniontown.
5. That the Joint Voters elect a common treasurer for the combined fund – to whom both congregations will pay their part of the expense of the combined activities and who shall pay the salaries and school expenses involved.

A motion passed to accept the complete set of school recommendations as presented.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Joint Voters' Minutes, March 22, 1963.

While other matters were dealt with at this meeting, the final matter discussed included another issue of joint concern: “a motion passed to exclude [the preaching of] German in Calling a pastor, but that we ask retired pastors to preach the German.”<sup>115</sup>

On May 12, 1963, a Longtown - Uniontown Parish Meeting was held in Longtown for the purpose of electing officers and then to proceed with a Call meeting. If there is an actual “birth-date” of the Joint Parish, surely this is it. On this occasion, officers elected were: President – Norbert Haertling; Vice-President – Oscar Hacker; Secretary – James P. Moll; and Treasurer – Wallace Hacker. After presentation of a slate of pastoral candidates, the Call was extended to Rev. Osmar Lehenbauer.<sup>116</sup> He would decline this Call.

In a combined meeting of the Zion and Grace Voters on June 30, 1963, held at Uniontown, Rev. Robert J. Koenig was Called as pastor of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish. He would accept this Call.

A special Voters’ meeting was called after church August 4, 1963 to arrange the details of the installation of Rev. Robert Koenig, first pastor of the Grace and Zion Joint Lutheran Parish. Rev. Koenig was to be installed the following Sunday at Zion (August 11, 1963) in the morning service, and Grace’s morning service was dropped in order to allow vacancy pastor, Rev. Kiihne (pastor at Trinity, Friedheim), the opportunity to be present for an afternoon Installation Service, to be held at 2 p.m. at Grace. The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, now staffed with a Called pastor, was no longer merely an idea or goal, but a reality.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Joint Voters’ Minutes, May 12, 1963.

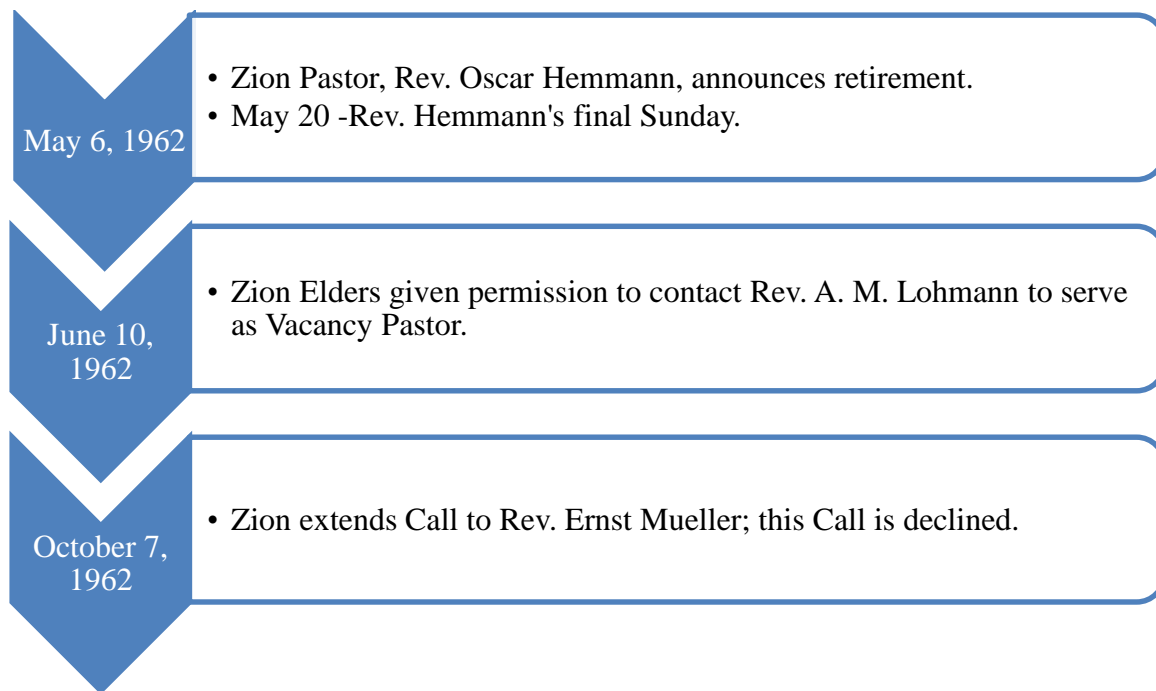
<sup>117</sup> Since Zion initiated the move toward the partnership, it is not entirely clear why it was not called the “Zion-Grace Joint Lutheran Parish.” The minutes record no discussion with regard to this. With Grace being the larger congregation, and thus the majority of Joint Voting members were from Grace, was this the logical outcome? One may only wonder.



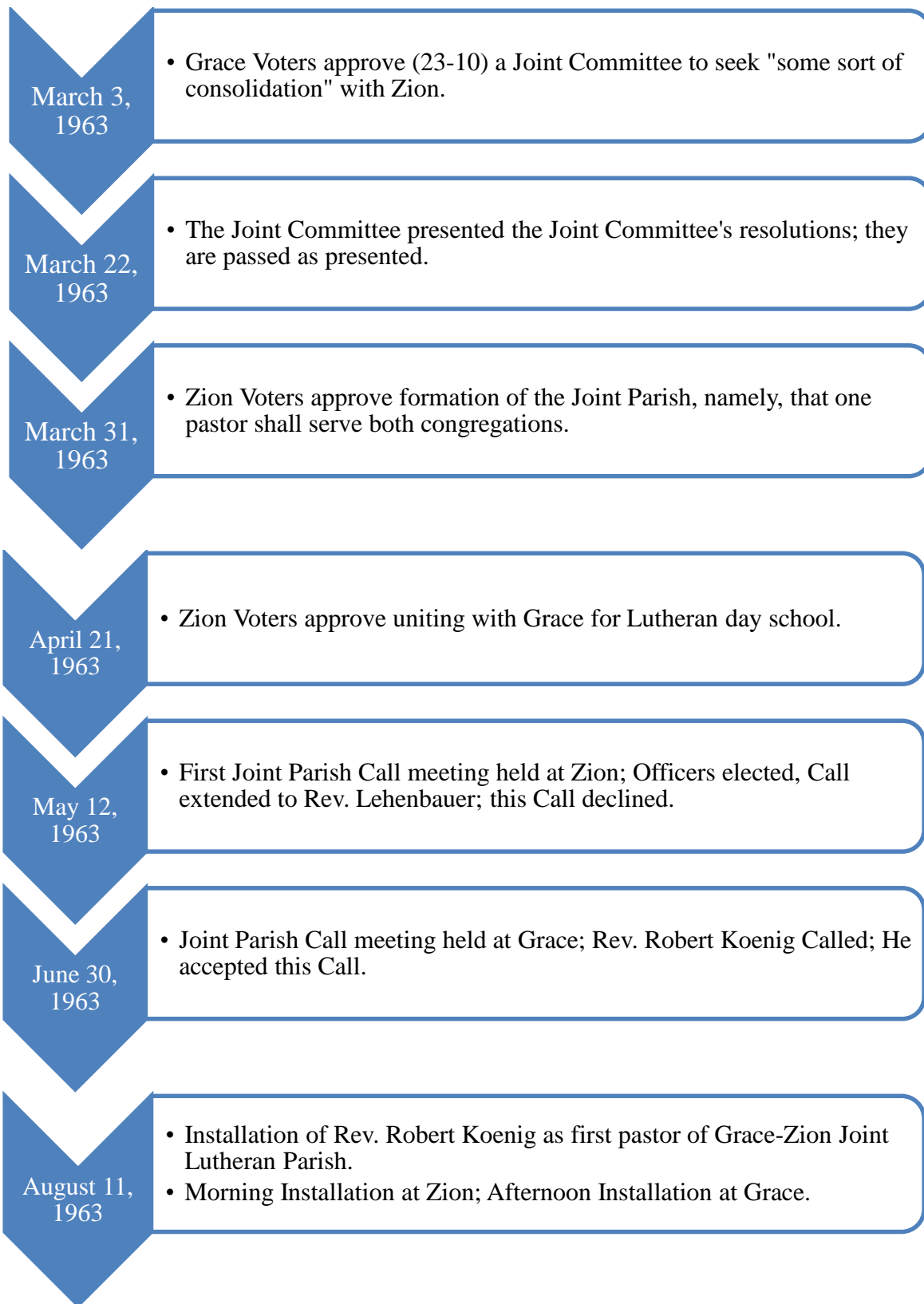
Matters regarding worship service times were not instantly settled. One finds in the Grace minutes from October 13 of that first year the following: “Rev. Koenig suggested that our service, beginning Jan. 1, 1964, be held at 8 a.m. in Uniontown and 10 a.m. in Longtown during the winter months (November to April) and a half-hour earlier in the summer months (May to October).” Furthermore, one finds the detail that “a motion passed that the matter of Christmas services procedure be turned over to the Joint school board.”<sup>118</sup>

In review, what follows (Figure 1) are Key Steps along the way as Zion and Grace moved toward forming a partnership.

Figure 1. Key Steps Toward the Partnership.



<sup>118</sup> Grace Voters' Minutes, October 13, 1963.



At this, the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish began to function.

It appears the major stated reason for the formation of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish was for procuring a pastor. Often financial distress is considered to be a factor for congregations entering into some kind of partnership. Was financial distress a factor leading to the Joint Parish? Nothing is explicitly stated, but one does find in the April 1, 1962 Grace minutes the following: “A motion passed that the treasurer of Grace Lutheran Church be authorized to borrow \$1,000 as of October 1961 (requested by bank).” Additionally, in the Annual Meeting of January 13, 1963, one finds the note: “A motion passed that the treasurer be given authority to borrow money as needed by the congregation.”<sup>119</sup> It may simply be a matter of order in financial transition toward the Joint Parish system that one finds that in their July 14 meeting the Grace voters approved “that we pay Vacancy Pastor’s salary [i.e., retroactively] out of the Joint Treasury as of July 1, 1963.”<sup>120</sup> A glance through the Annual Report of each congregation reveals that the year prior to the formation of the Joint Parish was finished in the black. If financial considerations were a part of the cause for formation, nowhere is it clearly stated.

The original Grace-Zion Joint Parish Guidelines were first published in 1967, and are included as Appendix 6. Very little has changed in them over five decades, although in 2012 a change in the congregational share of the Joint Parish budget was passed in order to make more expenses paid in a percentage manner according to the percentage of total communicant members. After a change to delineate a Call committee in August, 2014, new guidelines were published. They are included as Appendix 7.

While numerous other events could be noted, certainly a traumatic event in the combined history was this: the closing of the School, enacted in a Voters’ meeting of May 6,

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., January 13, 1963.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., July 14, 1963.

1986. By a vote of 19-12, with one abstention, the closing of the school was approved.<sup>121</sup> (There had been fewer and fewer Zion children in the school, and it is unclear if, at the time of closing, any Zion children were still attending.)<sup>122</sup> There is no record or recollection that any closure service was ever conducted, allowing for any public expression of grief at this loss.<sup>123</sup>

### The Closing of the Lutheran School to the Present Day

The closing of the school (1986) may have been more traumatic to congregational life than many have understood. Even though the congregational Voters' Assembly (Grace) approved paying tuition to Lutheran Schools, demonstrating the high value placed upon Lutheran education, it was not foreseen that one day the factors of family residence, employment, and travel patterns would lead to their children attending three different Lutheran elementary schools, not to mention three public elementary schools. Unity around the goal of Lutheran education has diffused.

One may note that at the outset, the Joint Parish had an educational role, namely running the Lutheran school. This matter is no longer entirely the case, but is now a matter for each congregation to deal with individually, namely the financing of Lutheran school tuition. On the other hand, the pastor is responsible for the confirmation instruction of the

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., May 6, 1986.

<sup>122</sup> The Zion Voters' Minutes indicate (Oct. 11, 1970 & Oct. 4, 1971) children still going to the school at Grace, as motions were passed to pay for transportation. On August 21, 1974, a special meeting was held to discuss Kindergarten tuition, the paying of which the Voters made the responsibility of the parents, as kindergarten was not done at the Grace (Joint Parish) school, but at Immanuel in Perryville. By 1980 (April 11), we find a motion approved to pay half of the tuition if the parents send the students to Immanuel, and full tuition if they attend the Joint Parish school. On August 17, 1980, we find the Zion Voters agreeing to pay 80% of the tuition if a parent sends their children to Immanuel, with the family responsible for the other 20%. This action was taken to avoid losing a family by transfer to Immanuel. On April 26, 1982, it was approved "to continue school as in the past two years." It appears at this point to be very few Zion students attending school at Grace anymore.

<sup>123</sup> About this the record is silent, and those interviewed agreed there was none. Regarding the need to treat such a matter as this as requiring a process of grieving, see Mogilka & Wiskus, *Pastoring Multiple Parishes*, 16-17.

public school students of both congregations. He also oversees key portions of the Lutheran Schools students' confirmation instruction, namely the portion concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, and preparations for Confirmation.

At the time this study was conducted, the children from Zion attend either the Perryville public schools (District # 32), Oak Ridge, or Immanuel Lutheran School in Perryville, with two attending Saxony Lutheran High School in Fruitland, whose technical address is Jackson.

The children of Grace have more diversity in the schools they attend. Currently, there are elementary-age children attending the Perryville (District # 32), Altenburg (District # 48), and Oak Ridge districts. Additionally, there are children attending three Lutheran Schools: Immanuel, Perryville [6]; St. Paul, Jackson [2]; and United in Christ Lutheran School (UCLS) in Frohna [1].<sup>124</sup> There are also four students attending Saxony Lutheran High School. One result of such diversity in schooling is that a sense of cohesiveness is absent. Such a cohesive spirit may well have existed in the days when most or all of the families supported one school and one PTL (Parent Teacher League of the combined school), but that day is long gone, the school being closed now for some 29 years.

Both congregations assist families with Lutheran School tuition in the desire to retain their young families, a significant commitment.

#### An Additional Note about the Ministry Context

The particular ministry situation is in a county that some have described as “over-churched” or “Lutheran-Church saturated.” Currently, there are eight LCMS

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<sup>124</sup> Figures for the 2013-2014 school year; Grace 2013 Annual Report.

congregations<sup>125</sup> (no other Lutheran denominations are represented) in Perry County, with another four<sup>126</sup> nearby in northern Cape Girardeau County. Most of the reasons cited for the establishment of many of these churches no longer exist, namely, the difficulty in traveling to church regularly due to poor roads, swollen creeks, and the like. This results in the oddity of families driving past several LCMS churches in order to attend the congregation of their choosing, or to attend congregations which are in no way the closest ones to their homes. The saturation is such that it is possible to reside in the county and to live within the five-mile radius of five LCMS churches. (See Appendix 4 for the map of these locations.) This introduces the notion that territoriality and congregational loyalty had much to do with the past, but may not be the same today as modern roads and transportation -not to mention the propensity for personal preference- facilitate more choices in this matter.<sup>127</sup> (Appendix 5 is a map showing the locations of seven Lutheran congregations in the county that have closed for a variety of reasons.)

Since the histories have varying mention of the pastors who have served, here is the listing of those who have served the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish in the Pastoral Office, and the years in which their service commenced and terminated.

Rev. Robert J. Koenig	1963-1964
Rev. Erhard W. W. Wolf	1964-1973
Rev. Gary W. Phelps	1974-1976
Rev. Daryl Bergelin	1976-1979
Rev. Loyle Vogt	1979, four months (Due to untimely death)
Rev. Vaughn Whiting	1980-1982
Rev. Wilbert Bok	1983-1989
Rev. Paul R. Winningham	1990-Present <sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Immanuel, Perryville; Zion, Crosstown; Salem, Farrar; Concordia, Frohna; Immanuel, Altenburg; Trinity, Altenburg; Zion, Longtown; and Grace, Uniontown.

<sup>126</sup> Trinity, Friedheim; Immanuel, New Wells; Trinity, Shawneetown; and Zion, Pocahontas.

<sup>127</sup> Kent Hunter, while noting that people are typically willing to travel 12 to 15 minutes to church notes that in rural areas this can be expanded to 20 minutes. These two congregations are not the only ones in the county that need to consider this! (From *The Lord's Harvest and the Rural Church*, surveyed later in this chapter.)

<sup>128</sup> *Grace Lutheran Church Records, 1840-2000* (Perryville, MO: Perry County Historical Society, 2000), 12.

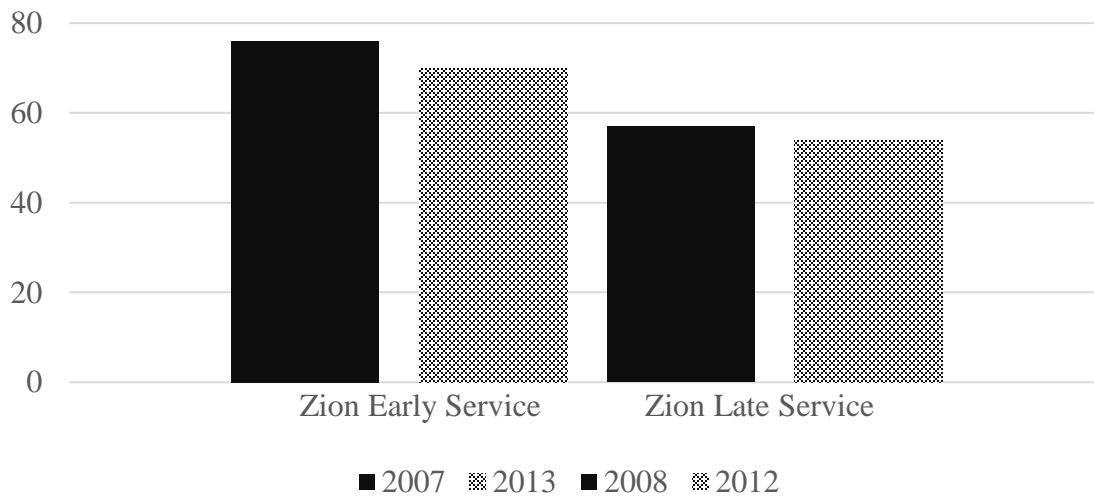
In surveying the list of pastors who have served the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish in its fifty-one year history, one may observe that of the eight (8) pastors who have served since formation, only three (3) have served for four years or longer, and only one has served in excess of 10 years. It would seem then, that among the areas falling under the literature review, pastoral change and tenure is an issue that dare not be overlooked.

#### Worship Time Change: An Annual Feature of the Grace Zion Joint Lutheran Parish

For more than the previous twenty-five years, worship service times have remained stable, although still alternating from early to late on an annual basis, with the schedule change taking effect January 1. This can be a drawback to long-term publicity efforts, as only “insiders” know this best. A note regarding this time change: a number of Grace members prefer an early service, and will become quite regular at Zion when Zion hosts the earlier service. For this reason (and perhaps others), the years in which Zion [Longtown] hosts the early service, the attendance figures are higher, owing mostly to the visiting Grace members. (On the other hand, rarely do Zion members attend the earlier service at Grace.) For these members, location seems not as important as service time. This situation seems to call for consideration in keeping the worship services quite similar in each location. This also offers some explanation as to the variance of attendance figures year by year. An agreement exists (it is not found in the Joint Parish Guidelines) that offerings given by members, if given in their own envelopes at the other congregation, are returned for tally and use in one’s home congregation. When a check is designated payable to one’s home congregation, it is forwarded to the designated congregation. This is not the case for loose plate cash taken in during the offerings, for this money remains with the local congregation.

In the visuals which follow (Figures 2 and 3), there is a difference between early service and late service attendance on successive years, with five years in between. This demonstrates the offset that occurs from early to late service at Grace and Zion that the service time occasions, with early service having a higher attendance, regardless of location. A decline in attendance is observed at both locations, although both congregations have been stable to mildly growing in membership. (Source: Congregational Annual Reports.)

Figure 2. Zion, Longtown, Recent Attendance Figures



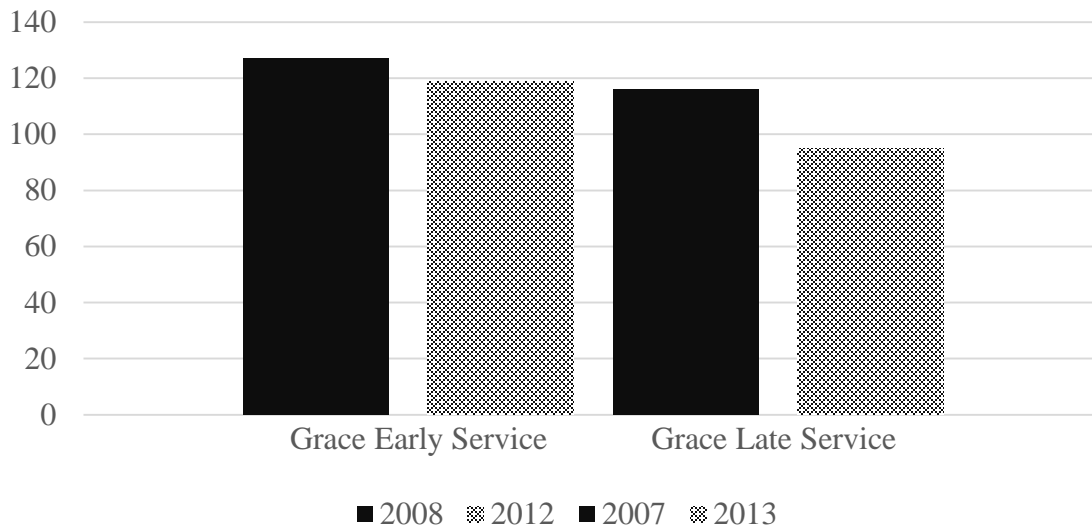
(Source: Congregational Annual Reports)

The actual data reflected in this (and the following) visual is as follows:

Grace 2008 (early service) Attendance: 127	Zion 2008 (late) att: 57
Grace 2012 (early service) Attendance: 119	Zion 2012 (late) att: 54
Grace 2007 (late service) Attendance: 116	Zion 2007 (early) att: 76
Grace 2013 (late service) Attendance: 95	Zion 2013 (early) att: 70



Figure 3. Grace, Uniontown, Recent Attendance Figures



(Source: Congregational Annual Reports)

Both visuals show a decline in worship, regardless of location.

There are some combined services (which are termed “Joint Services,” and include Advent, Ash Wednesday, Lenten, Ascension; which, with the exception of the Advent services held at Grace the others all alternate back and forth year by year); however, one must not presume that they are attended and treated as a truly “Joint” service. One example (although others could be cited) was Ash Wednesday, 2012, held at Grace, at which 66 persons were in attendance, only five (5) of which were Zion members.<sup>129</sup>

### A Statistical Look at Grace and Zion from 1948 to 2013

In the interest of providing sufficient data for any future study of these congregations and their membership, figures for both congregations are graphed here in five-year increments (actual figures given in Appendices 8 and 9) beginning in 1948, fifteen years prior to the formation of the Joint Parish until 1980. The year 1948 represents a time when

<sup>129</sup> From the researcher’s files.

membership for Grace was near its peak. Both congregations were still very near their peak in membership at the formation. The decades since have been a story of erosion (not always gradual) and stability, with Grace always having been the larger congregation. The figures from 1948 to 1980 are from LCMS Statistical Handbooks from the reports congregations (the pastors) sent in; additional figures after 1980 are found in Appendix 10 and are based on available congregational Annual Reports produced for distribution within the congregation.

Why preserve these statistics for the future? According to Lyle Schaller, renowned congregational growth and planning consultant, writing in 1982, in addressing partnerships or arrangements like the one under study, says, “churches served by this arrangement tend not to be numerically growing congregations.”<sup>130</sup> Seven years later, writing in the Foreword to Robert L. Wilson’s “The Multi-Church Parish,” Schaller would reiterate that thought.<sup>131</sup>

This partnership enables these two congregations to continue a Word and Sacrament Gospel ministry within their respective communities with the services of a trained and Called pastor. How have the congregations fared, particularly in view of the partnership?

Certainly the congregational histories included in Appendices 1 and 2 bring the reader up to 1997 for Zion, Longtown, and to 2000 for Grace, Uniontown. Figures 4 and 5 present a visual of the membership trends over the past 65 years.

Images of the history of each congregation may be found in the Appendices; Appendix 36 contains the Grace Timeline, and Appendix 37 contains the Zion Timeline.

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<sup>130</sup> Schaller, 98.

<sup>131</sup> Note his comments in the literature review for Wilson’s text to follow.

Figure 4. Zion Membership: Baptized & Communicant

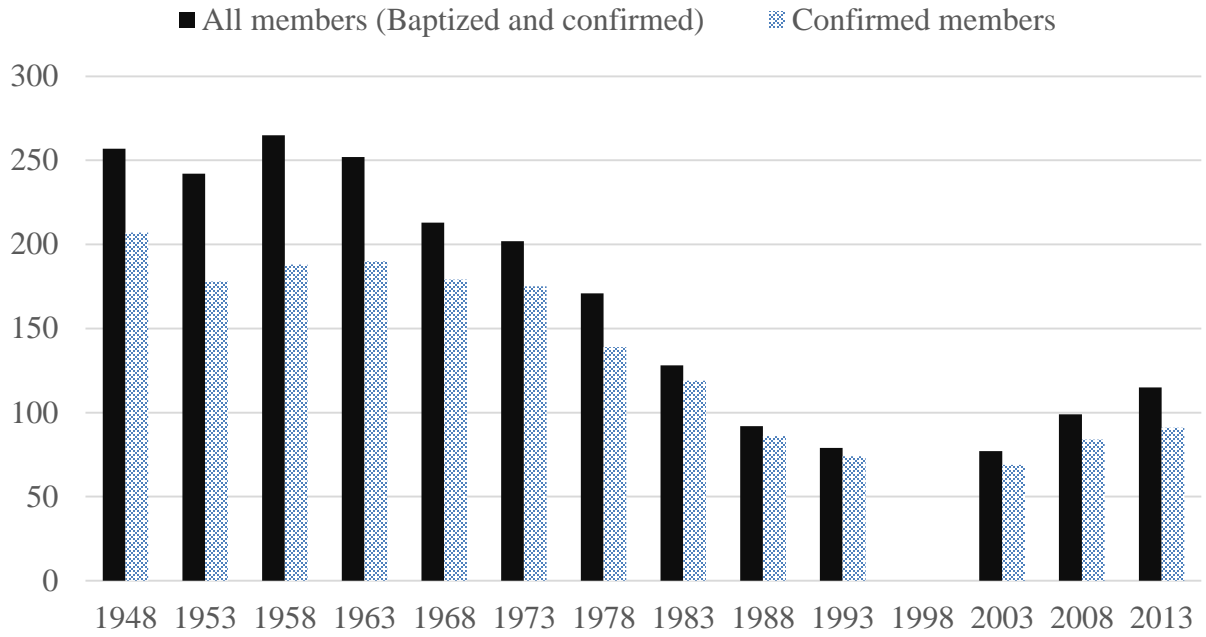
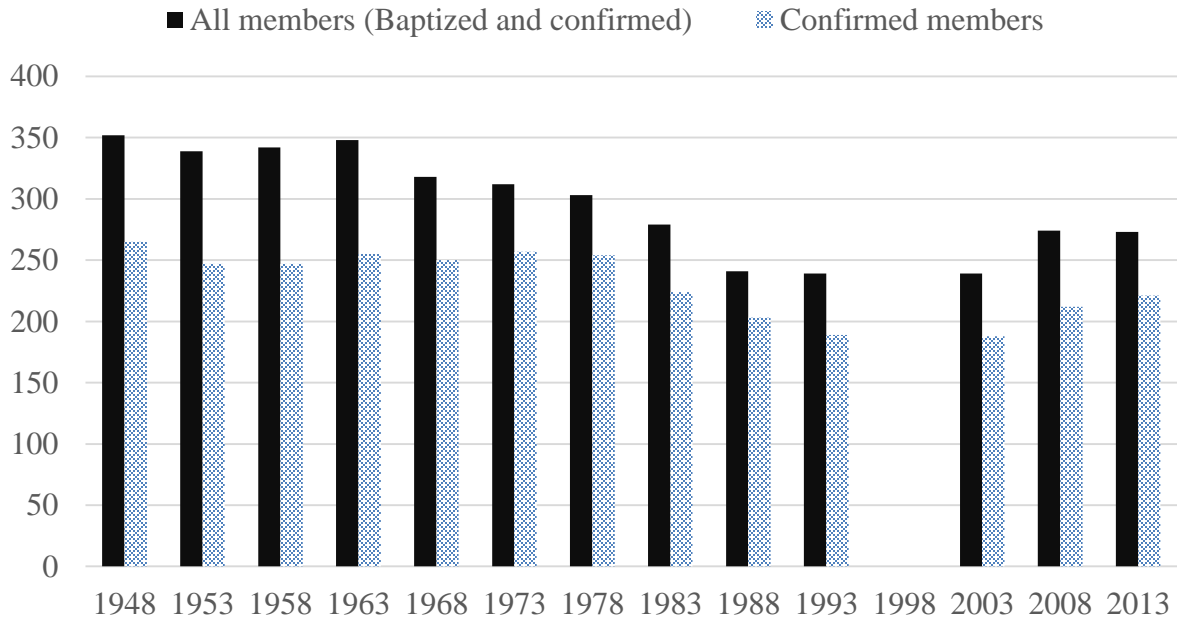


Figure 5. Grace Membership: Baptized & Communicant



How many members, both baptized and communicant, do the congregations have? At the conclusion of 2013, Grace had 274 baptized members, of which 231 were communicant members. Zion, meanwhile, had 115 baptized members, of which 91 were communicant members. Had this varied much from the previous five years? In 2008 Grace had 274 baptized members, with 212 communicants, while Zion had 99 baptized members, with 84 communicants.<sup>132</sup>

A number of documents will be included in the Appendices (11 and 12), including Projected and Actual Budget numbers for 2013 for each congregation, as well as the Joint Parish Budget for same (Appendix 13). This inclusion allows for the possibility of a future longitudinal study of Grace and Zion and the partnership they share.

### Summary

The convergence of two largely separate, autonomous LCMS congregations fifty-one years ago has been described, and a current glimpse has been given, with additional details to be accessed in the Appendices. This presents the ministry context of this study, the purpose of which seeks to discern how members of the congregations “*understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish*” as well as to “*gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*”

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<sup>132</sup> Data obtained from the congregational Annual Reports for 2008, 2013.

## **B. Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is two-fold. First, this anchors the proposed study within the foundational and ongoing literature related to multiple parish ministry. Second, since texts devoted to multiple parish ministry are relatively rare, one is forced to consider what factors are involved in the development of them, and to seek out complementary resources. Do such sources add insight toward a better understanding of the problem at hand, as well as how to explore such a problem, which is:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

Such resources are included to enable a better understanding of partnerships, of the congregations within the partnership, as well as the pastoral ministry to be conducted within that context. In this way it is hoped that data-gathering instruments may be created which will help the problem to be addressed in a profitable manner. The selected resources are among the best that could be termed “primary sources” pertaining to the subject matter.

The researcher is not an unbiased bystander; he serves as Pastor to these two congregations which share a partnership. This certainly must be acknowledged so that one might not suppose that even the selection and response to the literature is unbiased. It is from this perspective that he seeks to distill as broad an insight as possible, extending beyond the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod context as well.

Perhaps because multiple parish partnerships are outside the perceived norm of rural parishes (that of one pastor – one congregation), there are few texts devoted to multiple parish ministry. While not all dual or multiple parish arrangements are rural, they are found

predominantly in rural contexts. Robert L. Wilson, writing in *The Multi-Church Parish*, points out that small churches in cities tend to be able to come up with “part-time pastoral service without becoming part of a multi-church parish,” leaving the vast majority of multi-church parishes rural in nature.<sup>133</sup>

Thus it is that contextual factors force the student of dual or multiple parishes to search at the intersection of “small” and “rural,” where often the congregational dynamics of “small” (again, a rather flexible term) or “rural” (there seems to be some fluidity in this term as well, as we shall see) are addressed, but the depth of complexity required to understand the dynamics of a partnership is left largely untouched by authors of “small” and “rural” texts. The selected texts seek to examine the unique institution called the Christian Church according to certain characteristics which are relevant to the present study.

Not all dual or multiple parishes are rural. Most are small, although the word “small” has no objective referent; in a Roman Catholic context it might mean 250 families or fewer,<sup>134</sup> while in a Protestant context it might mean 40 worshipers or fewer.<sup>135</sup> To others, it may be something in between, or even something much smaller.

In the LCMS context, “small” to one might mean a congregation struggling to keep financially afloat and able to pay their pastor. To another, it might mean, small enough to enter into a dual or multiple parish arrangement, in terms of being able to shoulder the cost of salary, healthcare, and retirement benefits. It might also mean a congregation whose worshipping faithful looks embarrassingly few in a large sanctuary (having diminished from yesteryear), even if they are able to pay the bills. Regardless, small (and all its nuances) is a large part of consideration for dual or multiple parish arrangements.

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<sup>133</sup> Robert L. Wilson, *The Multi-Church Parish* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 22.

<sup>134</sup> Katarina Schuth, *Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 21.

<sup>135</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *The Small Church is Different!* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 9.

It is also noted that the literature search is conducted in such a manner that an interested party might pick up these texts and readily locate useful material, especially that which is unique to a particular text. In this manner, this portion gives exposure to much of the significant related literature that bears upon multiple parishes, smaller congregations, and rural ministry.

The literature search begins with sources directly addressing multiple parish arrangements.

### 1. Multiple Church Parishes & Cooperating Congregations

Robert L. Wilson's *The Multi-Church Parish*,<sup>136</sup> from the Creative Leadership Series, edited by Lyle Schaller, was a new source and recommended to the researcher upon his reception of a Call to the Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership. The book is still a very good resource for anyone wishing to understand more about the unique characteristics of multi-church parishes.<sup>137</sup>

The multi-church parish is just one of the possible answers for the thousands of smaller congregations that cannot afford or justify a full-time pastor.<sup>138</sup> Pastoring a multi-church parish is a complex and demanding task, quite often perceived by one's peers (as well as others) as "a less prestigious position than the person with only one local church."<sup>139</sup> Yet a multi-church parish permits many small congregations to have the benefits of a trained and ordained minister that would otherwise do without. This kind of arrangement allows the

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<sup>136</sup> Wilson served as research professor of church and society at Duke University Divinity School.

<sup>137</sup> Wilson defines a multi-church parish as one "in which one pastor serves two or more churches." 18.

<sup>138</sup> Schaller, 84-103, in a chapter titled "Staffing the Small Church," offers a dozen possible answers. Schaller wrote the Foreword in Wilson.

<sup>139</sup> Wilson, 23.

small church “a high degree of autonomy,” and it is the local church (congregation) which an individual joins and to which he or she yields loyalty.<sup>140</sup>

Wilson writes, “The multi-church parish in which one pastor serves two or more churches has long been and will continue to be a prominent feature of American Protestantism.”<sup>141</sup> He estimates there are “probably 50,000 such congregations in America” in which congregations share a minister,<sup>142</sup> and they are found virtually within every denomination.

From the foreword by Schaller:

The historical record makes clear that the basic tendency of the vast majority of smaller congregations is either to remain on a plateau in size or to experience a gradual erosion in numbers. This book makes it clear that numerical growth and multi-church parishes rarely go together.<sup>143</sup>

Wilson discusses what makes for an effective (as well as ineffective) multi-church parish, and into the mix go workload, population, worship times coupled with distance between churches, relationships, pastoral stability, cooperation, and compromise by all concerned.

Where the minister lives is important, meriting a chapter by itself. Noting that clergy tenure tends to be short in multi-church parishes, the practicality of a church-owned house is “virtually a requirement.”<sup>144</sup> Congregations long for their minister to be identified with their community, something that takes much time and effort, thwarted when clergy tenure is short.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 40.



In terms of managing the multi-church parish, Wilson notes complexities unknown to most, but demanding of the pastor's attention. The worship schedule must be agreed upon and workable, with some degree of accommodation and compromise.<sup>146</sup> The pastor's unavailability during the Sunday School hour is problematic. Cooperative programs seem to undercut the weaker church and more energy goes into cooperation than goes into outreach.<sup>147</sup>

Finances also can be complex, although often in multi-church parishes the cost of employing a pastor is the only shared financial responsibility. Still, it must be a matter of agreement, and along with a financial share may come certain expectations of the pastor's time.<sup>148</sup>

In separate chapters titled "Advice to the Minister" and "Suggestions for the Laity," Wilson addresses particular concerns to be taken to heart. He has much of profit to say, and each chapter ought to be read by the other targeted audience. This would enhance understanding and open to dialogue various aspects of the complexities of the multi-church parish.

In a chapter dealing with cooperative parishes,<sup>149</sup> a grouping of congregations served by a staff of clergy and lay professionals *not* to be equated with multiple church parishes, Wilson notes, "Becoming part of a cooperative parish assumes that each participating congregation will give up some autonomy for the common good."<sup>150</sup> Reasons are cited why denominational leaders seem to be cheerleaders of cooperative arrangements, although the

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 71. Cooperative parishes are not to be confused with multi-church parishes. According to Wilson, cooperative parishes consist of a group of several churches (usually from six to twelve), the number of which is too large to be served by one pastor.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 71.

author notes that cooperative parishes “tend not to continue indefinitely.”<sup>151</sup> Anyone considering joining or serving a cooperative parish, and also interested in congregational stability, will be well-served by reading what Wilson has to say.

As to the future of multi-church parishes, Wilson notes while there is a temptation for some denominational officials to try to merge smaller congregations, such mergers are seldom successful and lasting, and he urges such leaders to “devise strategies for small congregations and multi-church parishes that are not built on the idea of mergers.”<sup>152</sup>

Concluding his comments on the future of the multi-church parish, Wilson notes, “The multi-church parish is and will continue to be one form of organization that enables the church to witness and minister in many communities across the land.”<sup>153</sup>

*Pastoring Multiple Parishes*, by Mark Mogilka and Kate Wiskus,<sup>154</sup> shares what has been learned from the Multiple Parish Pastoring Project, particularly “for those engaged in multiple parish ministries, most especially the pastors of multiple parishes.”<sup>155</sup> This project is from one of the models identified by the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project, a joining of forces of six national ministerial organizations for study, funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.<sup>156</sup> Written from a Roman Catholic perspective, there is much to be gleaned from this resource for those serving multiple parishes in other denominational contexts.

Dual, joint, yoked, or multiple parishes have been around; what is new is the extent to which the phenomenon is growing. Multi-parish ministry is not to be seen as the ideal or the

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>154</sup> Mogilka serves as the director of pastoral planning for the diocese of Green Bay, and has served on a national study committee on multiple parish pastoring through the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project. Wiskus has served as a diocesan director of pastoral services, and is now associate dean of formation at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein Seminary.

<sup>155</sup> Mark Mogilka and Kate Wiskus, *Pastoring Multiple Parishes* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2009), xii.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

norm. The authors note that “multiple parish ministry is about making the best of a less-than-ideal situation.”<sup>157</sup> There are very real circumstances (rising Roman Catholic population, dwindling priesthood)<sup>158</sup> that are giving rise to an increase in this complex form of pastoring. Will the parishes thrive, or will they merely survive? There are actions which can be taken to insure the former, lest the latter—a survivor mode of minimalism, with little chance of growth,<sup>159</sup> be the likely result. The authors identify useful skill sets for pastoring multiple parishes (their list has 15 items),<sup>160</sup> and explain how each of these can have a positive effect, while also noting that for such ministry, “[t]raining is essential for the pastor.”<sup>161</sup>

A useful contribution from which Lutherans could learn is the importance of support staff for the pastor/priest in the multiple parish (Chapter 5 – “How to Recruit, Engage, and Empower the Pastoral Staff”). Often the authors refer to “staff” at each parish, whereas nearly every Lutheran dual or tri-parish of which this researcher is aware gets by with no to little staff, nor budget for such, with mostly the pastor as the staff. They note: “In multiple-parish situations, staff is critical. Failure to expand the pastoral resources by engaging others to assist is usually a ticket to burnout for the pastor.”<sup>162</sup> Chapter 6 presents different models by which multiple parish pastoring can be organized. Congregations would do well to look outside the “way we’ve always done things” to consider whether one or more model offered might better serve God’s flock than the “one pastor, two congregations model.”

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 59.

In *Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes*, Katarina Schuth<sup>163</sup> shares the results of a large study of Roman Catholic Priests, “to appreciate more fully the perspective of priests who serve multiple parishes.”<sup>164</sup> This book helps the reader to appreciate the enormity of the presence of multiple parishes and the unique issues they present, particularly since the book is of relatively recent publication (2006). This kind of ministry is “not understood well enough.”<sup>165</sup> A full 20% of active priests (4,408 out of 22,302) have multiple parish assignments, serving 9,109 clustered or multiple parishes. A total of 911 priests (21%) of active priests serving in a multiple parish assignment completed the survey upon which the book is written,<sup>166</sup> and an additional 70 were interviewed. Ten percent of the respondents indicated they had some preparation for multiple parish ministry, while 90 percent indicated they received no preparation whatsoever!<sup>167</sup>

This book pictures multiple parish ministry as at once demanding, diverse, and deserving of special attention, training, and preparation. Included are listings of “Ten Best Practices” as well as “Top Ten Biggest Mistakes” identified by the study participants,<sup>168</sup> as well as pastoral advice for the newly-assigned (Chapter 9). Since the majority of multiple parishes are rural, the responding priests overwhelmingly yearn for those in church hierarchy (most of whom are too urban or urban-bound) over them to truly understand their ministry realities.<sup>169</sup>

Two notable aspects of multiple parish ministry in a Roman Catholic context are this: The multiple parishes have come about not as a result of layperson initiative, but rather have

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<sup>163</sup> Author Katarina Schuth, Ph.D., holds the endowed chair for the Social Scientific Study of Religion at The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity at the University of St. Thomas.

<sup>164</sup> Schuth, 166.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

been imposed by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, and the use of the term “small” when referring to parishes. “Small” in a Roman Catholic context is a rather subjective term, being used for a parish of 250 families or fewer, or in some instances 100 families or fewer. Thus, the size of many parishes are in no way “small” as small is considered among protestants.<sup>170</sup>

*Cooperating Congregations* by Gilson A. C. Waldkoenig and William O. Avery<sup>171</sup> is a close-up examination of five cooperative parishes of various ages, denominational backgrounds, as well as five distinct geographical locales. In looking at these cooperating congregations, they seek to describe “a distinctive and little known organizational structure”<sup>172</sup> known as the cooperative parish.<sup>173</sup> Additionally, they examine and tell the stories that are representative of “creative congregational adaptation.” In doing so, they seek to give hope that it is possible to both “survive and live faithfully” even in places and circumstances that present great difficulty and even threaten the very survival of Christian congregations.<sup>174</sup>

Why is this book important? After examining figures on age and decline in their own denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the authors note that, in

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<sup>170</sup> Schaller, 9. Schaller writes, “The normal size for a Protestant congregation on the North American continent is one that has fewer than forty people at worship on the typical Sunday morning.”

<sup>171</sup> The authors both served on the faculty at Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Penn. At the time of publication, Gilson A. C. Waldkoenig was Assistant Professor of Church in Society and Director of the Town & Country Church Institute at the Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary. William O. Avery was Professor of Stewardship and Parish Ministry and Director of the Stewardship of Life Institute at Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary.

<sup>172</sup> Gilson A. C. Waldkoenig and William O. Avery, *Cooperating Congregations* (Alban Institute, 1999), ix.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. “Cooperative parishes are clusters of congregations that have joined together to engage in common mission and to share resources, without surrendering individual congregational identity or consolidating in the usual sense of the term.” The authors claim that “[c]ooperatives have greater structural integrity than the traditional circuit or yoked parish, in which only the preacher (and perhaps a parsonage) is shared between (or among) autonomous congregations. On the other hand, most cooperatives declare in their foundational documents that their intention is not to merge or to close individual congregations.”

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

accord with this information, “some experts predict that by the year 2025, two-thirds of the Protestant churches in this country will be unable to support their own pastor.”<sup>175</sup>

The cooperative parish model consists of “clusters of congregations that have joined together to engage in common mission and to share resources, without surrendering individual congregational identity or consolidating in the usual sense of the term.”<sup>176</sup> There are alternatives besides the cooperative parish strategy, of which the authors note three, utilizing terms that are not standardized across American church life. Among the options are yoked ministry (termed circuit or dual/triple/etc. parish), satellite ministry, and consolidation. The authors are convinced that cooperative parishes differ from these and are preferable for at least six reasons.<sup>177</sup>

The authors visited each of the five Cooperative parishes, visiting four of them twice and one of them once, for visits of four to five days’ duration for numerous structured interviews with staff and laypersons. Their study design was “to gather the stories, worries, dreams, and hopes of the very people who have been experimenting with cooperative or cluster structures.”<sup>178</sup> They especially sought to fill in the gap of lacking study “of the actual experiences of people in cooperative congregations.”<sup>179</sup> Their methodology was to employ an oral historical procedure, seeking to preserve narrative integrity, hoping it would prove “helpful to a variety of other researchers and practitioners.”<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 5-7. The six reasons are: 1. The cooperative parish can renew congregations in mission; 2. Lay leadership is developed in the cooperative model; 3. Proven record of wide and effective local community impact; 4. Adaptability in the American environment (flexibility affected by individual initiative and choice); 5. Allowing for local adaptive, organic change within congregations; and 6. Providing feasible, challenging call for ordained ministers in the prime of their careers.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

Each of the five case studies in the book follows a seven-part presentation. Introduction and context are followed by the story of the ministry's development in its context. Next, the ministries themselves are described to give the reader a sense of the continuing work of the cooperative. The vision(s) of the leaders is then explored, followed by the tensions that the cooperative faces. Next, a "why it works" section notes the main reasons the cooperative has continued. And finally, a glimpse at the future and the perceived threats and promises is presented.

After surveying each of the five cooperatives in the study, the authors present their conclusions and identify key features of cooperative ministry, of which they cite and explain twelve. They note that "in the next few decades, those who are called to pastoral ministry in rural, inner-city, and small-church situations will need to be informed about the nature and possibilities of cooperative ministry."<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, they note, "People in cooperative parishes have not yet realized just how significant they are as pioneers of the changing forms of the church at the end of its second millennium."<sup>182</sup>

The Appendix, "Guidance for Beginning a Cooperative,"<sup>183</sup> includes several key sources to assist in study, planning, and negotiation. In addition to this text, these resources may prove useful to those seeking to craft such a ministry. In order to bring a counterbalance to their zeal and favor for cooperative ministry, the authors cite several sources in the Appendix which present "cautionary and realistic advice,"<sup>184</sup> as well as more critical perspectives.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 203-204.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 203.

*The Cooperative Parish in Nonmetropolitan Areas* by Marvin T. Judy<sup>185</sup> is dated [1967] in terms of figures, current trends, travel, communication, and technology, but a classic for the study of multiple parishes, under various arrangements which the author terms cooperative parishes.<sup>186</sup> The bibliography reveals no single source covering the subject area Judy covers. He begins with a description of land settlement patterns in pioneer North America, patterns unlike anywhere else in the world, and covers the rural neighborhood and community on up to the functional economic area that reveals the community as a social system.

In covering societal trends affecting the Church in nonmetropolitan areas, Judy notes that between 1940 and the mid-60s, total farm population declined from 30.5 million to 13 million at the same time the number of workers on farms declined from 11 million to 4 million.<sup>187</sup> This mass exodus of millions from farming to non-farming life caused much decline and reorganization in rural areas (among other changes), which affected congregational life in nonmetropolitan areas.

Judy notes that the term “parish,” largely from Church of England and Roman Catholic practice (at the time), “conveys the idea of a local congregation but also a territory around a local church for which that congregation has a responsibility.” He also notes how “the Protestant church with its spirit of freedom has never adhered strictly to this concept in America.”<sup>188</sup> The notion of choice prevails. By the use of the word parish, Judy intends

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<sup>185</sup> Judy served as professor at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas at the time of writing, however, he had begun his ministry in a rural charge in Iowa and done graduate work in rural sociology; thus this book is birthed of his life’s passion for quality rural ministry.

<sup>186</sup> Care must be taken with Judy’s broad use of the term, as in later and more current writings the term has a more precise meaning.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.



“that territory for which a local church is responsible for pastoral care and evangelism.”<sup>189</sup>

With this definition in mind, he offers seven different arrangements, or parish organizational structures, to perform such ministry of service. Of particular interest to the present study is his description of the third structure, which he calls “the Enlarged Charge” (sometimes called the Larger Charge or Cooperative Charge),<sup>190</sup> which most closely fits what was put into place in the formation of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish at its inception and in the years to follow before it was codified in the publication for the first official guidelines in 1967. Each congregation retained its own organizational structure, a budget (consisting of local expenses as well as a sum to contribute to the parish-wide budget), as well as a central parish treasurer to receive from each congregation and disperse such funds as ministerial support, pastor’s travel, office expense, etc. A few differences, however, are to be noted, most notably in that the ability to pay is not prorated according to ability to pay, but rather upon percentage of communicant members.<sup>191</sup> He recommends monthly publication of a parish-wide paper that seeks to foster good communication between and awareness of each entity with the other.

The chapter “Establishing the Cooperative Parish” was written in response to requests (both in conversation and written) by denominational executives “for a more detailed analysis of the process by which a cooperative parish is brought into being.”<sup>192</sup> Judy does a good job of outlining the recommended steps, built largely upon the analysis of the process of social change devised by George M. Beal and associates, which gives a framework for social action.<sup>193</sup> Judy then presents a case study of a cooperative parish established in

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>191</sup> It is to be noted that his fourth suggestion, “as much as possible shall be done on a parish-wide basis in overall planning and work” is not employed, for at this point, the initial desire for congregational autonomy takes over and the reality is that very little joint planning occurs.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 93.

Schellsburg, Penn., between 1961 and 1964, of four churches: United Church of Christ (82 members), Methodist (79 members), Presbyterian (55 members), and Lutheran (68 members). It would be interesting to learn how this cooperative parish has fared in the half-century since. His major point here is simple: “Leaders in the church need to understand the basic principles involved in change and social control”<sup>194</sup> if they are to foster the establishment of a cooperative parish.

“The cooperative parish is designed to assist the members of local congregations to be the church at worship, nurture, and work.”<sup>195</sup> The importance of involved and strong leadership (including leadership education) is emphasized, as is the responsibility for evangelization of the surrounding community.<sup>196</sup>

Great care and study is to be taken in preparation for establishing a cooperative ministry. The understanding of characteristics of rural culture is essential, a host of staff considerations needs to be codified, and the purpose needs to be plainly stated and given wide publicity. The importance of obtaining a person with qualities suitable for pastoring (and the need for denominational assistance in securing such) a cooperative parish is noted, as well as the importance of dealing with conflict in a proper Christian manner rounds out the discussion.

The final chapter leads the reader to understand the necessity to do research in preparation, and what research ought to be done as a minimum. There is the danger of inadequately understanding one’s community, or to overextend oneself into ineffectiveness.

The cooperative parish, writes Judy, “forms a framework for such [needed] ministry”

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid. Interestingly, theological concerns seem of little interest here.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 130.

to family, neighborhood, community, and church.”<sup>197</sup> It is more than mere sociological forces, but requires the love of Christ and the Spirit of Christ.<sup>198</sup>

These are some of the resources that provide background as well as modern perspective to multiple parish partnership and pastoring.

## 2. Small Church Literature

Certain resources contend that small churches are a unique species of church, regardless of their setting, be they rural, urban, or in-between. They are explored for the insight they offer toward understanding smaller churches.

*The Small Church is Different!* by Lyle Schaller<sup>199</sup> is based upon the premise that the small church is not a small-scale version of the large congregation, but rather possesses characteristics quite unique unto itself. He writes to convince the reader that, since most church information is published from a larger congregation perspective, it is a mistake to think that merely downsizing the material or the idea is a suitable application. “Smaller congregations,” he asserts, “have a distinct set of internal dynamics that make them function differently.”<sup>200</sup> This point should not be lost on denominational hierarchy, as he notes, “the small congregation is not a small-scale version of the large congregation, and...denominational and ministerial policies should be tailored to fit the unique characteristics of the small church.”<sup>201</sup>

Whatever one thinks of congregations in a normative sense, Schaller notes that 40 or fewer people in church on a typical Sunday morning is normal for a typical Protestant

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> At the time of writing, he was editor of Abingdon’s Creative Leadership Series, and a parish consultant with the Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Indiana.

<sup>200</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, 45.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 161.

congregation.<sup>202</sup> While both of the congregations in this study exceed that total, a few points are well taken. Since both congregations are not as large as they once were, there is a tendency for them to think of themselves as “small,” regardless of their worship attendance average. In addition, the fact that they share a pastor (but once each had their own pastor) reinforces the idea of “smallness,” having diminished from an earlier day. Rather than rule out the applicability of this resource on the basis of current numbers, it is worth considering how what he says might be useful. It is useful to note that a long-term pastorate may cause exemption from some of the typical small-church dynamics set forth, as brief clergy tenure is often the norm.<sup>203</sup>

Congregational self-esteem or morale, which is often observed to be low in small congregations, receives treatment by Schaller.<sup>204</sup> Contributory causes include “a tendency to follow a problem-based approach to planning,”<sup>205</sup> ministerial candidates lacking in small church experience and training, ministerial tenure, and comparison to an earlier period in congregational history in which membership was larger.<sup>206</sup> In a discussion about staffing the smaller congregation, note is made of rising costs –as a percentage of the total budget- and how this spells difficulty in maintaining a minister.<sup>207</sup> Of special note is his observation that the most productive ministry minutes of the week are those of Sunday morning before and after worship, Sunday School and [any] fellowship hour, where the minister is able to mingle and converse among the people and identify ministry matters requiring his care. The wise

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>204</sup> Schaller lists and explains seven factors behind the morale problems in many smaller congregations, four of which have been noted in the text. His list also includes: Underestimation of size, resources, assets, and potential of the church by leaders; An operational assumption in many denominations that such a congregation should be subsidized; and Leadership positions held by people who remember too well the past and often compare the present with it, coming up with a negative. 58-61.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 84-85.

congregation (and minister) will seek “to maximize those productive minutes.”<sup>208</sup> Since ministerial tenure is important to the well-being of the small congregation,<sup>209</sup> consideration ought to be given as to how congregations might achieve healthy ministerial tenure.

Schaller takes the reader on a brief historical-economic tour of decades past to show how, from the 1930s to the 1980s in the 20th century, in order for a congregation to be served by a full-time married minister, attendance had to climb from perhaps forty in the heart of the Great Depression to perhaps 60 in the fifties, to perhaps 80 in attendance in the seventies to even higher in the eighties.<sup>210</sup> Simply put, ministerial costs (salary, benefit packages) have risen faster than the Consumer Price Index and are a greater percentage of the congregational budget than in times past, pricing a growing number of congregations out of the ministerial marketplace. The multi-church parish is often a response to this.<sup>211</sup>

Schaller addresses staffing advantages and disadvantages for multi-church parishes. At the time of writing (1982) he claims that there were at least 60,000 Protestant congregations sharing a pastor with one or more other churches.<sup>212</sup> He notes that churches served by this arrangement “tend not to be numerically growing congregations,” and tend toward brief ministerial tenure.<sup>213</sup> It is often difficult for these congregations and their pastors to capitalize on the most important ministry minutes of the week, pre- and post-service, due to the necessity to travel to the next stop.<sup>214</sup>

While people often assume everyone knows everyone else, this is not necessarily true as small congregations find themselves in an increasingly “bedroom community”

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 60, 71, 91.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>211</sup> Robert L. Wilson. This is from the foreword by Lyle E. Schaller, p. 9, 11.

<sup>212</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, 146.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 146.

environment, and he points out, “the churches must carry a greater burden in helping people become better acquainted.”<sup>215</sup> This involves consideration of building design, parking facilities, wise use of time surrounding the worship hour, and intentional fellowship events, in which socializing is intentionally planned.

As one of the earliest noteworthy publications on the small church, Schaller has contributed much to the understanding of small church characteristics.

Anthony Pappas’ appropriately-named book, *Entering the World of the Small Church* (Second Edition) helps the reader to see that the small church is not the standard that is taught about in seminary, nor is it what many seminary graduates have ever experienced or imagined. He writes so that the reader can do as the title suggests, having himself learned how to enter the world of the small church through a two decades-long experience of serving one. He endeavors to help the reader understand the small church, experience the small-church world, and finally, to demonstrate what healthy leadership in a small church looks like and does.

Small churches are a unique kind of church, often overlooked by publications about churches. But they are numerous, diverse, and unique, and they have something special to offer. Small churches need quality leadership for the unique challenges they face today.<sup>216</sup> Six of the challenges Pappas identifies are: Traditionalism (unwillingness to try anything new); “Niceness” that refuses to speak the truth in love or to confront damaging behavior; A “club mentality” that is satisfied with itself; Paralysis in the face of conflict; Negative scripts

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>216</sup> Anthony G. Pappas, *Entering the World of the Small Church* (Second Edition), (Alban Institute, 2000), 7.

(as accompanies poor self-esteem); and the enormous cost of maintaining archaic buildings.<sup>217</sup>

Perhaps the most unique contribution of this book is how, borrowing from anthropologist Robert Redfield, Pappas likens the small church to a “folk society” (a term coined by Redfield) and presents 19 characteristics of a folk society.<sup>218</sup> These characteristics find a remarkable parallel to the people of God as found in many small churches. A familial kind of relationship is characteristic of a small church. “Small” is not defined with particular numbers, but he speaks of it being a relationally-based, single-cell structure that, like marriage, is so basic to life that people feel a need for it.<sup>219</sup>

Goals in the small church are often not articulated, existing below the level of awareness; often the major unspoken goal is continuity.<sup>220</sup> Preservation and maintenance are the aim, not change and transformation. The house of worship, if it has served for any

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 13-15. Pappas notes that a folk society is composed of a group of people who

1. Are small in number,
2. Have a long-term association,
3. Know each other well, and
4. Have a strong sense of belonging.
5. The group is isolated from other groups in neighboring areas and
6. Has a high identification with the territory it occupies,
7. Often functioning as if it is “in a little world by itself.”
8. Wisdom, prestige, and authority strongly correlate with the age of each individual,
9. Enhanced by the fact that each generation goes through a similar sequence of life events.
10. There is a simplicity of roles,
11. A primacy of oral over written communications, and
12. A straightforward level of technology.
13. Position in the folk society determines an individual’s rights and duties,
14. Behavior is as much expressive as it is effective, and
15. Relationships are ends in themselves, not a means of achieving an external object.
16. Social recognition is a greater motivator of behavior than material gain,
17. Qualities that contribute to long-term stability, not change, are valued.
18. Tradition determines actions, and
19. Moral worth attaches to the traditional way of doing things.

Pappas cites: Robert Redfield, “The Folk Society,” *American Journal of Sociology* 52, no. 4 (January 1947): 293-303.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 45.

significant length of time, is a “hall of memories,” a personal place, with a sacred dimension; it is never merely space!<sup>221</sup>

Regarding leadership in the small church, Pappas notes that pastoral leadership requires one to truly know the congregation, something that takes commitment to the “long-haul.” The small church sees faithfulness not as being innovative, but rather in being constant. For this reason, change from the outside (even by a good-intentioned pastor!) is resisted, and change is only possible as people open themselves up to new responses and behaviors (he calls them “reflexes”) that flow from who and what the people become over time. He calls this leadership a hidden activity, one that cannot be done with fanfare and fireworks, but rather, develops quietly, simply, and behind the scenes, best seen if it is thought to flow from the congregation itself. A relationship agenda prevails over any task agenda.<sup>222</sup>

A discussion on congregational health and assessment is followed up by suggestions for leadership activities particular to small-church culture. Small churches will always be present, and Pappas has given good insight into how to understand them for the purpose of serving them.

*The Big Small Church Book* by David R. Ray<sup>223</sup> also contributes to the discussion about the unique characteristics of small churches. Noting that small has a number of synonyms, none of which are viewed positively, it is seen that already a bit of a public relations problem exists. And while small churches may not be the standard about which books are written and courses are taught, they remain God’s instrument for His work,

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 86-87, 89. On page 89, Pappas notes: “The task agenda is the lesser agenda. The relationship agenda is the greater concern.” With this in mind, pastoral tenure is important.

<sup>223</sup> Ray has served as a United Church of Christ (UCC) pastor for 20 years and also served as a denominational consultant. (Reverse book jacket)



regardless of size, and there are a great many of them. Small churches have an advantage in that they have the capability to develop healthy relationships, whereas in larger churches getting to know other worshipers and actually having a relationship with very many is plainly an impossibility.

Ray points out how one can calculate the number of relationships possible with a given number of attendees by means of a mathematical formula:  $(\text{Number} \times \text{Number}) - \text{Number}$ , divided by two. Or stated differently: Number squared, minus number, and divide by two. Thus, for a church of fifty attendees, we would have the following possible relationships:  $(50 \times 50) - 50$  and divide by two; 2450 divided by two equals 1225 possible relationships. At some point, one may be able to know the other worshipers, but is no longer able to have much sense of what relationships exist between the others in the group.<sup>224</sup>

There is no “typical” small church. Not only are all small churches not the same, but Ray notes seven different kinds of small churches, including the Always Small Church; the Once Large or Remnant Small Church; the Not-Yet-Large Small Church; the Schismatic Small Church, the Intentionally Small Church, the Clan Small Church, and the particular Ethnic Small Church. Of these, the most applicable in the current study is the Once Large or Remnant Small Church, who have had higher membership and participation in the past. Ray says of these; “They are more likely to wither and die because they don’t know how to be small.”<sup>225</sup>

While he notes that most rural churches are small, not all are. Furthermore, medium and large-size rural churches, writes Ray, “will likely feel and act much smaller than they are

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<sup>224</sup> David R. Ray, *The Big Small Church Book* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1992), 28.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 29-30.

because they tend to be full of family connections and their people are likely to interact throughout the week.”<sup>226</sup>

Ray mentions the issue of low morale or congregational esteem, which he considers to be a major problem for many small churches, having inherited feelings of insignificance from the culture (which denigrates things small and prizes the large church).<sup>227</sup> He calls this low morale “the most debilitating problem in a high percentage of churches” and, likening it to a cancer that kills, says it “undermines the ministry and mission of the church. Efforts to enhance personal and church self-esteem and build morale need to top a small church’s priority list.” He then has a 21-question inventory on interrelated categories intended to provoke discussion and then offers a “12-step” program for transforming a church’s self-esteem.<sup>228</sup>

Another contribution that Ray makes is his discussion of the three kinds of relationships between small congregations and their pastors, which resemble three kinds of male/female relationships. The first of these categories is the one-night stands, with brief pastorates (for any number of reasons) that convince people they don’t deserve a lasting relationship, leading to a downturn in morale and esteem, with members resigned that this is the best they can expect.<sup>229</sup>

The second kind of relationship is more like a “live together” one. Finding a little security in each other, they get along for a while, each not fully trusting the intentions of the other, and when a more intriguing partner is spotted, the arrangement is broken, and a new

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 141-146.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 175.

partner is eventually found. Most pastor-congregation relationships are of this kind, he says.<sup>230</sup>

The third and most rare relationship is like a marriage, where “some trusting and courageous churches and pastors buck the prevailing trends and commit [to a marriage].”<sup>231</sup> There really is much like a lasting marriage in this kind of relationship, including, but not limited to deep trust and care for each other, growing and maturing together, and accepting the risk of being jilted. Should there be a parting, it “is both painful and thankful, with each wishing well for the other.”<sup>232</sup>

The challenge, he writes, is how to help prevent the first two kinds of relationships and “how to help pastors and churches create and sustain strong and enduring marriages.”<sup>233</sup> He then offers 10 guidelines that seek to promote that goal, and how to avoid bad matches. In describing the five stages in a marriage relationship and drawing parallels to the pastor and congregation relationship, he offers advice he believes will help this goal to be achieved.<sup>234</sup>

Ray notes the importance of non-rural pastors quickly acclimating themselves to the rural setting, to gain a rural appreciation for the soil, etc. In attempting to bring some facts to bear, it is unfortunate that he quotes what have turned out to be alarmist figures, so that by the year 2000 (14 years prior to the current study), due to our supposed disregard,

-15 to 20 percent of all the species on the earth may be extinguished;

-40 percent of the remaining forest cover will be gone;

-One third of the remaining soil will be lost and 5 percent of the earth’s surface will remain arable.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 176-180.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 189, C. Dean Freudenberger, as quoted by Ray, from *Food for Tomorrow?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 15-16, 21, 27, 31.

These dire predictions have not come anywhere close to fulfillment, neither in 2000 nor today. The unfortunate result is that the reader might be less inclined to do exactly what Ray is encouraging: to develop a theology of the land as steward and caretaker, and to think and live consistently within that theology. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the pastor gain a grasp of rural issues and understand how these issues affect his people and his community or communities.

One of the best questions a rural congregation can ask itself is: “How can we find and keep the best possible pastor for our situation?” Ray advises that one of the first questions to ask a candidate is, “How many years will you commit to this church?”<sup>236</sup> Both are bold and often thought-but-not asked questions that, if answered candidly, might lead to a more sustaining ministry and improved pastoral tenure.

In the final chapter, Ray includes pointers for denominational administrators for more effective work with small (and mostly) rural congregations, noting that far too often they come in –or are called in- at stressful times and face unrealistic expectations about what ought to be done in a given situation. He makes a pitch for bivocational<sup>237</sup> ministry, noting that quite often this can bring about a longer tenure, and that we should not look upon bivocational ministry as somehow suspect, noting that every seminary ought to have a course in bivocational ministry.<sup>238</sup> His advice to seminaries is that students need to know that most of them (in all likelihood) will serve small churches, and require instruction in such.

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>237</sup> The term is used for one who holds employment in the workforce and serves in the ministry. Ray notes that bivocational ministry can force the laity to take more responsibility for the ministry of the church, and may steer the church clear from constant fundraising. He suggests there is evidence that such ministries tend toward longer pastoral tenure, and that with the number of second-career students in seminaries today, emphasis should be placed upon such bivocational ministry, noting, “Every seminary should have a course in bivocational ministry.” 208-209.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 209.

Furthermore, he advises, “They need to be counseled to leave a small church alone if they aren’t prepared to make a several-year, loving commitment to a small church.”<sup>239</sup>

These are some of the sources for small church literature that this study has reviewed.

### 3. Rural Church Literature

Since a great majority of multiple parishes seem to be in small town and rural contexts, it makes sense to explore this literature to gain a grasp of the nature of this ministry context.

*Rural Ministry – The Shape of the Renewal to Come*, is by Shannon Jung and others, all of whom are associated with the Center for Theology and Land: Rural Ministry Program, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa.

For one who expects a book on how to “do church” in a rural context, this work proves to be much deeper than expected. The authors wrestle with how the church must seek for change and justice in rural communities and beyond. The reader is given a glimpse of the pressing issues of change in rural America, from graying population to the changing face of poverty, the consolidation of schools, business, and institutions of aid and assistance, from the difficulty of obtaining pastors for rural areas to the closing of churches or the merging or blending of churches to various partnering ministry arrangements.<sup>240</sup> This the authors accomplish without overlooking or ignoring the personal salvation that is in and only through Jesus Christ and His suffering, death, and resurrection. But they recognize that the Gospel brings change and transformation; so what ought that transformation look like in a rural context? Certainly rural America will need to be re-churched, and this is an increasingly

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>240</sup> Shannon Jung et al., *Rural Ministry – The Shape of the Renewal to Come*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 29.

complex task, owing, in part, to an increasing diversity of peoples. Rural America still needs community and always will, but the forms of community must change to meet the needs of rural dwellers; the rural church will need “to be more intentional about its role in building community than it once was.”<sup>241</sup> Furthermore, there is a need for rural America “to model environmentally sustainable and renewable life,”<sup>242</sup> in providing a Biblical model of stewardship in daily life.

Borrowing from Alvin Toffler’s *The Third Wave*, the authors use his model to describe the challenge facing the church today. The primary modes of movement in each age (“wave”) are feet, freeways, and fiber optics. The first wave was the settlement of the continent; wave two was the movement of peoples to the industrialized cities, and wave three is the return of people to the rural areas, made possible by the advanced technology of our communications age.<sup>243</sup> This third wave brings with it a diversity that challenges the church, and expectations that the church has not known. Indeed, rural America is not homogenous and is becoming less so.<sup>244</sup> While first-wave churches still abound, specialized third-wave churches will target cultural subsets of the population.<sup>245</sup>

There is talk about God suffering “with us,”<sup>246</sup> as if suffering itself were sacramental, but one strains to find it plainly proclaimed that Christ (God) suffered *for* us. Furthermore, one would hope to find that it is not merely “brokenness” which requires confession,<sup>247</sup> but rather “sin,” according to I John 1:8-9, in order to walk in the glorious pardon that Christ alone gives.

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 147.

In a quote of Lester Brown on page 157, much of which is quite true, one gets the impression that the earth is at maximum carrying capacity for humans, and that no more are welcome.<sup>248</sup> In the “Re-vision for Rural America” (and Rural Ministry), the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and learning to live in Him rank third and fourth out of eight central tenets, being displaced by sustainable and renewable agriculture and rural persons being “able to enjoy the fruit of their labor” as first and second.<sup>249</sup>

Rural churches require faithful pastors who will engage their culture. Rural pastors need to purposefully avoid “being perceived as a religious professional on an upwardly mobile career track,” and instead become known as a “pastor to the rural community.”<sup>250</sup> Acknowledging that there are indeed occasions when churches will close, some good closure service ideas are provided.<sup>251</sup> Noting that lay involvement is a key ingredient in vital churches,<sup>252</sup> clergy must develop leaders and help build community.

Perhaps a summation of the authors’ call is found in this: “Rather than simply maintaining the church, rural congregations are being called to mediate God’s grace in their locations and to develop ways to nurture themselves and their communities spiritually and holistically.”<sup>253</sup>

*Preserving and Growing Rural Congregations – A Report on Rural Ministry to the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (1994) is by Eldor W. Meyer.<sup>254</sup> This study and research

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>254</sup> Meyer served as President of the Nebraska District, LCMS. Perhaps one the best features of Meyer’s study is that as an LCMS clergyman, District President, researcher, and writer, he knows the LCMS, its congregations and their ministry, and those who serve in this body can resonate with so much of what he says without having to employ a theological strainer in order to cull useful material.

project flows from the experiences of the author in rural ministry, as well as a study of 47 congregations conducted in six Midwest districts of the LCMS.

His concern is the several thousand small town and rural congregations who are facing decline. Such congregations once provided significant financial support to the LCMS and were the roots and strong heritage of this church body.

Meyer seeks “[t]o assist the national church (LCMS), its districts and congregations, in understanding, appreciating, and preserving the ministry of rural congregations” [and] to “set in motion the process that will result in a revitalization of rural congregations.” Additional objectives were to “renew spiritual growth,” “increase membership,” and to “provide a more viable, visible presence in rural and small town America.”<sup>255</sup>

Surveying the rural scene and the rural culture, which he does ably and in very readable fashion, he moves on to the rural church, describing various aspects of rural life as experienced in these situations. He notes how the rural church, until the middle of the 20th century or even a bit later, used to be the social and communication hub of the community, but this has now been replaced in many instances by the local school with its sporting events. Furthermore, for many the church has ceased to be an “extended family,” so that the church is in many places more on the periphery of community life.<sup>256</sup> “Community involvement is a must for pastor and congregation in rural communities,” he asserts.<sup>257</sup> Church esteem, commonly low in rural settings, often is reflected in both depression and apathy. Since typically the congregation has had a more robust past, the decline in rural population as well as membership, has contributed greatly to low self-esteem of congregations. Attitudes are

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<sup>255</sup> Eldor W. Meyer, *Preserving and Growing Rural Congregations – A Report on Rural Ministry to the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (1994), 4.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 23



expressed in statements such as “We are not worth much and are not important since we can’t afford a full-time pastor.”<sup>258</sup> Such situations indicate a less-than-ideal situation, affecting church esteem. This is reflected in Calls being assigned to seminary graduates who often have no desire for rural ministry, often resulting in a mismatch whereby anxiety levels grow, and the pastor remains a relatively brief time. Such congregations end up feeling used, keeping church esteem low. The reversing of low self-esteem in a congregation is no small matter, for it leaves congregations perceiving themselves mired in mediocrity, which seldom motivates.

Drawing upon the rural model of what happens when a town loses some of its services and then ceases to be a full-service town, Meyer seeks to challenge congregations to strive to be full-service congregations, serving as a “Ministry Service Center to meet the spiritual needs of its members and the Ministry Service Area”<sup>259</sup> (which he had earlier described as the immediate, local, and geographic area for ministry by the members of the Ministry Service Center).<sup>260</sup> Fewer than half of the congregations he studied had a full service ministry,<sup>261</sup> which needs to be of high quality embracing the following areas: Worship, Music ministry, Adult Bible Study, Bible Study for teenagers, Sunday School, Midweek School, Vacation Bible School, Youth Ministry, Elderly-Older Adult ministry, Outreach-Evangelism-Inactives, Caring Ministry – Fellowship, and Stewardship.

Meyer notes that it is important for a congregation to have a “rural style of pastoral leadership,”<sup>262</sup> which involves an understanding of the rural context in all its breadth and complexity. While it may not be possible for all pastors who serve in a rural context to have

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 29-43.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 44.

a rural background, they certainly may (indeed must) become learners and grow by listening and learning. He notes that rural ministry requires specialized ministry skills, and in the church we can ill afford a mismatch of skills in rural ministry any more than we can afford a mismatch of ministry skills in foreign missions, black ministry, inner city, or other areas merely for the purpose of “expedient placement” so that a candidate may have a Call.<sup>263</sup> Brief pastoral tenures help keep church self-esteem low, as congregations feel used.<sup>264</sup> He calls for a process to better identify seminary students who have the giftedness (as well as the family ability to adapt) for rural ministry. Rural style of pastoral leadership was just the first of eight special features he identifies that will assist a congregation in having an effective ministry.<sup>265</sup>

Of seven parish models for ministry listed, of particular interest to the current study are his comments on multiple parishes and the pastoral leadership required.<sup>266</sup> Precisely because he demonstrates such insight –gained in an LCMS context- into multiple parish ministry, and because his insightful comments would otherwise lie in obscurity, they are reproduced here.

Regarding dual and multiple parish arrangements, he writes,

A common parish model in rural ministry is the dual and multiple parish. A working document of agreement by the congregations involved is a necessity. This agreement, subject to annual review, states the process and procedure in determining working arrangements, salary, times of service, and the responsibilities of the pastor in dividing his time in giving leadership to the ministry. Congregations in the multiple parish normally desire and request separate identities...[unity] and focus of ministry are hard to maintain with multiple locations and service areas.<sup>267</sup>

Regarding pastoral service in multiple parish arrangements, he says,

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>265</sup> The other seven are identified and discussed at length, pp 44-51.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

Pastors of multiple parishes need special gifts for ministry such as patience, self-discipline, dividing their time, and prioritizing ministry needs. They need a high level of commitment and desire to serve a multiple rural congregation parish. The complexity of the multiple parish can be a dangerous haven for a pastor who is a little lazy, because he can hide behind the many tasks in a multiple congregation [parish] and get by with doing very little. Very few members will question him if they believe he is at the other congregation making calls or attending meetings. Normally the ministry in this kind of situation is maintenance. There certainly are pastors who have served a dual parish successfully throughout their ministries and plan to continue such service.<sup>268</sup>

Regarding the predominant reason for multiple parish arrangements, Meyer says,

Congregations enter into a multiple parish arrangement for several reasons, but the most frequent one is financial. Members feel they can't afford a full-time pastor only for themselves. Also, joining a multiple parish gives a promise of new vitality for a small congregation [i.e., by freeing up finances]. Sometimes a small congregation feels trapped in rural America and has no other arrangement for ministry, but has a number of built-in features and limitations such as requiring additional lay involvement to avoid becoming a mere survivor. Normally a multiple congregation parish moves into a maintenance mode and can operate this way for years. Presently the usual arrangement is a dual parish; however, in the future three or more congregations will link together.

Several special challenges exist for multiple-congregation parishes. Quality full service ministry is essential, individually or jointly, in a combined Ministry Service Area. Quality ministry in all areas which enhances spiritual and numerical growth may require additional staff- a lay minister, director of Christian education, deaconess, parish nurse, a part-time retired clergy or lay person. Whatever meets the needs of the Ministry Service Area should be explored.<sup>269</sup>

Meyer challenges rural congregations to commit themselves to revitalization, warning that this is no easy decision, and it will require “much effort, energy, and commitment.”<sup>270</sup> He also says that “urgency” is the key word in sharing the Gospel in a rural context, for farmers know what it is to feel a sense of urgency. And nothing is more urgent than the lost, coming to know Jesus their Savior.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 64.

In the Appendix (Exhibits), Meyer provides a number of helpful inventories to assist a congregation to conduct a thorough self-examination for the purpose of improving their ministry with the goal of providing Full Service Ministry.

*The Lord's Harvest and the Rural Church*, by Kent R. Hunter<sup>272</sup> contributes to the current study. After tackling the confusion over the term rural, Hunter notes that it is not necessarily helpful to think in terms of size of congregation, but rather to think according to mind-set or lifestyle. Noting from the dictionary that the term “open country” has been the traditional way to describe a rural church, he instead offers a better definition: “A rural church is a congregation of Christian people who live an agriculturally-oriented lifestyle.”<sup>273</sup> Rather than rural being a location, he maintains that “[r]ural is a mindset. It is a way of life...[that] carries with it characteristics that have an enormous impact on a Christian church. It helps describe not only what people think, but how they think – how they perceive reality. It helps to describe how they perceive their church.”<sup>274</sup> And size is not necessarily a qualifier for a rural church by his definition.

Many of the characteristics of rural churches are described in chapter 2, with much insightful observation enabling the outsider to understand more fully how the rural church begs to be better understood by those on the outside. In chapter 3, Hunter describes distinct types of rural churches (of which he identifies ten distinctly different church types, although one might argue that a few are no longer rural by his own definition), enabling the reader to see how diverse even rural churches are, as well as how they are affected by change.

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<sup>272</sup> Hunter is a clergyman on the roster of the LCMS, serving as pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, and also as the leader of the Church Growth Center of Corunna, Indiana, at the time of publication.

<sup>273</sup> Kent R. Hunter, *The Lord's Harvest and the Rural Church* (Kansas City, MO, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1993), 16.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

Church self-image (or self-esteem), which “affects the health and vitality of a church,”<sup>275</sup> is addressed in a chapter solely devoted to the issue, titled, “Healing the Church’s Wounded Personality” (Chapter 4). Here Hunter identifies five causal factors, among them denominational default (a bias in programming and publications toward larger non-rural communities and larger churches), pastors (looking at a smaller, rural parish[-es] as a stepping stone to something bigger, failure to become culturally acclimated to the rural church and its environment), and brief pastorates (resulting in longer –and more frequent- vacancies) among other concerns.<sup>276</sup> In his concern to offer ways to nurture self-esteem in the (rural) church, he offers five suggestions,<sup>277</sup> topped off by “building an edifying climate” and finding/concentrating upon strengths already present in the congregation, and being affirming about them.

Growth in God’s Word is top priority for developing health and vitality in the rural church, says Hunter. Necessary keys to developing a church with a vital ongoing program of the study of God’s Word involves “priorities, attitudes, and commitment.”<sup>278</sup> This is no instant program, but a continually growing conviction that this matters more than all else. He also notes the need to grow together (fellowship, which is no longer automatic in our busy world), as well as the need to grow out and grow more. Interestingly, he notes that the ministry area of the average church “can be defined by drawing a boundary that represents 12 to 15 minutes traveling time from the church. In the rural area this can be expanded to 20 minutes because people are accustomed to traveling longer distances.”<sup>279</sup> He then offers

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 56-60.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 60-64.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 70. In the locale of the churches of this study, this length of drive (twenty minutes or less) would put the members of Grace, Uniontown within driving distance to at least 9 other LCMS congregations (including Zion, Longtown, with whom they are in partnership). As people exercise their choice this far (and beyond), all

suggestions to removing roadblocks to growth, each of which requires care and deliberateness, but has the potential to open eyes of the congregants to the opportunities God has placed around them.

In a chapter titled “The Rural Pastor,” Hunter describes the rural placement of a pastor and wife who are from a significant urban area, and much of the learning they undergo as they learn about rural ministry up close. “Pastors have tremendous power in the congregation,”<sup>280</sup> he notes, and gives examples of how pastoral leadership can be infectious for good or quite the opposite. As to the inaccurate assumptions that a large number of seminarians carry with them out into the field (many into rural placements), he identifies six. They are (here listed without explanation):

1. Rural is less valuable, less exciting, less important than suburban, small town, or urban.
2. No long-term growth is possible.
3. Temporary tenure is the rule.
4. Big is better.
5. Rural is a nice place to retire.
6. Rural ministry is for the pastor who can’t cut it elsewhere.<sup>281</sup>

Additionally, he notes at least 6 aspects or directives that fall to the pastoral leadership in the rural congregation that bear consideration. These include vision casting (helping them to see who they are in Christ, and the opportunities for mission and ministry that exist); looking beyond the church itself (and how to be effective in witness); seeing the community (for the purpose of diagnosing how best to serve); setting goals for growth (to aim at something and to be able to measure effect); cheerleading (“One of the key roles of a

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sense of “parish” and local congregational loyalty begins to vanish. This is a concern to all, or at least it ought to be.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 91-93.

pastor as leader is to build the corporate self-esteem of the congregation.”); and being in for the long haul (pastoral tenure).<sup>282</sup>

For those who might find themselves in a church in a declining population area with no seeming future for the church, he identifies 8 responsibilities for the pastoral leader in preparing the congregation for what might be described as death “with dignity.” This type of ministry, Hunter says, involves:

1. Removing guilt (about things that cannot be changed).
2. Committing to ministry as long as possible (usually a financial issue).
3. Facing reality (good use versus abuse of resources).
4. Building a healthy sense of pride (of their ministry, heritage and history).
5. Considering long-range alternatives.
6. Having a homecoming party (a celebratory look back with thanksgiving).
7. Holding a going out of business sale (all the resources belong to God).
8. Helping the church prepare a spiritual will (that promotes mission locally or beyond).<sup>283</sup>

The importance of the worship experience merits a chapter, with the reminder of what this means for those who gather. This is written so that the non-rural member (likely a pastor who reads Hunter) might more fully understand and appreciate the importance of the Sunday experience from the perspective of the congregation. The importance of various strategies for inviting people is noted, as is the importance of connecting with people by way of visit or phone call as opposed to letter. The less formal setting of the rural church might call for more announcements to be given verbally rather than in writing (“less church-to-people-oriented and more people-to-people-oriented”).<sup>284</sup> Suggestions for capitalizing on the worship experience by inviting, bringing, becoming visitor-sensitive, and the need for follow-up round out the chapter.

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 103-105.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 111.

The importance of understanding finances from the rural church's perspective is imperative. Simply put, there are a good many things about financial stewardship that someone who has not grown up rural cannot possibly understand, and here Hunter offers insight.

*The Rural Church* by Hassinger, Holik, and Bensen<sup>285</sup> is a bit dated [1988], however, it is worthy of inclusion because the authors surveyed rural churches (“a rural church is one located in a village of less than 2,500 population or in the open country”) in Missouri,<sup>286</sup> in a truly unique study. “The churches in 99 rural townships were studied in 1952, restudied in 1967, and the whole process replicated in 1982.”<sup>287</sup> All three surveys used the same sample of townships, and the data was collected by personal interviews with either the minister (341 of them),<sup>288</sup> or a church officer if the minister were unavailable.<sup>289</sup> The authors note that such a longitudinal study has no “parallel in either urban or rural areas, and offers scores of insights into the nature, life, and ministry of the rural church.”<sup>290</sup> “The documentation of the survival of rural churches and an explanation for it is the goal of our study.”<sup>291</sup> The sampling of churches was divided between mainline and non-mainline churches (noting that, curiously, they operate from different models with regards to resources and programs).<sup>292</sup>

The authors describe the settlement of Missouri in dealing with the historical context, noting that “[c]haracteristics of the present religious landscape are greatly enhanced by the

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<sup>285</sup> At the writing, Edward W. Hassinger was professor of Rural Sociology at the University of Missouri, Columbia; John S. Holik was associate professor emeritus, Department of Rural Sociology at the University of Missouri in Columbia; and J. Kenneth Bensen was professor of Sociology and chairman of the Department of Sociology, University of Missouri. (Book jacket reverse)

<sup>286</sup> Edward W. Hassinger, John S. Holik, and J. Kenneth Bensen, *The Rural Church* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1988), 42.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.



frontier experience.”<sup>293</sup> They then go on to describe the waves and movements of settlement in the state and their religious influences, a tremendous help to understanding Missouri in the current day.

Missouri consists of three distinct rural social areas, namely the Commercial Agricultural Area, the Ozarks, and the Missouri Bootheel. The first of these, “north of the Missouri River and extending down the western side of the state is typical of the Midwest in settlement patterns and farming operations.”<sup>294</sup> The Ozark region “has marginal agriculture, and farmers there have long depended on off-farm employment,”<sup>295</sup> and, the authors note, is not really “hillbilly” as is often thought. “The Missouri Bootheel, in the southeast corner of the state, is rich river-bottom land where cotton, corn, wheat, and soybeans are main cash crops.”<sup>296</sup>

As the authors note, “The purpose of placing Missouri on the national religious landscape” is that Missouri is viewed as typical of many other parts of North America, and to “assure our readers that findings from this research on the rural church have application beyond that state’s boundaries.”<sup>297</sup> Thus one gets a factual glimpse at the rural church over time in the very state in which the current study of rural churches is being conducted. This explains the stated purpose of the authors: “We think...that practitioners should enter the rural church field as informed as possible about rural society and the role of the church in it.”<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 33. It is an unfortunate error that the authors note the German-Lutheran colony from which grew the LCMS, but they claim it was northwest of St. Louis, in Perry [County, the location of the current study], rather than southeast, as is the case.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 168.

Certainly one notes that the rural church is tenacious and quite self-sufficient.<sup>299</sup> While the urbanization of rural society leads to such things as the closure and consolidation of schools, medical facilities, or businesses, the church does not follow this trend. “Tradition and collective memory are important elements in many congregations; it would be difficult to understand the survival of some small congregations without resorting to these factors.”<sup>300</sup> Over the three decades, only six percent fewer congregations existed in 1982 than in 1952. There were closures and there were additions, and a noticeable shift from the open country to larger villages.<sup>301</sup>

The tremendous diversity found among rural churches (in size, history, internal organization, leadership, community relationships, and more) demolish any mythical idea that there is something called a rural church, for there are indeed many rural churches, none the same.<sup>302</sup> Rural churches, for the most part, remain locally-oriented and independent, and are composed of “primary groups” (to use sociological jargon), “small face-to-face groups whose members relate to one another in a whole range of settings and are bonded by affective relationships;” primary groups thrive on tradition and group memory and attend to the needs of their members.<sup>303</sup>

*The Continuation of the Small Rural Church*, a Doctor of Ministry Thesis by Robert W. Holaday (2002) is a qualitative analysis case study examining two rural Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod congregations in north Texas who share a pastor.

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 148; “A major finding of this study is the stability in the number of churches in rural Missouri when charted over a thirty-year period.”

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 148-149.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 159-160.

The congregations had recently joined together in their finances to form a dual parish as a way for them to continue, and the researcher sought to gain through interviews of members and knowledgeable denominational officials a perspective on the past, present, and future continuation of the churches. The study is significant because there are many dual or multiple parishes within the LCMS, and a great many more within Protestantism in North America, not to mention a significant number within Roman Catholicism, although their governance is quite different. It was also significant for seminary “and denominational officials who may need to know more about the rural church”<sup>304</sup> (not to mention knowing more about the participants in a dual- or multi-parish partnership). It may well assist those unfamiliar with rural ministry characteristics to understand some of the factors that lead to the tenacity and persistence of the rural church. He also offers numerous thoughtful suggestions for further study that might help illumine the culture and nature of small, rural churches, and especially those of a recently-formed partnership.

#### 4. Pastoral Change and Tenure Literature

Because pastoral tenure is often shorter in rural and small churches,<sup>305</sup> the following texts were included to round out an understanding of much of what takes place in the termination of one pastorate and the commencement of the next, and how such a change can be a time of opportunity in the life of a congregation.

*A Change of Pastors* by Loren Mead is a revised and updated edition of *Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors*, originally published by the Alban Institute in 1986. Mead writes so as to inform and prepare lay leaders for much of what typically (and

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<sup>304</sup> Robert W. Holaday, *The Continuation of the Small Rural Church* (St. Louis, MO: Covenant Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Thesis, 2002), 154.

<sup>305</sup> As cited in Meyer, 24; Schaller, 97-98, 181; Ray, 175, 196, 215; Hunter, 57-58; and Jung, et. al., 29, 198.

untypically) can be expected to occur when a congregation loses its pastor, regardless of the cause. The book serves as a resource to pastors as well as denominational officials of every level. When transition happens, life changes, he asserts, and the challenge in facing a change of pastors is to funnel the process with wise procedures that lead to positive change.<sup>306</sup> Mead brings decades of experience both as pastor and consultant in order to bring order and sense to both the departure and farewell process, approaching the interim process with optimism and purpose, and adding well-thought-out steps to procuring a pastor. Much guidance is provided for the search committee, as well as with regards to the role and importance and frequent need for an interim pastor. But he does not stop there, for he also ties in steps that help the congregation and newly-installed pastor get off to a good start, with healthy interaction between clergy and leaders.

For those denominational officials who read the book, Mead notes that their effort in procuring a suitable pastor for a congregation is their best-spent time, since it will shape the congregations well into the future.<sup>307</sup>

No pastor will last forever in a congregation, so Mead has provided a useful tool (with additional resources) to enable the wisely-led congregation to face pastoral transition and the change it will bring with better preparation, and to harness such change for good.

*Running Through the Thistles: terminating a ministerial relationship with a parish* by Roy M. Oswald. In this monograph, Oswald notes similarities between the termination of a pastorate and death. Both manifest the need to grieve, although both can be done in a manner that makes healthy grieving difficult, and subsequent living for the survivors difficult as well.

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<sup>306</sup> Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastors* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005), 92.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

Oswald sought to understand what makes for a healthful termination process, and learned that when congregations have not experienced a good termination process, they carried “unresolved work with them when new pastoral leadership arrived on the scene.”<sup>308</sup> It has been observed that some clergy seem to run full speed through the closure of a ministry, in effect, not giving full attention to the most painful parts of that experience. In so doing, unexpressed feelings and emotions do not get resolved and both clergy and congregation retain them after the departure, an unhealthy process. In order to understand the parting process, he studied seven military chaplains (who must often deal with the closure process throughout their careers). Presuming that Army chaplains have a variety of styles, he sought to learn why some have termination styles that “serve to enhance the ministry of these chaplains, bringing a period of service to a meaningful conclusion,” while others seemed to have a disengaging style that served “only to diminish the overall effectiveness of a period of ministry, bringing it to an unsatisfactory conclusion.”<sup>309</sup> Oswald and his team found that “each chaplain’s termination style remains basically the same throughout his career as a chaplain.”<sup>310</sup>

Oswald identifies four termination tasks (borrowed from Oswald’s friend and colleague at the Alban institute, John Fletcher, who studied terminally ill patients and identified four key closure tasks) and then added a fifth termination task that makes for a healthy closure of a ministry. He notes that it is important not to be passive, but rather to take control of the situation when a resignation (or termination date) has been announced. First, this is a time to finish strong, to say proper goodbyes, either by visit, telephone, or letter to both individuals and groups. Second, this is also a time to get your affairs in order

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<sup>308</sup> Roy M. Oswald, *Running Through the Thistles* (Alban Institute, 1978; reprinted 2001), 3.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

and not leave a jumbled mess in the wake of a departure. Third, it is important to let go of old grudges. Fourth, it is also a time to say “Thank You.” And lastly (beyond these first four that parallel what Fletcher identified in the terminally ill patients), it is important to be straight and clear about the reasons for leaving. Lay people normally “carry a lot of sadness and guilt when their pastor leaves.”<sup>311</sup> Honesty and transparency about reasons for departure may well alleviate guilt, self-doubt, and feelings of emptiness or loneliness.

In summation, Oswald proposes that there are two basic approaches to termination of a ministry. One might be called a “people-oriented approach,” where feelings are shared and hopes and disappointments are acknowledged in honesty. The other might be termed a “task-oriented approach,” in which one methodically (indeed, almost disengagingly) checks off the list of what must be done to conclude one’s service position. According to Oswald, the latter appears to be the more popular method of termination.<sup>312</sup> It is also the latter that fails to bring a period of service to a meaningful conclusion, while the former style serves to enhance the ministry and bring the period of service to a meaningful conclusion.

Since smaller congregations and dual, joint, and multi-parish settings seem to experience significant pastoral termination (it will simply be a fact of life for them), careful attention ought to be given as to how to shepherd or guide clergy through the process in the most helpful manner possible.

Precisely because of typically shorter pastoral tenure and accompanying termination of ministry, the current study of multiple parish rural congregations would be incomplete without consideration of the phenomenon of termination of ministry and change of pastors as a part of the life of multiple parish congregations.

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 5.

### **C. Summary**

In summary, there were unique factors converging in the lives of two congregations as well as within the LCMS at the time of the birthing of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish. This chapter has examined more fully the unique historical context of the 51-plus year partnership of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish.

This chapter has also explored literature related to multiple-parish settings, as well as related additional factors (small congregations, and small town and rural congregations, as well as pastoral change and tenure) that will help the reader understand the unique circumstances and interrelatedness of factors involved in multi-parish ministry, and the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish in particular.

The next chapter will describe the design and implementation of such a study that might help these congregations to gain clarity as to the vision they have of themselves and of their shared partnership.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

This chapter seeks to address the original problem, stated as:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

When the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish was formed, it was done so with the reminder that it was more likely for two congregations together to have a pastor than for either of them (or both, for that matter!) to have a pastor, especially with the decline in seminary graduates at the time of their vacancy, as described in the previous chapter. No one seemed to explore the question “Do we like this?” for it was simply a matter of common agreement that the new partnership<sup>313</sup> might be for the best.

Regardless of what was thought at the time of the idea to join two congregations under the services of one pastor, a half-century has passed. By way of analogy, when one enters a tunnel in daytime, it is possible to look back into the daylight. But go far enough, or simply round a bend, and the entry point is no longer in view. In the same way, with the

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<sup>313</sup> This study employs the word “partnership,” but curiously the Joint Parish Guidelines do not employ the term. Yet what they have established together fits precisely the term, as defined in *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, (Tenth Edition), 846: partnership – 1. “the state of being a partner;” 2a. “a legal relation existing between two or more persons contractually associated as joint principals in a business;” as well as: 3. “a relationship resembling a legal partnership and usually involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities.” Each of these definitions apply as a result of the Joint Parish Guidelines, to which each congregation has pledged commitment. The researcher realizes that the very employment of the terms “partner/partners/partnership” may well seem new to some participants, even though that is what they have been. Might the use of this term and concept enhance their life together?



passage of time and the entry into glory of so many of those who were around at the founding of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership, the point at which the tunnel was entered (the various perceptions, understandings, and valuations) is no longer plain. A lot of change has come and gone, and it is important to understand the vision (view, perspective) members have today of their own congregations and of the partnership these congregations share by hearing the members speak of it through their own voices. That is what this study seeks to do.

The multiple church parish, as has been observed through the literature review, is a unique blend of small church (definition a bit flexible), quite often with characteristics of rural churches. The mere mention of rural churches in the same breath with small churches seems to evoke generalities, but no congregation is a “generality,” and certainly no partnership may be generalized. It matters nothing how the members of any other multiple church parish understand or value their partnership, for this study seeks to know better the perception and valuation of the partnership of these two unique congregations. As was noted in the previous chapter, these congregations, for reasons embedded in their own history, are unique unto themselves. For this reason, a study design has been selected which can help the members of the partnership as well as the researcher to gain increasing clarity as to the vision they have of themselves and of the partnership they share.

The study was composed of two distinct types of data gathering. Quantitative data regarding the identified problem was gathered by means of a Partner Questionnaire, primarily composed of Likert-scale questions arranged around four basic aspects or categories of the existence and partnership of these Lutheran congregations. Qualitative data was gathered by means of the convening of two focus groups, one from each congregation,

whose task it was to wrestle with selected questions. These focus groups were recorded in order to produce a transcript included in this study. (Appendix 24 is the Grace focus group transcript, and Appendix 25 is the Zion focus group transcript.)

The data was digested by the pastor (in this case, the researcher), congregational chairmen, elders, and joint parish officers. The data was then prepared for presentation to the members of the congregations in events called “Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops” (GPAW), held July 27 and August 3. Attendees had more opportunity to discuss some key questions at this time (as suggested by the data digestion team), as well as to offer observations. The event concluded by offering attendees an opportunity to indicate whether they found this to be a useful awareness tool, by means of an evaluation sheet, and allowed them the opportunity to identify something they learned either new or important.

Each of these components will now be looked at with more specificity: The Partner Questionnaire, the focus groups, the data-digestion group, and the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop.

#### **A. The Partner Questionnaire: offered to all communicant members**

The Partner Questionnaire was developed by the researcher over a length of time in pondering some of the unique questions and issues that might help the congregations to understand themselves and their partnership together. Certainly the literature review served as an influence as questions were drawn up, rephrased, set aside in favor of still others, or reconsidered. When the final form was settled upon, it was submitted electronically to the worker at the Missouri District office of the LCMS who had agreed to assist by formatting it so that it could be entered into a database survey program. When this was done, it was sent

back electronically, and was then printed, proofed, and sent on electronically to a local print shop.

The researcher provided special pencils (black, with gold lettering) for the occasion imprinted with the following in three lines: “Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish / Partners in the Gospel / Established in 1963.” These were ordered through the local print shop which printed the questionnaires.

The elders and two volunteers took the questionnaire ahead of time, administered by the researcher. One family (two members) by their own request, having commitments that prevented their attendance both weekends, took it on the evening of May 18<sup>th</sup>, administered by the researcher, and an elder sealed them into a separate envelope for inclusion with the mailing.

In addition, the two volunteers to whom the Partner Questionnaire was administered ahead of time (under the administration of the researcher) visited with homebound members or those in nursing homes who wished to take the questionnaire, for their participation was not to be excluded simply by their mobility, health, or residence issues. A Partner Questionnaire was offered any person or persons who had been participating in the life of the congregation prior to their inability to attend, since they ordinarily would have been present for such an occasion. This accounted for eight (8) members, four from each congregation. No effort was made to do so for those who were inactive or absent by their own choice. The remainder of the Partner Questionnaires were all completed in conjunction with one of two worship opportunities. The goal was to have them taken and completed on site.

The Partner Questionnaire was the most broadly-based data gathering tool. It was offered to the communicant members of the congregations after worship services on May 11

and May 18, 2014. These dates were selected for a number of reasons, in order to find two successive Sundays while avoiding certain occasions (an off-site mission festival, Easter, Confirmation, Church Supper at Grace, Memorial Day weekend) where attendance might be in question or it may have been problematic to administer the Partner Questionnaire. The selection of these dates coincided, incidentally, with the date that most certainly can be identified as the anniversary, or founding date, of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, namely, May 12 [1963].<sup>314</sup>

Those in attendance at worship were reminded that after the service, which was abbreviated to accommodate this occasion, communicant members would have the opportunity to give their input by completing the questionnaire merely by remaining in the sanctuary. For those wishing to not do so, or for non-members or children, there was the opportunity to depart.

The ushers assisted in handing out sharpened pencils, as well as the questionnaires. An elder<sup>315</sup> read a brief introduction (included as Appendix 14) and then read the text of the questionnaire, pausing to allow for approximately five seconds to respond to each question. Participants were told they would have an opportunity to revisit any responses about which they were uncertain or failed to answer the first time through. For any member who began the questionnaire and then decided for whatever reason against completion and submission, there was an opportunity to void one's questionnaire. The researcher, with a congregational roster of both congregations, noted who had remained in the sanctuary for the questionnaire. (After week one of the Questionnaires, the rosters were photocopied so that week two's tally

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<sup>314</sup> May 12 was the date of the first Call meeting as chronicled in the Joint Voters' minutes, May 12, 1963.

<sup>315</sup> The researcher would prefer to do this himself, but this is a multi-church parish, and the next service must go on as usual!

might be compared with week one for notation purposes, primarily to guard against duplicate participation, of which there was none.)

The Questionnaires were gathered upon completion by the ushers and elders, who then placed them into a pre-addressed postal carrier and sealed them for the purpose of sending them to the Missouri District office of the LCMS, where a worker had agreed to enter the data utilizing Survey Monkey software. This procedure kept the Questionnaires from coming into contact with (and out of the possession of) the researcher, in order to protect the validity and usefulness of the responses.

For whatever reason, the first week saw an alarmingly few of those present for worship remain to complete the Partner Questionnaire. Only 33 out of 103 present at Grace remained to do so; at Zion, 17 out of 52 did so. Roughly two-thirds of those who were present did not remain to complete the Partner Questionnaire. A participation goal had neither been set nor announced, and from the outset it was not known as to what degree a voluntary participation might accomplish. This left concern as to whether there was going to be enough participation the second week to produce valid and useful data. After consideration of this matter, a special announcement was composed for the close of worship the second Sunday to encourage and invite participation, the text of which is found in Appendix 17.

The second week, a goodly number remained and completed the Partner Questionnaire, so that in total, 81 Grace members and 33 Zion members completed the Questionnaire, for a total of 114 participants. As noted, this was done two successive Sundays. This completed the collection of the quantitative data.

On the two days following the completion of the Partner Questionnaires the focus groups were held, for Grace first, and then for Zion. By these two focus groups, qualitative data was gathered. More information about the focus groups will follow, but first a closer look at the Partner Questionnaire is in order.

The questions for the Partner Questionnaire fell beneath four headings. Those headings were:

Perceptions Regarding One's **Own Congregation** (OC);  
Awareness of the **Partnership Agreement** (PA) by which the Partnership functions;  
**Pastoral Office** (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership; and  
**Perceptions** regarding the **Partnership** (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish.

The questionnaire now follows, with brief comments by the researcher in italics following each item explaining why this question was chosen and what value it offers to the project as a whole. Explanations appear in *italics*. The actual Partner Questionnaire as formatted by the print shop appears in Appendix 16.

### Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish: Partner Questionnaire

*Please Circle your responses*

I am a member of (select one):      Grace      Zion

*Clearly, it is necessary to determine to which congregation this set of data pertains.*

I reside how far from my church?    Less than 3 miles    3 to 5 miles    6 miles or more

*Is this a community church or a commuter church? Without identifying it, one cannot address certain concerns. Three miles is rather arbitrary, but in this setting it is a rather telling number, given the close proximity of other LCMS congregations.*

The church I belong to is the closest Lutheran Church to my home.      Yes    No

*While the obvious answer in earlier generations was in the affirmative, it will be interesting to see what this looks like today. Might it reveal that these congregations, too, are part of a consumer-oriented society, and removed from a “local parish” mentality? Under what conditions might these congregations seek to influence the choice of where people attend, and to what distance might these efforts reasonably extend?*

Circle your current age category.      Under 40.      40 or older.

*The purpose of this question is to sort out those who may have had a memory of the formation of the Joint Parish, from those who came of age long after it was a settled fact. Additionally, while it is a bit of an arbitrary age, it may also help reveal whether age distribution above or below this age matters on certain questions. Furthermore, it might be used to consider how grayed the congregations are, and what need exists (or will exist) to explore senior ministry opportunities.*

Which selection best describes your spiritual journey and association with this congregation?

- Born here and have never left
- Born here – moved away – and returned
- Transferred here from another LCMS congregation
- Came to the church by some other way—  
(Adult Baptism, Adult Confirmation, Reaffirmation of Faith)

*While the pastor may have access to such data, it has never been examined for the whole of the congregations to see and consider. Are they who they think they are? How frequent –or rare- is the fourth item, which certainly represents some of the “mission work” of their generation? Might the responses, coupled with recent demographic data, cause them to think differently about their community and their role in it?*

How long have you been a member here?

- Twenty or more years
- 11-19 years
- 0-10 years

*No hard facts on this have ever been shared, so it may be interesting to see this.*

Perceptions Regarding One's Own Congregation (OC) (Which best describes your thinking?)

OC-1. The best way to solve most decisions is to let a committee study it and make recommendations. Strongly agree Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree

*This question seeks to discern whether the respondent thinks like larger churches, organizationally, or prefers the decision-making style of a smaller church.<sup>316</sup>*

OC-2. The best way to solve most decisions lies in airing it out among us all and arriving at a consensus. Strongly agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly disagree

*This procedural question helps to determine how people view their congregation: is it a small church or an "organization"?<sup>317</sup>*

OC-3. Our congregation needs more fellowship/togetherness events. Strongly agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly disagree

*This, coupled with the age of the respondent, might reveal whether a need for this is perceived, and to target age groups. This is for the purpose of discerning whether such events are perceived as beneficial, and whether or not more energy ought to be invested in such events. These are typically the "doors" by which unchurched and de-churched people enter and/or re-enter.*

OC-4. What happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life. Strongly agree Agree Uncertain Disagree Strongly disagree

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<sup>316</sup> Schaller, 34-35.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.



*Do the participants recognize Word and Sacrament ministry to be the very heart and core of congregational existence, the very heart of the life of the congregation, and the purpose for which God has instituted the Office of the Ministry in their midst?*

OC-5. How likely am I to attend a special service (Advent, Lent, Ascension)...at my OWN congregation?      Always      Very likely      Unsure      Not likely      Never

*Since these services are not typically robustly-attended, curiosity exists as to what the expectation should be, based upon current thinking. What ought the expectations be, based upon submitted data?*

OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us.  
   Strongly agree    Agree    Uncertain    Disagree    Strongly disagree

*This is to discern if the respondents are optimistic about the future of the congregation or somewhat resigned to decline. This enters into the arena of a congregation's self-image<sup>318</sup> and what, if anything, to do in elevating it.*

OC-7. Which best describes my commitment to my congregation?  
Till death parts us / strongly committed / committed / as long as things are going OK / not sure

*How committed do the members see themselves? With this question, responses can be quantified, and members may obtain a feel for the general strength of commitment of the members to their congregation.*

OC-8. This congregation is welcoming to new members, visitors, and strangers.  
   Strongly agree    Agree    Uncertain    Disagree    Strongly disagree

*Do "insiders" generally view our congregation as a vibrant place of hope and kinship? And might "outsiders" agree - or differ?*

OC-9. How do you describe your congregation in the past ten years:  
   Growing robustly      slow growth      steady      decline      rapid decline

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<sup>318</sup> Schaller, 59-60; and Meyer, 21; Schaller, as quoted in Ray, 141; Ray, 108.

*The congregational numbers will be shared at the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop, however, this question seeks to obtain the prevailing perception about one's congregation.*

OC-10. I think the members of my congregation value highly our Joint Parish Partnership.  
Agree strongly      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Disagree strongly

*This is an opportunity to obtain a "read" as to how the respondent believes his or her fellow members value the partnership.*

Awareness of the **Partnership Agreement** (PA) by which the Partnership Functions<sup>319</sup>

PA-1. The Partnership exists so each congregation may retain its separate identity and function.  
Agree Strongly      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This is an agreed-upon point of the parish partnership structure, and was from the outset. Is this understood, and is this the conviction of the participants?*

PA-2. The service time annual switch –a feature of fairness- is important to maintain.  
Agree Strongly      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This was seen as important in the formative days, as the earlier service was the desired service. Is this preference for the earlier service still present? The annual switch was a concession, that neither congregation be denied the earlier service.*

PA-3. I have read the Joint Parish Guidelines in the last--  
3 years      5 years      Never

PA-4. The Joint Parish Guidelines are supposed to be reviewed annually.  
True      False      Don't know

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<sup>319</sup> The Joint Parish Guidelines is the "Partnership Agreement" of which this speaks. This agreement, obligatory and legal, is the foundation upon which this association of two congregations rests (for the purpose of retaining their individual autonomy while sharing a pastor). What awareness have the participants of it? Granted, not all (perhaps only a few) may be interested in this, but the study at the outset at least seeks to discern what awareness exists.

*True, and this is a duty required of the Joint Council when it meets in preparation for the annual Joint Voters' meeting. ( Grace Zion Joint Parish Guidelines, 2014, 1. B. 8.)*

PA-5. The Joint Voters is the authoritative body by which a pastor is Called.  
True False Don't know

*True, and according to the Guidelines, the Joint Council shall function as the Call Committee.*

PA-6. Only Voting members from each congregation comprise the Joint Voters.  
True False Don't know

*True, according to the Guidelines ("Parish Structure", item B).*

PA-7. The Joint Parish Guidelines allow for joint societies to be formed in our midst.  
True False Don't know

*True, and guiding policy about such are listed under "Auxiliary Organizations" in the Guidelines.*

PA-8. As a member of G/Z, I have no particular obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership.  
True False Don't know

*Interesting question, since this is a part of a Questionnaire being taken by communicant members (all of whom are eligible to become Voting members of their respective congregation, and thus, also become eligible to attend the Joint Voters to direct the affairs of the Joint Parish). Have they an obligation? How do they see it?*

PA-9. The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish treasury is funded equally by both congregations.

True False Don't know

*The treasury is funded from each congregation using communicant membership numbers and establishing a percentage contribution from each congregation proportionately. As a member pointed out to the researcher afterward, this percentage can be seen as "equality." If other members saw it this way, then the question was poorly*

worded. Its goal was to see if people erroneously thought each congregation contributed an equal amount into the treasury.

PA-10. Whose job is it, properly speaking, to prepare the annual Joint Parish budget?  
Elders            Treasurer            Joint Council            Other            Don't know

*Properly speaking, this is a duty of the Joint Council. ("Parish organization" 1. B. 7.)*

### **Pastoral Office (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership**

PO-1. It is important that there be a regular, Pastor-led Bible Class in my congregation each year.

Agree Strongly            Agree    Undecided            Disagree            Strongly Disagree

*"The inability of the pastor to be present during the church school hour is considered one of the major disadvantages of the circuit [i.e., the multi-parish partnership]."<sup>320</sup> This question seeks to identify how strong a need is felt among the congregations for this. Since pastor-led Bible study occurs every other year with regularity on Sunday mornings, what change might be called for in keeping with what these responses reveal? What new initiatives might be undertaken in response to sentiment expressed with this statement?*

PO-2. Greet-time with Pastor after worship is crucial.

Agree Strongly            Agree    Undecided            Disagree            Strongly Disagree

*A multi-parish partnership may often seem heinously-designed to keep the Pastor busiest when people are gathered establishing, maintaining, and building relationships.<sup>321</sup>*

*The after-service greet time with the pastor is a very important time when certain ministry needs or information is often obtained which would otherwise not be shared. This is prime time to learn about an upcoming surgery, test, appointment, etc., and to offer pastoral compassion as well as a word of encouragement, and to make a note for prayer. Such casual*

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<sup>320</sup> Wilson, 47.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 32.

*times of visitation allow the possibility to connect personally, to learn who has had a job change, etc. The pastor who misses this will grow out of touch and distant from his flock, unless other suitable avenues are available to grant him as much face time, on a weekly basis, which is unlikely.*

*Pastors in multi-church settings recognize this,<sup>322</sup> and wish that greet-time not be rushed or omitted from the worship schedule. Do the participants feel this way? Is there a need to educate about this so that these most vital “ministry minutes” not be squeezed in the interest of a more compacted worship schedule? According to the Joint Parish Guidelines, an hour and a half is stated to be the minimum spacing for worship service start times (“Time of Services,” B. 1.); it is up to the pastor to make this work, no matter what.*

PO-3. One congregation seems to get favored treatment from the Pastor.

Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This question may be a matter of perceptions, but the wise pastor had better pay attention to what it suggests. If answers are in the affirmative and leaning strongly toward one congregation or the other, some introspection and dialogue may be overdue to consider why this perception exists as it does, if there is truth to it, how pastoral conduct might be a contributing factor, and whether or not change ought to be addressed, and if so, in what manner.*

PO-4. It is important that the Pastor try to balance his time between the congregations.

Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Is balance of Pastor’s time felt to be important? Is there a perceived imbalance? If there is imbalance, does it lean toward a particular congregation? Of what does balance*

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<sup>322</sup> Schaller, 91, 146.

*consist? Might this discussion be a lively one? Should it be fifty-fifty between congregations, or more akin to the percentage of communicant membership?*

PO-5. The congregation where Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage.  
Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Is this a matter of importance? To whom? If this is seen to be an advantage, need the pastor consider his family's attendance at the other congregation periodically? And what pressure does this place upon the pastor's family which might be considered unreasonable? Again, this discussion might be worthwhile in causing the members to view certain expectations from the perspective of the pastor's family. Since he is the one who has been Called to serve them, have they a right to place expectations upon his family?*

PO-6. The community/location where the Pastor resides matters a great deal.  
Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This is said to be of major advantage for the community of residence.<sup>323</sup> Does the questionnaire bear this out? If it does, does it call for some educating members as to this perception? And does it call for dialogue about the allocation of ministry time in order to benefit the non-residence congregation, or how such time might be maximized?*

PO-7. Outreach is largely the Pastor's job.  
Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*How is the matter of outreach considered? If there is widespread agreement, what might the responses suggest in terms of educating and equipping the laity for outreach? If there is disagreement, how might the pastor encourage and lead efforts to better equip others for this?*

PO-8. Stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for our partnership.  
Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

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<sup>323</sup> Wilson, 39-42.

*The Partnership is currently experiencing the longest pastorate in its existence. Is this continuity and stability viewed as a strength? Is pastoral tenure not viewed to be important? Do other sources suggest it to be so?<sup>324</sup> There certainly ought to be an openness to discuss the importance of this, and how it can be addressed and encouraged for the future of the partnership. Is it deemed important by a significant number of respondents?*

PO-9. Even without pastoral stability I would expect our congregation to continue.  
Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This question is purposefully paired with the preceding question to see if there is optimism about the congregation's strength and persistence apart from pastoral leadership. Were a vacancy to exist, what might be the best ways to address pastoral care for the well-being of the congregations for their continuance?*

PO-10. It is important to have someone whom we can call "OUR" Pastor.  
Agree Strongly      Agree Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This question simply seeks to ascertain how important the pastoral relationship is perceived to be among the respondents. This might prove to be important, for example, in a time of vacancy, in order that pastoral care arrangements be made so that there is the best possibility of a pastor-people bond with the particular pastor into whose care the flock has been entrusted. This also recognizes that a unique relationship exists when a pastor is their own Called pastor.*

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<sup>324</sup> Meyer, 24; Schaller, 181.

**Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish**<sup>325</sup>

PP-1. Maintaining our separate identities is an important purpose of the Joint Parish.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Is maintaining separate congregational identities a valued purpose of the Joint Parish? Does this vary with the age group? Is this uniform among both congregations? Might certain responses suggest this value -which was foundational at the onset- is less valued now?*

PP-2. The Joint Parish Partnership should be seen more like a marriage union: inseparable except by death.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Here is an attempt to discern how strong the sentiment is that views the partnership as more sacred than a mere business partnership.<sup>326</sup> What is the commitment level of the membership, does it vary by congregation – and if so, how?*

PP-3. The Joint Parish Partnership should be seen as purely a business partnership.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This question seeks to discern if the prevailing notion is on the level of a business partnership, or something deeper, something requiring more lasting commitment.*

PP-4. From its beginning, the Grace-Zion Partnership seemed a most natural combination.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Don't know      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Given the history and background of the congregations, this question seeks to know if the respondents view the partnership as a natural one. The actual history –and the*

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<sup>325</sup> While the “Partner Agreement” questions were concerned about the formal arrangement, this section is concerned with the perception that exists among participants about the purpose, value, and possibly the future (in terms of possible future behaviors, PP-5, 7, and 9). These perceptions have to do more with relationships.

<sup>326</sup> Wilson writes, “When a multi-church parish is established it should be with the expectation that it will continue for a very long period of time.” 34.



*participant can draw their own conclusions- will be shared at the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop.*

PP-5. I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Here input is sought as to how valued partnering ventures are viewed. Does age group matter? Does congregational affiliation matter? Might the responses indicate a need to dialogue on this issue (which has not, admittedly, been a part of the history)?*

PP-6. Our newsletter, “The Joint Parish Chronicle” is an important communication tool.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Since the pastor values this highly and puts considerable energy into it, it is helpful to hear from the members as to their valuation of it. If this is not the best communication tool, what might be better? How can communication occur in such a way as to unite the partnership for the good of one another?*

PP-7. How likely am I to attend a Joint or special service (Lent, etc.) at the other partner congregation?

Very Likely    Likely            Not sure            Unlikely            Highly Unlikely

*Is the respondent likely to attend one of the special services when held off-site from his/her own congregation? What sort of percentage answers “Likely/Very Likely”? According to the responses, what kind of attendance at such services might be expected? Does the attendance at such services bear any correlation with the responses given in this questionnaire?*

PP-8. The Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership is healthy.

Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*Does the respondent view the partnership to be healthy? In general, what estimate of health is identified?*

PP-9. The Partnership has outlived its purpose and ought to be abolished in favor of some other arrangement.

Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This is a bold statement. It is asked to see if this sentiment exists, and if so, how widely held it is.*

PP-10. The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership.

Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

*This may prove to be instructive, depending upon the responses. It is the hunch of the researcher that the smaller congregation will tend to agree with this, while the larger congregation will seem oblivious to any benefit. Do the responses bear this out? And will the responses surprise anyone? Along with the “benefit” comes the residence of the pastor, which seems to be no small benefit. How is this considered, from the respondents’ viewpoints?*

Upon receipt of questionnaires for both weekends, the Missouri District staff person entered the data electronically for the purpose of producing a computer-generated tally and analysis of the responses. This report was then returned electronically for the data-digestion and analysis teams to begin their work of analyzing and prioritizing how best to share results with the congregations in keeping with the original identified problem.

## **B. Focus Groups and Selection of Participants.**

As noted earlier, qualitative data was gathered by means of the convening of two focus groups, one from each congregation. Focus Group selection took place in the following manner to achieve a maximum of 10 participants: The chairman and elders of each congregation were each afforded an *ex officio* place (up to a total of 4 places). The next

places were to be filled from a random selection (as needed) from those applications received, as described in the following paragraph.

Additional focus group participants were sought, using bulletin and service announcements, and a bulletin insert application was made available to every worshipping communicant on both April 20 and May 4.

An announcement in worship (Appendix 18) as well as an application form with explanation (Appendix 19) appeared in the church bulletin on two Sundays prior to the first Partner Questionnaire Sunday. Willing volunteers for the Focus Groups were to simply fill out their name and give contact phone numbers, handing the forms either to the ushers, the researcher (pastor), or placing them in the offering plate. A random selection process was identified, but not employed, as there were not enough applicants to fill out the groups. After the group members were identified, it was clear that absent from the applications (in both congregations) was the perspective of a life-long congregation member of retirement age or beyond.<sup>327</sup> In order to fill this void in a random fashion, the communicant members were identified who were confirmed prior to the formation of the Joint Parish (i.e., they had some long-term perspective), had never transferred away, and were actively attending (over 50% of the time). For Zion, this gave us the members needed to fill out the group. For Grace, from this narrowed pool, a random draw was made and contacts were made, according to the order of the draw, until the group numbered ten. These were next notified and reminded of the time and date of the focus group meeting, being asked to arrive fifteen minutes early for preliminary matters.

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<sup>327</sup> Joseph A. Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2005), 88, calls this *purposeful selection*.

### Focus Group Procedure, Meetings, and Moderator

Focus group participants were notified, and were given the specific questions (Appendix 20) for deliberation in advance of the meeting of the congregation's focus group (for most, this was at least a week in advance). This was done in order to provide opportunity for forethought about the issues being raised in the questions, and to allow members to jot down thoughts if they wished. Since these responses and observations were a part of the data-gathering, no effort was made to suggest that the questions not be talked about among couples or family groups. Giving the questions out in advance was deemed preferable to notifying the participants they had been selected, and subsequently leaving them in the dark about what questions to which they might have opportunity to respond.

Preparations for the focus group meetings included having on hand two types of recording equipment, with one as a backup. A digital recorder was employed as primary, with a cassette recorder as a backup. Sound testing was conducted prior to each focus group meeting.

The group meeting was held in a location in which restrooms were accessible. Participants were provided with the waiver to sign, (Appendix 21) which they had been informed from the outset must accompany this data-gathering. Only after the waiver was signed were they given a number and allowed to be seated at the table. (The second focus group numbers did not re-use numbers, but rather, continued sequentially where the first group numbers ended. This was done to avoid any confusion as to which group or which group member was speaking in the transcriptions.) All signed waiver forms were placed in an envelope identifying them as such and sealed in the presence of all. Bottled water was provided to each participant. Participants were seated around two tables abutted lengthwise, where their number could be prominently placed, along with any notes they wished to bring.

Pencils were provided, as were fresh copies of the questions, for purposes of notation as participants awaited their turn for comment. The recording equipment was centrally located. After a few brief introductions, the moderator activated the recording equipment, read the opening script, and began with prayer (Appendix 23).

The focus group moderator position was filled by the researcher, who opened and closed the group with prayer (scripts provided in Appendix 23). His task as moderator was to make no comment, but merely to guide the discussion and to help identify which number participant had spoken, for the sake of the transcriptionist. It was his job to help facilitate opportunities for all to participate, particularly if one or more parties seemed to be dominating the discussion.

As the moderator began reading the first of the questions, a numbered tongue depressor (corresponding to the numbers of the group participants given as they arrived and signed the waiver) was drawn after reading the question. The participant with that number was given the opportunity to reply first. This was to randomize the responses and to give all an equal chance at being first. After the reading of each question, this procedure was followed, giving each participant only one chance to reply first.

Upon the completion of the focus group, cassettes (pre-labeled for the occasion) had their record-over tabs punched out, and were placed in their labeled protective cases. The digital recorder was connected to the moderator's computer, where, utilizing Sound Organizer software, the sessions were downloaded and then burned onto two compact discs (to be given to the transcriptionist), with an additional copy of each being burned as backup (to be kept on site). In this way it was pretty certain that the qualitative data could not be lost to some unforeseen circumstance.

The day following the second focus group, the audio data (both cd originals and backup tapes) was hand-delivered to the professional transcriptionist, a member of neither congregation, who had given consent to assist in this fashion. Along with the audio data were given copies of the focus group questions as well as the introductory statement, to better acquaint her with the occasions she was to transcribe. The focus group transcriptions are included in the Appendices as 24 (Grace) and 25 (Zion). A personal handwritten note of thanks was sent or hand-delivered to participants by the week's end.

### Focus Group Questions and Brief Explanation

The questions for the Focus Groups to consider were intended to carry the discussion forward beyond the Partner Questionnaire. The questions, as well as the reasoning behind them are explained in what follows.

#### Perceptions Regarding One's **Own Congregation** (OC)

1. Which best describes our church -commuter church or a community church- and why?

*Are we a place that is only "open for business" on Sunday amid a bedroom community, or do we perceive ourselves as being "of the people," meeting needs, helping lives, etc. What do we think about ourselves? What should we be doing and how might we structure ourselves to better do it?*

2. What blessings does our congregation experience as a result of the Joint Parish Partnership? Where would our congregation be without this partnership?

*The Joint Parish partnership has been in place now 51 years. Are we better or worse for our partnership? How has it benefitted us? Has it been detrimental in any way, and if so, how?*

3. What fears threaten our congregation?

*What things are perceived as threats to the well-being of our congregation? Are these threats real or imagined? How might such fears be addressed?*

4. What kind of Leadership in the local congregation is expected of its elected leaders?

*In conjunction with question # 10, this seeks to discern the type and scope of the leadership that the congregation expects of its elected leaders. Are there written expectations? Are there unwritten expectations? If so, what are they? Are the expectations realistic for the offices? Is a different kind or aspect of leadership expected than that of the pastor? Is such leadership earned or bestowed? Might the pastor and elected leaders have different visions of leadership and what is needed or expected of them? To whom and in what forum do they communicate about this?*

**Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish**

5. What conduct or attitude(s) does the Joint Parish partnership require of me?

*Do the participants see themselves as having a “share” in the Joint Parish partnership, or is membership viewed only through the lens of one’s individual congregation?<sup>328</sup> Does one have responsibilities to the partnership merely by one’s membership in one of the congregations of the partnership, or is this optional? What are such responsibilities? What are such attitudes that are obligatory?*

6. What might be indicators (signs) of an unhealthy partnership? If such indicators exist, what might be done to remedy it/them?

*Do participants consider that the partnership CAN be unhealthy? By what might an unhealthy relationship be detected? What suggestions may be offered for remediation?*

7. In what lie the strengths of the Joint Parish partnership? (What enables it to continue with strength?)

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<sup>328</sup> Wilson, 28: “It is the local church which the individual joins and which commands his or her loyalty.”

*This of course presumes the Grace Zion Joint Parish Partnership to be a positive entity. How does the participant view it? What are viewed as the most vital features, and why?*

Perceptions regarding **Pastoral Office** (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

8. What qualities, ministry duties, and activities are important to you for the Pastor of the Joint Parish?

*Do the expectations placed upon the pastor resemble the expectations the pastor has in the performance of that which he believes to be dutiful? What activities, ministry duties and qualities are viewed as important by participants? Is there agreement in large measure?*

9. A multi church Partnership like ours might require particular or special gifts of its pastor.<sup>329</sup> What comes to mind?

*What observations might laypeople make of the importance of certain gifts and /or mixes of gifts in the occupant of the pastoral office? Do they seem to be realistic? Might there be a difference in the gifts expected of a pastor of a single congregation? How might such a giftedness be identified in a prospective pastor prior to his serving in a multiple parish setting? Since most multiple parish settings are rural, and typically small, what might be done to prepare those who have received such a Call?*

10. What kind of Leadership in the congregation(s) is expected of the Pastor?

*It should be good for the pastor to consider how the leadership of his office is viewed by the congregants. Is his leadership perceived as adequate, overbearing, or lacking? In what matters should he lead...and when should he take a back seat? Is he viewed as a*

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<sup>329</sup> Wilson, 22-23 says, "For the minister, serving two or more congregations is a complex and demanding task." Mogilka and Wiskus, 37, "Through surveys, interviews, gatherings, and dialogues," were able to identify a list of "fifteen pastoral skills or tools necessary for effective leadership by the pastors of multiple parishes."



*leader? Does his leadership seem relevant, judging from the comments? Certainly question # 4 may be considered in the light of this discussion.*

### **General**

11. What observations –or what learning- have you made as a result of either the questionnaire or the focus group discussion?

*This question serves as an indicator as to the value of the participation in the questionnaire or the FG in and of itself as instruments of learning.*

With the conclusion of the second focus group, the gathering of data was completed. The Partner Questionnaire had been composed, administered and sent off for scoring; the focus groups had met, and now began the wait for the return of data in order to begin the process of interpreting it and explaining it. What will be learned from those who participated in the data gathering? How might the data prove beneficial to these congregations with regard to the original problem?

The data had been gathered by which it was sought to explore the original problem, stated as:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

In the next chapter, both the quantitative and qualitative data which was gathered by the means described in this chapter will be presented.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE PROJECT EVALUATED

With the completion of the Partner Questionnaire and the focus groups, it was possible to examine both quantitative and qualitative data with the hope of sharing what the participants had revealed with members of the congregation. Included in this chapter are the results of the Partner Questionnaire, as well as the manner in which this quantitative data was presented to interested members of the congregations in the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops. Additional analysis is included which could not be included in the workshops due to time constraints. Researcher comments will appear in *italics*. Results of a ten-question evaluation at the conclusion of the workshops are included as well.

This chapter also includes abbreviated comments from each of the focus groups (one from each congregation) that were convened after the Partner Questionnaire had been administered. The focus groups wrestled with some different questions that were designed to add insight to the goal of discerning how the congregations understand and value themselves, as well as to add clarity as to the vision they have of themselves and of the partnership they share.<sup>330</sup>

This chapter shares some of the qualitative data that was gathered from those occasions as well, although there was insufficient time to share this qualitative data with the

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<sup>330</sup> Clearly, the thinking and perceptions of a congregation are not monolithic, so a debt is owed those members of the congregations who participated in the research. While their responses provide a window into “the congregation,” the caution remains to be to not generalize the whole by the responses of the participants.

Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop. This presentation makes the data accessible to interested parties in one chapter.

This chapter is assembled in such a way that someone who belongs to either Grace or Zion could read for themselves basically what was presented in the workshops that were designed to share feedback with them, along with things that time limitations did not permit to be shared, as well as a synopsis of the focus group data.

A brief overview of this study might provide perspective at this point:

In chapter two, the theological foundation for understanding the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership was laid: namely, two Lutheran congregations who have, by common agreement, called one pastor to serve them in the Office of the Ministry which God has established in the midst of each congregation.

In chapter three, the events precipitating the formation of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish were presented, along with some overview of the intervening years. A survey of literature relevant to this study was conducted.

Chapter four detailed how a study was prepared and conducted in order to gather both qualitative and quantitative data with respect to the identified problem, which is recalled for the reader at this time:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

Responses to the Partner Questionnaire were tabulated and were data-entered by the Missouri District staff person. The data was returned in tabulated replies (Appendix 28). The latter formed the basis for the interpretation of the results. On four occasions (two with

leaders from each congregation serving as a “digestion group”) the results of the Partner Questionnaire were read and discussed on the basis of the tabulated replies, with an eye toward how best it ought to be presented, and to consider which questions and replies were of greater importance for discussion and additional consideration.

### **A. Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops**

A workshop format was selected for sharing the results of the Partner Questionnaire with the members of the congregations on two successive weekends after worship (when the most people would be gathered and the best hope for attendance might be realized). The workshops would take place after an 8:30 a.m. Sunday worship occasion with lunch provided afterward. For Grace members, this would be their usual worship time; for Zion members, a special 8:30 a.m. worship time was approved by the Voters’ Assembly on the second of the two weekends so that an identical schedule could be followed. This being a multiple parish partnership, of course, necessitated special arrangements for a substitute pastor to fill in at Zion for the 10 a.m. service the first week (so that the researcher/pastor might remain at Grace and conduct the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop), and for Grace the second week, enabling the researcher/pastor to conduct worship at Zion at the special earlier 8:30 a.m. time and proceed to the workshop in seamless fashion. (It was necessary to keep this time-change and learning opportunity before the Zion members for many weeks leading up to the occasion.) Members were informed that they would be free by 11:30 a.m. This allowed for approximately ninety minutes of presentation time.

One might ask, Why not a longer workshop, and share the data more in-depth, along with more precise historical background? Numerous reasons spoke against this, including the awareness that attendance and the time commitment required might be inversely

proportional. Providing a meal and streamlining the morning so that participants could go forth ready for the day was important. This is a rural community, and good weather daylight time is valued highly. This fact alone may have limited the attendance.

With so much data and such limited time, the decision was made to concentrate chiefly on what was learned through the Partner Questionnaire. A PowerPoint format was decided upon and prepared (Appendix 31), projector and screen were readied, and a laser pointer was employed to draw attention to key points of the presentation. A sound system was employed, taking into account noise of air-conditioning, projector blower, hearing impairments, as well as other background noise. A digital recorder was used to record the workshop, and two cds were burned in order to preserve the proceedings.

Visual time lines of each congregation's history on foam boards were displayed. Images of them are included in Appendix 36 for Grace, and Appendix 37 for Zion. Tables with eight chairs apiece were arranged in such a manner as to facilitate a view of the projection screen. The table arrangement was chosen to allow for small-group discussion at a few points in the presentation.

Child care was provided by high-school youth who were working to attain service hours as required by Saxony Lutheran High School. This enabled at least three couples to attend who ordinarily would not have been able to attend. Lunch arrangements had been made in cooperation with the Grace-Zion LWML (Lutheran Women's Missionary League).

Materials provided for the attendees were: copies of the opening devotional hymn ("May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill," Lutheran Service Book # 698, guitar and guitar chords for accompaniment), pencils, question sheet for small group discussion, evaluatory questions for the conclusion of the workshop, and newly-printed copies of the recently

approved Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish Guidelines, made available at the conclusion of the workshop (Appendix 7). A sign-in sheet was passed around in order to record attendance.

The workshops had been scheduled for two successive weeks: July 27 (Grace, Uniontown) and August 3, 2014 (Zion, Longtown). Thirty-one communicant members (all from Grace) attended the July 27 Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop, held in the Grace School basement. Church attendance for that day had been 96 (the previous four weeks had averaged 97.7). This meant that of those who worshiped that day at Grace, 32% attended the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop.

Twenty-nine communicant members (three from Grace) attended the August 3 Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop held in the Zion Parish Hall. Church attendance for the day (with its special earlier 8:30 a.m. worship time instead of the regular 10 a.m.) had been 41 (the four previous weeks had averaged 55.3). This meant that of those who attended worship that day at Zion, 66% attended the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop. In total, then, the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops were attended by 60 communicant members, excluding the researcher.

#### Sharing the results of the Partner Questionnaire

The format of the Workshop included an opening devotion noting God's good use of symbiotic relationships in His creation, and drawing a comparison to Grace and Zion's partnership as a kind of symbiotic relationship. (Text of the devotion is included in Appendix 30.) Hymn selection ("May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill," LSB # 698) was made on the basis of the hymn's woven themes of Christian unity, love, and walking in Christ. After prayer, the presentation was begun.

Since the presentation was done by PowerPoint, this presentation of the findings will follow that format, slide by slide. Each slide in the PowerPoint presentation will be identified by slide number. In this printed format, the slide's heading will follow on the same line. If the heading is followed by a parenthesis enclosing two letters, a dash, and a number, this indicates the **category** (to be explained shortly in slide 11) and **question number** within that category. While there are forty questions from the four categories (ten in each), there were a few more questions on the Partner Questionnaire as a result of the need to gather some preliminary data at the outset. Where percentages are given, due to rounding, they may not total 100%.

A question or statement follows beneath the heading. An italicized number in parentheses may follow. This number is the Partner Questionnaire number, so that the reader/viewer may follow the progression more easily. After a presentation of the data in a simplified format, explanations will follow.

The PowerPoint presentation began with the title slide--

Slide 1.

Partners in the Gospel: The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish Partnership

Slide 2.

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

The purpose was once again made clear: Nowhere in the literature search was found such a study that sought to do this. There were numerous references and assertions as to characteristics of yoked or multiple parishes and characteristics thereof, but no evidence of systematic study undertaken to validate such assertions.

Slide 3. The Partnership Comes Together...

- Two simultaneous Pastoral vacancies
- Returned Calls
- Shortage of Seminary graduates
- 1963

While there are numerous details to the story, the partnership came together as a result of several occurrences: Here were these two neighboring LCMS congregations, both experiencing vacancies; one had Called and had had those Calls returned (indeed, Zion had had three Calls returned!), and there was a much smaller than normal projected graduating class from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (see Appendix 3), indicating that there would be a shortage of pastors. At the urging of Zion's vacancy pastor, Rev. A. M. Lohmann of Perryville, in early 1963, Zion and Grace took steps to explore how they might form a partnership, or dual parish, with one pastor serving both congregations.

Slide 4. Why this study?

- There exists a lack of materials addressing multiple parish ministry settings.
- In order to learn about such, the search leads to—
  - Rural Ministry settings
  - Small congregational settings
  - Pastoral continuity and stability are part of the picture.

There exist relatively few materials addressing multiple parish ministry settings. That being the case, the search to find out more about such ministry settings leads one to consider “rural” (definitions vary here) ministry settings and also “small” (again, definitions vary) congregation settings. Multiple parish ministry settings will likely exist at the intersection of these two groups, for reasons identified in chapter 3.

As one studies rural ministry and small congregation settings, pastoral stability and continuity also become an issue. Pastoral retention is more difficult in such settings, the



literature suggests.<sup>331</sup> And short pastorates –as well as vacancies between- tend to negatively affect things like congregational perception of well-being or self-esteem.<sup>332</sup>

There does not seem to be such a study as the current one, at least not one found in the literature search. As noted earlier, there are not that many things written on multiple parish partnerships. What might happen if two congregations sharing a pastor learned more about themselves and the partnership in which they share? Could such knowledge be employed in a beneficial manner? Since there was no other such account, it simply was not known. And could such a study be undertaken by a researcher who also served as the pastor and had precious little time to spare for such an undertaking? With this comes the reminder that had there been other studies among other congregations, they still could not presume to speak for these two congregations, and for this reason alone this is an important undertaking, so that willing participants from each congregation might have a voice.

Slide 5. The Partner Questionnaire

- Was completed by 114 members (from both Churches). (1)
- Grace: 81 (71%)                      Zion: 33 (29%)
- Total Communicant members (as of Dec. 31, 2013):
- Grace: 231 (71.7%)                      Zion: 91 (28.3%)

The Partner Questionnaire was completed by 114 members (from both Churches).

From Grace, 81 (71%) members completed it, and from Zion, 33 members (29%) completed it. Note how it compares with the total combined Communicant membership numbers (as of Dec. 31, 2013), with Grace at 231 (71.7%) and Zion at 91 (28.3%). This indicates that regardless of the percentage of communicant members per congregation completing the questionnaire, the tool is roughly representative of the proportion of communicant members.

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<sup>331</sup> Wilson, 39.

<sup>332</sup> Meyer, 24; Ray, 175; Schaller, 60-61.

Even though the proportion of those who took the questionnaire is a near match to the communicant member number from each congregation, this does not permit generalization. One cannot say with any degree of certainty that “this is how Grace feels,” or “This is how Zion feels about this.” No, one may only say with certainty, “This is what the members of Zion who filled out the Partner Questionnaire felt,” or “This is how the members of Grace who filled out the Partner Questionnaire felt,” or “This is what the members of the Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership who filled out the Partner Questionnaire felt.”

Slide 6. The Partner Questionnaire

- How far do they reside from Church? (2)
  - 54% Less than three miles (61)
  - 14% Three to five miles (16)
  - 33% Six miles or more (37)

In identifying how far those who filled out the Partner Questionnaire reside from their church, sixty-one (54% of respondents) reside less than three miles from church. Sixteen (14% of respondents) reside three to five miles from church, while thirty-seven (33%) reside six or more miles from church. In the situation of these congregations, this final designation places respondents in this category closer to some other (LCMS) Lutheran Church than their own.

*This suggests considerable commitment from those who travel the farthest, and suggests that the congregations have a responsibility to help these members who do not reside close by to feel a part of the congregation community.*<sup>333</sup>

Slide 7. The Partner Questionnaire

- The Church to which I belong is the closest Lutheran church to my home— (3)
  - Yes 71% (81)
  - No 29% (33)

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<sup>333</sup> It was observed in the Grace focus group that it is often some kind of family tie that exists by which people are drawn. (Grace focus group, Question 1, Participants 9 and 1.)

*Again, if nearly three out of ten of the group who completed the Partner Questionnaire, in attending, say “No” to a closer option for worship, their presence suggests, among other things, a significant commitment to their congregation.*

Slide 8. The Partner Questionnaire

- Age category of those who took the instrument– (4)
  - Under 40 (27%) (31)                      Forty or over (73%) (83)

Identifying the current age category of those who completed the Partner Questionnaire might help one sift through data on other questions to determine age-relevancy. Thirty-one (27%) of respondents were “under 40”, while Eighty-three (73%) were forty or over. The memory of congregational days prior to the formation of the Joint Parish simply cannot exist for a significant number of those who participated.

*Perhaps this question could have provided more useful information had it stratified those above 40 so as to include a response of “sixty or above,” in order to reveal not only those who had a recollection of the congregation’s days as a single parish. An additional concern was suggested for which this data is insufficient to determine: Does an unmet need for intentional senior ministry exist among (or will it soon)?*

Slide 9. The Partner Questionnaire

Spiritual Journey & Association with this\* congregation (5)

Born here & never left - 32% (36)

Born here –moved away- and returned – 13% (15)

Transferred here from another LCMS Congregation – 39% (44)

Came another way (Adult Baptism/Confirmation/Reaffirmation) – 16% (18)

Observations here include the note that nearly four in ten who completed the Partner Questionnaire have transferred from another LCMS congregation at some time in the past. Would that percentage hold across the general membership? Or are the “transplants” more highly included among the members who completed the Partner Questionnaire?

One might wish the final category larger; might it be helpful to examine how the congregations do or do not “make disciples” from those outside the church?<sup>334</sup> *Further study here seems warranted, including –but not limited to- a look at current demographic data for the community at large in order to understand the mission field surrounding the congregations. Who are the people of the community-at-large among whom God has placed these congregations in their midst, and how might they more effectively share the Gospel with them?*

Slide 10. The Partner Questionnaire

- Length of membership- (6)
  - Twenty or more years – 55% (63)
  - 11-19 years – 22% (25)
  - Ten years or less - 23% (26)

Numerous observations may be made on these figures. Certainly one of them is the fact that for over 45% of the respondents, the current pastor (serving his twenty-fifth year in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish) is the only pastor they have known in this place. They can compare him to no one else here, for better or worse. This would include his administrative style and leadership, as well as preaching and leadership in worship.

About the Four Subject Areas of the Partner Questionnaire

Having gathered some background information that should be helpful, now comes the main body of the Partner Questionnaire, which is arranged around four categories of questions, ten in each: [proceed to slide 11]

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<sup>334</sup> A search through the records of each congregation revealed that across the years 1963-2012, Zion had received 27 members by Adult Baptism, Confirmation, or Reaffirmation or Profession of faith. Grace, over the same time period had received 40 such members. There were twenty-one years in which no such members were received.

Slide 11. About the Questionnaire...

- The Partner Questionnaire was arranged around four categories of questions, ten in each:
- Perceptions regarding one's **Own Congregation** (OC)
- Awareness of the **Partnership Agreement** (PA) by which the Partnership functions.
- **Pastoral Office** (PO) and pastoral presence in the Partnership.
- **Perceptions** regarding the **Partnership** (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish.

While it might seem that only the first, second and fourth of these have to do with this exploration, it became the conviction of the researcher, as the literature review was undertaken, that the unique characteristics of multiple parish partnerships, coupled with the inseparable Office of the Ministry which exists in their midst, deserved a closer look in this context. If, as some authors assert,<sup>335</sup> pastoral tenure in such situations is briefer, and pastoral vacancies are more frequent, this is an area that ought to be examined as well. For this reason, the set of questions regarding Pastoral Office (PO) and Pastoral Presence (PP) were included.

One more note about the Partner Questionnaire before the four categories are explored. It was the hope of the researcher that the questions up to this point could easily make it possible to subdivide responses on what follows. This proved not to be the case, as the software had its limitations. Any breakdown had to be hand-counted by the staff-person who entered the data, by sorting through a printout of the raw data, and for this reason only selected breakdowns of responses were requested.

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<sup>335</sup> Meyer, 24; Schaller, 60-61; Wilson, 39.

## Feedback Regarding Perceptions about One's Own Congregation (OC)

### Slide 12. Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-1)

- Decision-making (7)  
A significant number of us say the best way to make decisions is to let a committee study it and make recommendations.
  - 95 Agree (13 Strongly)
  - 10 Disagreed (0 Strongly)
  - 9 Undecided

The favored decision-making process in the congregation [slides 12 & 13] was sought by two questions in succession. Slide 12 read: "A significant number of us say that the best way to make decisions is to let a committee study it and make recommendations."<sup>336</sup> Did people view their congregation as a small church or an "organization?" According to the responses, one might conclude it to be viewed as an organization. However, the next question, juxtaposed to this one for the purpose of clarity, proved unhelpful in making such a determination.

### Slide 13. Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-2)

- Decision-making (8)  
A significant number agree that the best way to reach decisions lies in airing it out among us all and arriving at a consensus.
  - 96 Agree (19 Strongly)
  - 8 Disagree (1 Strongly)
  - 10 Uncertain

This question describes a smaller-group decision-making process, and a significant majority preferred this. The result of the two questions gives no evidence that the respondents think in an either/or fashion so as to be identified as either small-church thinking or "organizational" thinking. Upon presenting this to the first group assembled for a Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop, discussion ensued that the two styles were not considered to be mutually exclusive, and could indeed be reconciled together, to which a goodly number voiced agreement.

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<sup>336</sup> Schaller, 34-35.

*An additional observation about decision-making style: It might be that because of their past (both having been larger churches than current membership) both congregations still value an “organizational” way of making decisions.*

*These questions simply did not reveal any small church/organizational decision-making dichotomy. Perhaps additional questions might have done so, but not these. Do the participants think of themselves as “small churches”? In the absence of conclusive data, it cannot be said with certainty.<sup>337</sup> The preference to access both styles of decision-making leaves an unclear picture.<sup>338</sup>*

Slide 14. Perceptions re: One’s Own Congregation (OC-3)

- Our congregation needs more fellowship / togetherness events. (9)
  - 76 Agree (17 Strongly)
  - 12 Disagree (0 Strongly)
  - 26 Uncertain

Clearly, desire for additional events/activities exists, and perhaps if such events have appeal, some of the “undecided” might join in as well. Discussion time at the conclusion of this set of questions was intended to tap into some ideas for possible activities.

Was this sentiment expressed more strongly by congregational association? Here it may be useful to import figures from Appendix 29 for a little analysis:

9. OC-3. Our congregation needs more fellowship/togetherness events.  
(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Zion	6 16 (67%)	5	6	0
Grace	11 43 (67%)	21	6	0
TOTAL	17 59	26	12	0

<sup>337</sup> Perhaps it may have been simpler and to the point to respond to a statement like: “I think of my congregation as a small congregation or a small church.” This might have provided more clarity as to how they perceive their congregation.

<sup>338</sup> The Researcher has observed that in the quarterly Voters’ meetings of both congregations, a strict adherence to Robert’s Rules is not adhered to when considering action to be taken, or when finally taking action, as matters are allowed to come up and be discussed in the absence of a motion and a second. This suggests smaller group style.

The desire in the affirmative for more fellowship events was identical across respondents from either congregation at 67% when the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” are considered together. *Regrettably, the question did not hint at inter-congregational fellowship, which, in retrospect, it would have been good to know if such a need was perceived.*

- Slide 15. Perceptions re: One’s Own Congregation (OC-4)
- What happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life. (10)
    - 108 Agree (54 Strongly)
    - 2 Disagree
    - 4 Uncertain

The regular weekly gathering around Word and Sacrament for these Lutheran congregations and to receive Christ’s Gospel gifts of the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of God’s peace are essential functions of the Office of the Ministry, which these congregations have valued so much as to create and sustain this partnership in order to sustain it in their midst. *The vast majority “get it,” and indicated so. How important that every Lord’s Day be an uplifting occasion. Regarding the 6 replies that were not in agreement, perhaps they had in mind other gatherings (Voters’ meetings, where the congregation’s business is transacted, for example) and viewed the word “supreme” as too exclusive.*

- Slide 16. Perceptions re: One’s Own Congregation (OC-5)
- How likely am I to attend a special service (Advent, Lent, Ascension)... at my OWN congregation? (11)
    - 28 – Always
    - 65 – Very Likely
    - 9 - Unsure
    - 12 - Not Likely
    - 0 - Never



While Church attendance on these occasions does not measure up to the total of “Always” and “Very Likely” replies,<sup>339</sup> there certainly is signaled an acknowledgement of these as important occasions, worthy of our attendance, with a significant level of intent on the part of those members who completed the Partner Questionnaire. (The matter of territoriality and special services at the location of which the participant is not a member will be taken up in Partner Questionnaire # 41, PP-7.)

Slide 17. Perceptions re: One’s Own Congregation (OC-6)

- Our congregation’s best days are behind us. (12)
  - 8 Agree (2 Strongly)
  - 32 Uncertain
  - 74 Disagree (14 Strongly)

*Do you see optimism here?*

Did it matter how long a person had been associated with their congregation and the response they gave? Only persons who had been a member twenty years or more were in agreement with this statement. (Someone at the workshop remarked that these were ones who had been around enough to recall “the good old days.”) More importantly, however, seems to be the matter of optimism, and the matter of congregational self-image. While there is a fair amount of “Uncertain” replies, it is even more significant in that 74 disagree with this statement, and neither resign their congregations to decline nor exhibit poor congregational self-esteem. And of those who had been with the congregations twenty years or less, 14 were “Uncertain,” while 37 disagreed (6 strongly).

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<sup>339</sup> Compare with actual attendance figures: In 2014, Ash Wednesday had 76 in attendance, with the alternating two Lenten services having 54 and 52, with 34 present for Ascension.

A look at the breakdowns by length of membership from Appendix 29 reveals an interesting picture:

12. OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us.

(Breakdown: by **grouped by number of years as a member.**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Uncertain	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
0-10	0	5	4 (81%)
11-19	0	9	2 (64%)
20+	2	18	8 (59%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>32 (28%)</b>	<b>14 (65%)</b>

A few observations on the responses would include that over one-fourth (28%) expressed uncertainty. All of the agreement with the statement was expressed by those participants who had been with their congregation twenty years or more, and as the next breakdown would show, all but one are from Grace. The greatest degree of optimism about the future was expressed by participants who had been with their congregation ten years or less (81% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement), followed by those who had been there eleven to nineteen years (64%). A look at the breakdown by congregation provides an additional view:

12. OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us.

(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Uncertain	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
Zion	1	2	2 (91%)
Grace	1	30	12 (54%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>14</b>

Uncertain responses are few from Zion (2), while 37% (30) are uncertain from Grace. Zion respondents (91%) express disagreement with the statement (signaling optimism), while only 54% of Grace respondents indicate optimism about the future.

- Slide 18. Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-7)
- Which best describes my commitment to my congregation? (13)
    - 47 – Till death parts us.
    - 36 – Strongly committed.
    - 27 – Committed.
    - 2 – As long as things are going OK.
    - 2 – Not sure.

Again, this is a strength upon which to build, as 110 out of 114 respondents indicated some form of commitment, with 83 being strongly committed or more so. This might open the door to discuss just what such commitment entails – or how does our commitment manifest itself?

- Slide 19. Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-8)
- This congregation is welcoming to new members, visitors, and strangers. (14)
    - 95 Agree (24 Strongly)
    - 7 Disagree (1 Strongly)
    - 12 Uncertain

This question is not being answered by new members, visitors, and strangers. It is being answered by all of those who pretty much know each other.<sup>340</sup> *They know who they know and will visit with them after church. So here is where caution is taken to remind the members that perhaps they do not know "everybody" (a pictorial directory is helpful in this case). Visitors, strangers, and new members as well as long-time members would find it helpful to introduce themselves, saying, "Hi, I'm [name] and I didn't get your name," hopefully leading to an exchange of not only names, but the beginnings of a conversation. Being friendly is important; it is important that someone knows and remembers that they received a warm welcome in one's midst. What an impression a warm welcome makes! And, likewise, a poor or lacking welcome is long remembered! There is the power to uplift and encourage as members are intentional with their welcome.*

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<sup>340</sup> In the Grace Focus Group, two members echoed this sentiment: "everybody knows each other," (8) and "everyone knows everyone else." (4)

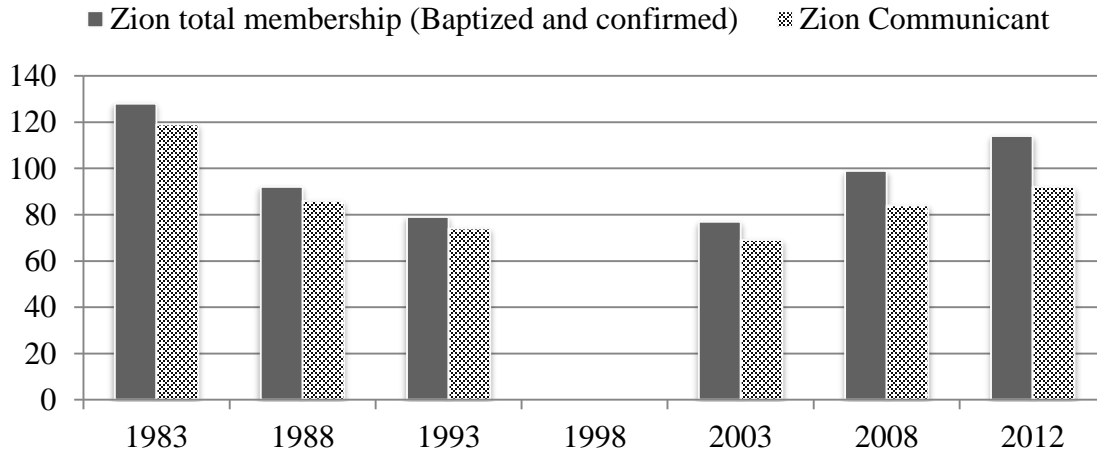
- Slide 20. Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-9)
- How would you describe your congregation in the past ten years? (15)
    - 1 – Growing robustly
    - 44 – Slow Growth
    - 53 – Steady
    - 14 – Declining
    - 2 – Rapidly Declining

Charts for Zion and Grace were displayed (Slides 21 and 22) which charted membership (both baptized and communicant) for both Grace and Zion over 30 years in five-year increments from 1983-2012, as drawn from available Annual Reports.

The darker bar indicates baptized membership, with the lighter bar indicating communicant membership. The difference between them is the unbaptized youth and possibly any baptized but unconfirmed adults.

**Figure 6**

**Membership for Zion, Longtown, 1983-2012**



(Source: Available congregational Annual Reports)

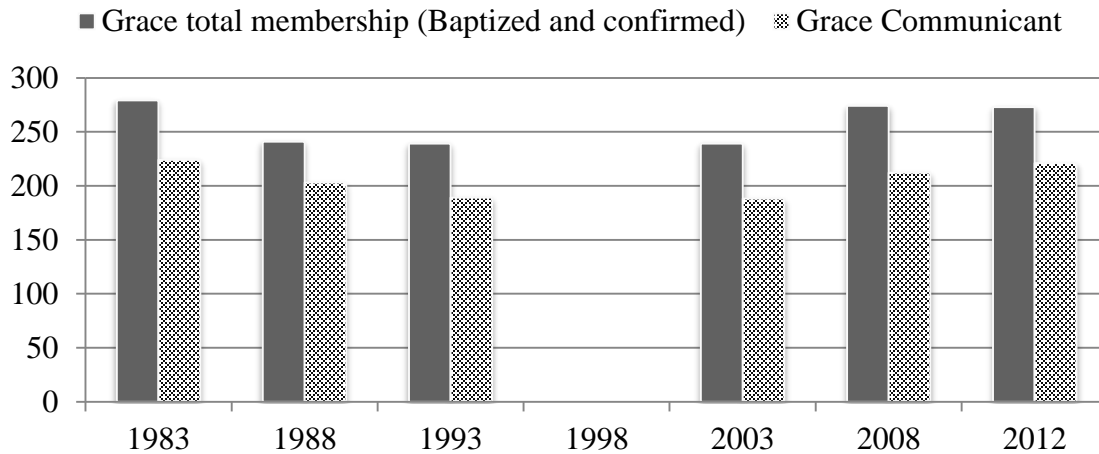
Observations were made as to how the trend appeared with decline, and a modest rebound. Grace attendance showed a similar decline and rise.

*The question was asked in one workshop how these figures related to church attendance. The presenter shared that it was his impression that the figure of forty percent*

*(of a congregation’s communicant membership) has been tossed about in the LCMS, sadly, as being “average.” But average is not the same as normal. It ought to be asked if this is “normal,” however, in God’s economy: Is it “normal” for sixty percent of those who once pledged to be “faithful unto death” (Revelation 2:10) to be absent from their congregation on a typical Lord’s Day?*

**Figure 7**

**Membership for Grace, Uniontown, 1983-2012**



(Source: Available congregational Annual Reports)

Slide 23. Perceptions re: One’s Own Congregation (OC-10)

- I think the members of my congregation highly value our Joint Parish Partnership. (16)
  - 69 Agree (9 Strongly)
  - 14 Disagree (3 Strongly)
  - 31 Undecided

While it is plain that no one can read the minds of those around as one worships, it is interesting that there is a significant number that think (again this is a perception!) that those around us value our Joint Parish partnership. Relatively few disagree, although 31 were “undecided;” this could be considered as not knowing what the others think, or not being sure

the others “highly value” the partnership. (If the positive benefits of the partnership were extolled more often, might the perception of its value increase?)

16. OC-10. I think the members of my congregation highly value our Joint Parish Partnership.

(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Uncertain	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
Zion	2	17 (58%)	9 (27%)
Grace	7	43 (62%)	22 (27%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>60 (61%)</b>	<b>31 (27%)</b>

While it was suspected by the researcher that there might be an imbalance between the congregations’ valuation of the partnership, this was not borne out by the breakdown, as the figures were very close for the respondents from each congregation.

Slide 24. Perceptions re: One’s Own Congregation (OC)

- Questions for discussion:
  1. What kind of fellowship event(s) would appeal to you?
  2. How important is it that food be involved?
  3. What does commitment to one’s own congregation look like?

Here the presentation paused for approximately five minutes for discussion;

secretaries at each table recorded responses for later consideration by congregational leaders.

Feedback Regarding Awareness of the Partnership Agreement (PA)

Slide 25. The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- Joint Parish Guidelines
  - Only 12 admitted to having read them in the past three years
  - Seventy-eight admitted they never have read them (19)
  - We have a learning gap / curve to overcome!!

The slides for this section, Partnership Agreement, do not follow the question format of the Partnership Questionnaire, as it was determined that knowing how questions were answered did not suit the ultimate goal of enhancing awareness of the Partnership

Agreement. In the Partner Questionnaire, seventy-eight (78) respondents indicated that they had never read the guidelines, and only a dozen had read them in the past three years.

*Perhaps it is researcher bias, but it seems that those who are participants and beneficiaries ought to have an interest in the partnership agreement that binds them and enables the partnership to continue. Clearly, a learning gap exists that needs to be addressed now, as well as repeatedly and cyclically in the future. Rather, the questions for this section were restated as true statements, with little to no discussion needed.*

Slide 26. The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The partnership exists so that each congregation can “retain its separate identity and function.” (17)
- The Annual Service Time Switch – a feature of fairness- **is** important to maintain. (18) *Eighty-nine (89) respondents were in agreement with this statement as it stands; this is the why the “is” was underlined and made bold.*

Slide 27. The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The Joint Parish Guidelines are to be reviewed annually – by the Joint Council (20)
- The Joint Voters (comprised only of voting members from both congregations) is the authoritative body by which a pastor is Called. (21,22)

Slide 28. The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The Joint Parish Guidelines **do** allow for joint societies or auxiliary organizations to be formed in our midst, in keeping with specified purposes. (23)
- Does each member have an obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership? (24)
  - 19 said “No”
  - 69 said “Yes”
  - 26 Did not know. *What do you think?*

Slide 29. The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish Treasury is funded by a proportional amount for every communicant member. (25)
- It is the responsibility of the Joint Council to prepare a budget annually. (26)

Slide 30. The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- Questions for discussion:
  - 1 - Does each member have an obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership? If so, what kind of an obligation?
  - 2 – As a member, how am I obligated?

Discussion was held for the group as a whole. A member volunteered that “we all have to see ourselves as obligated. It was this member’s observation that neither [here was named the other congregation] nor ‘we’ could afford a pastor, and it is basically up to us all to keep our congregations strong.” It was then noted that, budget-wise, had each congregation tried to retain its own pastor, certainly the first big budget item to be cut would have been Lutheran school tuition, which would have de-incentivized even further their young families to remain with them during the elementary school years of their lives while shouldering the burden of tuition alone.

Another member at the first workshop asked whether it might be beneficial for congregations considering a partnership to know that it is possible to retain their separate identity, that [the partnership] hasn’t changed us, that we have done it for fifty years and it has worked. The presenter agreed, but noted one key point: As a member congregation of a church body (LCMS) with over 6,100 congregations, yet this congregation has a special regard for the other congregation above all the others, because of the shared partnership. In this partnership, change has taken place, benefits have been received, and yet each congregation has retained its own unique identity.

#### Feedback Regarding Perceptions about the Pastoral Office (PO)

##### Slide 31. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-1)

- It is important that there be regular, Pastor-led Bible class in my congregation each year. (27)
  - 79 Agree (18 Strongly)
  - 9 Disagree (0 Strongly)
  - 26 Undecided

This question is asked because the pastor can only lead Bible class in one congregation each year (unless of course, it was done after the second service) because of the



morning service and travel schedule. This is probably a typical situation for congregations in partnership. How strongly do people feel that Pastor's time should be invested in Bible study leadership in the alternate years when their congregation has the late service and hence, no possibility for pastor-led Bible study prior to worship? The response here is telling. Seventy-nine indicate this to be a priority (18 strongly so), while only nine disagreed. One wonders if, given the right topic or theme, and an accommodating time slot, any of the "undecided" might be persuaded to prioritize Bible study as well.

A member at the first workshop spoke up and noted how beneficial their participation in Bible Class has been in helping them to understand more fully the meaning and message of the readings that have been covered. (A word of explanation is in order: For the current year, Bible study has been studying the readings that do not serve as the sermon text for the day.)

- Slide 32. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-2)
- Greet-time with Pastor after worship is crucial. (28)
    - 101 Agree (35 Strongly)
    - 8 Disagree (0 strongly)
    - 5 Undecided

What happens during that greet-time? Sure, pleasantries are exchanged, or the pastor says something like, "The Lord bless you," or "The Lord bless your day," but what else happens? One attendant noted that her young daughter has finally emerged from her shyness to shake pastor's hand rather timidly –or "gives him five"- but that a relationship has been building over time. She even noted that, one week, when the presenter (also the pastor) was absent and a substitute led in worship that her daughter asked, "Where's my pastor?" From that standpoint alone, it is a relationship-building time. Another member also commented as

to how her boys look forward to this time, and that it also gives them another male to look up to as an example.

*An additional thing that happens is that this is often a time when someone, upon exiting, may mention an upcoming eye surgery, medical test, etc. They may even mention a procedure they had recently, sometimes almost embarrassingly, as if they forgot to notify the pastor, but they sure appreciate his prayers, even now. After-service greet-time is a time when valuable pastoral information is often traded, especially key since the pastor may not reside in the immediate community. The point is that even though the service is over, this remains a ministry time between the pastor and the people of the congregation. Certainly a large majority of those who took the Partner Questionnaire understood this to be a significant time.*

Slide 33. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-3)

- One congregation seems to get favored treatment from Pastor. (29)
  - 11 Agree (3 Strongly)
  - 84 Disagree (27 strongly)
  - 19 Undecided

This question (and a few related to it) is here because the literature suggests that among partnered congregations there is some tension, and this study sought to see if it were an issue here, or is there sufficient harmony that it is not an issue? At this time, responses suggest there to be the blessing of a good degree of harmony about this, notwithstanding some ten percent of respondents who agree with the question's sentiment.

Slide 34. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-4)

- It is important that the Pastor try to balance his time between the congregations. (30)
  - 104 Agree (23 Strongly)
  - 6 Disagree (0 strongly)
  - 4 Undecided

Of what does balance consist? Partnered congregations have perceptions of the pastor's time expenditures, and, if the voice of those who participated in the Partner Questionnaire is representative, they highly value the pastor's time and his attempts to be balanced toward them.

Slide 35. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-5)

- The congregation where Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage. (31)
  - 25 Agree (0 Strongly)
  - 73 Disagree (15 Strongly)
  - 16 Undecided

The responses tell a story of those who agree that it is an advantage to a congregation for the pastor's family to attend, as well as nearly three times as many who disagree with this sentiment. Might the figures from each congregation give a more precise accounting of this? Here is how such a breakdown appears:

31. PO-5. The congregation where the Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage.

(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Uncertain	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
Zion	0	7 (21%)	19
Grace	0	18 (22%)	39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25 (22%)</b>	<b>58</b>

Evidently, the figures do not indicate a major difference of opinion of this matter when examined congregation by congregation. If anything, the relatively high number of Zion participants who disagreed represents a charitable spirit.

Slide 36. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-6)

- The community/location where Pastor resides matters a great deal. (32)
  - 30 Agree (5 Strongly)
  - 54 Disagree (6 Strongly)
  - 30 Undecided

A congregational breakdown on this was not requested, as this is nearly the same as the previous question in the situation under study. The location where the pastor resides (and

his family attends) is the community that has him always accessible by phone (this is far less important now with cell phones), can always receive a drop-in visitor, can come to his door with questions, may observe him mowing his lawn, may come by to drop something off, pick up a key, sort through the mail, have him open the facility for some purpose, unload some item for delivery, and the list could go on. He is available for none of this except by prior arrangement at the “other” location. Do such things matter? How much do they add up over time? Simply put, in one location he has a “presence,” and not in the other, without a great deal of effort and intentionality.<sup>341</sup>

- Slide 37. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-7)
- Outreach is pretty much the Pastor’s job. (33)
    - 27 Agree (0 Strongly)
    - 57 Disagree (5 Strongly)
    - 25 Undecided

While the responses indicate the continual reminder that all are called to be witnesses of God’s mercy to us in Christ, there is a continual need to be reminded of this reality. This suggests a need for more intentional teaching on aspects of how witness may take place, as well as what one might say as a witness.

Robert L Wilson, in *The Multi-Church Parish* writes, “[t]he members of churches that share their pastor must find prospective members and bring them into the church. The evangelistic outreach of these churches must be primarily the responsibility of the laity. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a non-resident minister to find the persons who are potential members.”<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> It is the conviction of the Researcher that many Grace participants do not understand the benefit of “Pastoral Presence” day in and day out, and how different it is for their partner congregation to experience “Pastoral Absence.”

<sup>342</sup> Wilson, 68.

How important is this point? Wilson goes on, “In fact, one serious, if not the most serious handicap of the multi-church parish is the difficulty the pastor has in locating, cultivating, and winning new members.”<sup>343</sup>

Slide 38. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-8)

- Stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for our partnership. (34)
  - 101 Agree (22 Strongly)
  - 0 Disagree (!)
  - 13 Undecided

No one disagreed with this statement. Clearly, it is agreed that stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for the partnership.

*Perhaps the responders have an innate understanding of the importance of that Office in the Word and Sacrament ministry of a Lutheran congregation. Certainly it should be considered how stability and continuity has or has not been in the past, as well as to examine what factors contribute to pastoral continuity and stability for the well-being of the partnered congregations.*

Slide 39. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-9)

- Even without pastoral stability, I would expect our congregation to continue. (35)
  - 73 Agree (11 Strongly)
  - 22 Disagree (3 Strongly)
  - 18 Undecided
  - (1 did not answer question)

There is a fair degree of optimism that the existence of the congregation does not depend merely upon the pastor. Congregations tend to be tenacious, according to one study.<sup>344</sup>

*This speaks highly of the commitment that members have for their congregation.*

35. PO-9. Even without pastoral stability, I would expect our congregation to continue.  
(Breakdown: by **grouped by number of years as member.**)

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Hassinger, Holik, and Benson; A summation of their study might simply be that rural churches are persistent.

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Undecided	Disagree +	Strongly Disagree
0-10	2	15 (65%)	5 (19%)	3
11-19	2	11 (52%)	5 (20%)	6
20+	8	36 (69%)	8 (13%)	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	11 <sup>345</sup>	62 (65%)	18 (16%)	19

One observation here is that the highest optimism about continuity is evidenced by those participants who have been members the longest.

*Perhaps some profitable discussion could be evoked as to whether this represents naivete' or persistence, and what activity best assures the continuance of a Christian congregation. Further exploration should incorporate insight from chapter 2 in consideration as to how the Office of the Ministry is best exercised, as well as how the Word and Sacrament ministry might be sustained for the building up of the local body.*

- Slide 40. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-10)
- It is important to have someone whom we can call “OUR” Pastor. (36)
    - 103 Agree (53 Strongly)
    - 4 Disagree (0 Strongly)
    - 7 Undecided

It might be entirely possible to try to keep a church (or partnered congregations, as here) going by cobbling together a regular worship schedule which employs seminarians and pastors (who may have no relationship with the members) as substitutes. Would this make a difference in the congregations? Here the respondents were mostly agreed that a relationship is important with the man who leads in worship and conducts Word and Sacrament ministry as well as administrative functions in the congregation.

- Slide 41. The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-10)
- Questions for discussion:
  - 4. What Bible study topics or themes appeal to you?
  - 5. When would it / they best be held?
  - 6. How important is the stability and continuity of a Pastor’s service to the Joint Parish?

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<sup>345</sup> The figure “11” was reported to the Researcher for this column’s total, but obviously the figures add up to 12; human error must be to blame.

Time was given for discussion on these questions, and a secretary recorded responses for each group so that congregational leadership might gain insight and perhaps plan with the responses in mind.

Feedback Regarding Perceptions about the Partnership (PP)

Slide 42. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-1)

- Maintaining our separate identities (as congregations) is an important purpose of the Joint Parish. (37)
  - 82 Agree (13 Strongly)
  - 19 Disagreed (0 strongly)
  - 13 Undecided

37. PP-1. Maintaining our separate identities is an important purpose of the Joint Parish.  
(Breakdown: by **grouped by number of years as a member.**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Undecided	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
0-10	1 16 (65%)	4	5 0 (19%)
11-19	1 15 (64%)	4	5 0 (20%)
20+	11 38 (77%)	5	9 0 (14%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b> <b>69 (72%)</b>	<b>13 (11%)</b>	<b>19</b> <b>0 (17%)</b>

From this it is clear that there is significant support for the original intent of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, namely, that each congregation retain its separate identity. Of note is that the participants who have been with the congregations the longest are the most convinced. *This suggests that the participants may innately understand the local concept of “congregation,” and value an arrangement which allows the congregation, as well as the Pastoral Office to remain localized while maintaining Word and Sacrament ministry, or that they just want to maintain a separate identity.*

Slide 43. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-2)

- The Joint Parish Partnership should be seen like a marriage union: inseparable except by death. (38)
  - 59 Agree (8 Strongly)
  - 29 Disagree (4 Strongly)
  - 26 Undecided (Note: 78 had never read the J-P Guidelines)

It would seem, with 78 of the respondents having never read the Joint Parish Guidelines (Partner Questionnaire, #19 [PA-3]), that not too much be read into this. Certainly it appears that there is a significant degree of commitment to what has been in place already for half a century. It is also clear that there remains an ongoing need to inform members of the facts about the partnership, and a consistent, systematic way to do this must occur. Perhaps the next question helps explain why this is so.

Slide 44. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-3)

- The Joint Parish Partnership should be viewed by the partners as purely a business partnership. (39)
  - 28 Agree (3 Strongly)
  - 68 Disagreed (6 Strongly)
  - 18 Undecided

While nearly a quarter of respondents agree with this statement, three-quarters do not (86 respondents -75%- either disagreed or were undecided)! Factoring out the “undecided” responses, then 71% (68 out of 96) of those who were decided with a response disagreed. Be they undecided or agreed (46 responses), it is clear that there is a significant number (68) who feel this is more than a mere business arrangement, that it is an arrangement deserving of special consideration.

Slide 45. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-4)

- From its beginning, the Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership seemed a most natural combination. (40)
  - 70 Agree (6 Strongly)
  - 6 Disagreed (3 Strongly)
  - 38 Undecided(Note: 51 have been members less than 20 years) (6)

One might respond to this statement in two opposing ways. Upon driving along Highway 61, and seeing two LCMS churches just five miles apart, and if it became necessary for each to be in partnership with another church, why not these two? And yet, from the historical perspective, the congregations might not have been such a natural partnership. (See



congregational histories, Appendices 1 and 2) Each congregation had its own unique origin, Zion being primarily descendants of the Bavarians who were first associated with the Friedenbergs congregation, and Grace being associated with the Saxon immigration. There was not a great deal of association of the members of one congregation with the other, the researcher has been told by various persons. The records bear this out, as there were relatively few weddings conducted involving one member of both congregations over the years prior to the partnership coming together, with people typically associating with folks like themselves. With that in mind, the partnering of these two congregations might not seem so natural.<sup>346</sup>

Slide 46. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-5)

- I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry. (41)
  - 66 Agree (10 Strongly)
  - 12 Disagreed (2 Strongly)
  - 36 Undecided

What does a congregational breakdown of this tell us?

PP-5. I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry.

(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Undecided	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
Zion	3 12 (45%)	15	3 0 (9%)
Grace	7 44 (63%)	21	7 2 (11%)
TOTAL	10 56 (58%)	36 (32%)	10 2 (11%)

The responses indicate that there certainly exists a desire to partner on more matters of ministry, and those respondents disagreeing are not that numerous. Clearly, the Grace participants demonstrate more openness to this than do the Zion participants.

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<sup>346</sup> Overlooked by the researcher in the presentation, but pointed out by a participant in a comment made at the conclusion of the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop was the point that back then, each town was its own community, complete with stores, tavern, etc., and that to go beyond one's community was often viewed as unusual. It was "quite an experience," he reported (in a positive way), to have new students suddenly come into the schoolroom who had not been part of their school experience ever before [at the start of the Partnership].

Slide 47. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-6)

- Our newsletter is an important communication tool. (42)
  - 100 Agree (31 Strongly)
  - 3 Disagree (1 Strongly)
  - 11 Undecided

This is helpful guidance on whether time should be invested as it currently is on producing the “Joint Parish Chronicle,” the monthly newsletter. Is pastoral time being well-spent in producing the newsletter? This response says “Yes”.

Slide 48. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-7)

- How likely am I to attend a Sunday or special service (Lent, etc.) at the other partner congregation? (43)
  - 85 Likely (31 Very Likely)
  - 20 Unlikely (6 Highly Unlikely)
  - 9 Not sure

Clearly, it takes some commitment for members of one congregation to cross the threshold of the other congregation for any occasion of worship. There may be actual physical reasons in addition to travel distance why (perhaps variations in sound system performance coupled with hearing impairment, lighting, etc.) a person(s) might be averse to attending at the other partner congregation.

*Leaders ought to be open to hearing about such, and doing what might be needed to address and remedy the perceived difficulty. While no figures are kept for attendance of members at the “other” congregation, clearly these responses do not represent the reality of how few members do what is indicated as “likely” or “very likely.”*

- Slide 49. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-8)
  - The Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership is healthy. (44)
    - 80 Agree (11 Strongly)
    - 9 Disagreed (1 Strongly)
    - 23 were Undecided
    - (2 did not answer question)
      - *What makes for a healthy partnership?*

Fewer than ten percent of respondents estimated the Partnership to be unhealthy (or disagreed that the Joint Parish Partnership is healthy)! This signals significant optimism about the Partnership.

*Certainly there ought to be open discussion about what it is that constitutes “health” in the Partnership, and to pursue those things which facilitate health, with the ever-present reminder that these are not merely organizational matters, but have to do with matters of eternal welfare, the Office of the Ministry, the Pastoral Office, and the Gospel witness in these two communities.*

- Slide 50. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-9)
  - The Partnership has outlived its purpose and ought to be abolished in favor of some other arrangement. (45)
    - 3 Agree (2 Strongly)
    - 90 Disagree (36 Strongly)
    - 21 Undecided

There is strong sentiment among respondents (79%, or nearly four out of five) that the Partnership has not outlived its purpose and should continue. *Perhaps due to the number of “undecided,” it might be wise to instruct in the benefits that the Partnership has allowed each congregation to have, including, but not limited to, the budgetary breathing room to assist with Lutheran School tuition and to keep the congregation’s property in good repair.*

- Slide 51. Perceptions Regarding the Partnership (PP-10)
  - The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership. (46)
    - 8 Agree (0 Strongly)
    - 81 Disagree (15 Strongly)
    - 25 Undecided

What does this look like in a congregational breakdown?

PP-10. The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership.  
(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree + Agree	Uncertain	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
Zion	0 2 (6%)	3 (9%)	25 3 (84%)
Grace	0 6 (7%)	22 (27%)	41 12 (65%)
TOTAL	0 8 (7%)	25 (22%)	66 15 (71%)

While this would seem to be a given in the affirmative (see slides 35 and 36), it is indeed interesting that so many would disagree, even strongly so. There are not enough of the “Agree” responses to signal that a significant portion of the smaller congregation’s participants is frustrated or embittered with the current situation. It is noteworthy that Zion participants, members of the smaller congregation, not only do not indicate much agreement with this statement, but are actually higher in disagreement. *This is a bit surprising to the Researcher, since the larger congregation is the place of the pastor’s residence and office, the congregation his family attends, and the place that receives a disproportionate share of his energy and attention. Perhaps this reply is due to an exceptionally charitable spirit.*

Slide 52.

- *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves and of the partnership they share.*
- Well...now it has been researched!

(A reminder that this was scripted for the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop:)

You who have participated in the Partner Questionnaire (as well as the Focus Groups), and have now seen the results, have been helpful in enabling there to be increasing clarity as to the vision you have of your own congregation as well as the partnership that is shared.

## Summary Regarding the Quantitative Data (Partner Questionnaire) Feedback

Slide 53.

- Now, through actual research, it is more possible to discern how the members of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches understand and value their partnership.
- What we have learned –and continue to learn (as we reexamine the data)- will help us as we journey into the future...as...Partners in the Gospel.

Slide 54. How did St. Paul value his Gospel Partners?

- "...I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:4-6 NIV

Slide 55. Thank You!

- Thank you for your participation in this project to help us better understand ourselves, the partnership we share, and how we value it.
- No longer is leadership subject to guesswork, subject to private opinions, or to a select circle of friends...for now there exists data.
- Before you depart, we ask your favor to answer just a few questions about this process.

As the presenter drew to a close with prayer at the first workshop, held at Grace, two long-time members spoke up about how positive and influential the Joint Parish partnership has been for the congregation. One noted that while the partnership has endured some fifty-one years, "It was fragile at first."<sup>347</sup>

Attendees were asked to complete a brief ten-question sheet upon the conclusion of the workshop as an evaluation instrument. These were gathered for examination, tabulation of which will appear shortly. Gathered at this time also were the small group discussion sheets, compiled by a secretary from each discussion table. These will be made available for congregational leaders for the purpose of consideration for implementation.

Both workshops concluded with a luncheon, which served the dual purpose of enabling the participants to go forth to whatever activities they wished without further delay, as well as to enjoy some time for further visitation and discussion. A good number of people

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<sup>347</sup> Comment by R. S.

did not dash off immediately after eating, but visited casually. A number of people took time to thank the presenter (researcher) and made positive comments about what they had seen and experienced, and thanked him for undertaking such a study so that they could learn more about the congregations and their perceptions of themselves and the Joint Parish relationship. Not a single negative comment was passed on to the researcher, who was the last person to depart the premises.

The purpose of the evaluations (Appendix 33) was to learn if this process (both the taking of the Partner Questionnaire as well as the viewing of the results) had any impact upon the attendees. Opportunity was given to indicate to which congregation the participant belonged, and whether or not they had completed a Partner Questionnaire in May when it was offered. (It had been made clear in an announcement that morning in worship that taking the questionnaire was not a prerequisite for attending the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop.) Nine questions were in a simple yes/no format to ascertain what impact participation in the workshop may have had upon thinking and behavior. A final question was open-ended: “The most useful thing I learned was \_\_\_\_.” Results are included here. Not all attendees to the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop completed an evaluation. Fifty-seven were submitted, and three were not included in the tabulation, as they had not designated which congregation to apply them. Thus there were fifty-four evaluations tallied.

Evaluation Responses: completed at the conclusion of the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop

1. I have grown in my awareness that it is important to the well-being of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish that both our congregations be healthy and thriving.

Grace: Yes - 31      No - 0  
Zion: Yes - 23      No - 0

2. I am relieved that pastor or other powers are not pushing a merger of congregations.

Grace: Yes - 23      No - 3 (5 left blank)  
(One said: "Never felt this was an intent.")  
Zion: Yes - 23      No - 0

3. I have been challenged to grow in my prayers and concern for the well-being of each of the congregations.

Grace: Yes - 30      No - 1  
Zion: Yes - 23      No - 0

4. I see more clearly the importance of my own faithful attendance and support of my congregation and how it affects other people.

Grace: Yes - 31      No - 0  
Zion: Yes - 23      No - 0

5. I am more likely to attend a Joint Voters Meeting.

Grace: Yes - 24      No - 5 (2 left blank)  
Zion: Yes - 16      No - 7

6. I am more likely to attend a jointly held service, regardless of location.

Grace: Yes - 29      No - 2  
Zion: Yes - 20      No - 2 (1 left blank)

7. Pastoral Stability is desirable for the Partnership.

Grace: Yes - 31      No - 0  
Zion: Yes - 23      No - 0

8. Our Partnership is a bond that is worth appreciating and working to preserve.

Grace: Yes - 31      No - 0  
Zion: Yes - 23      No - 0

9. I have a better appreciation of my brothers and sisters in Christ from our partner congregation.

Grace: Yes - 31      No - 0  
Zion: Yes - 23      No - 0

10. The most useful thing I learned was \_\_\_\_\_

The final question was opened-ended. Following are responses as given to:

“The most useful thing I learned was \_\_\_\_\_”

(Responses from Grace members who chose to reply:)

-It truly has been an important and necessary blessing for Grace and Zion to stay in existence to form the joint parish.

-make decisions; no decision means no action.

-the importance for congregations to continue to work together to continue to be successful.

-why it was originally formed and how important it is to continue.

-how important this partnership is to our Joint Parishes.

-the partnership may need some revisions. Now is the time to do this to ensure that both congregations continue and thrive.

-how committed each congregation actually is to the partnership.

-that our two congregations are mostly agree[d] that our partnership is good & will work.

-a better understanding of our partnership – the value & importance of it.

-that it does seem that [a] majority support the Joint [Parish] situation.

-that we all work together with God's help.

-that there is still a need and a want for the Joint Parish partnership, and how each congregation feels about the other one.

-we can survive.

-how even though we are separate identities we are still strong as one whole.

-that both congregations are alike in their thinking.

-how important it is to keep the Joint Parish going.

-history of the Joint Parish.

-awareness of the commitment of our forefathers & current members.

-people care about “their” church.

-we can work together.

-hope this survey will assist other congregations who may pursue a joint parish relationship.

-thankful for the unity we have.

(Responses from Zion members who chose to respond:)

-our purpose.

-that members of both congregations are wanting to continue this partnership and work together.

-cooperation.

-the needs of the congregations in the immediate future.

-people are really interested in church history.

-the history, and there are undecided among us, for future work to teach.

-the importance of our joint partnership.

-we need the other congregation to thrive.

-foundational history.

-that we are still a joint congregation [parish?] but will stay separate.

-I only knew Grace background and not Zion, with Bavarian families.

-that the congregations do not have to be separate in all things.

-values of a partnership

-working together.



## **B. Feedback (Part II) of Qualitative Data from the Focus Groups**

While there was insufficient time to share any of the focus group data with the Gospel Partner Awareness Workshop, a brief synopsis of the focus group data follows.

The focus groups –(abbreviated as “FG,” one from each congregation- met on two successive evenings after the second of the two Sundays on which the Partner Questionnaire was administered. Participants were in attendance according to the standards and selection criteria outlined in chapter 4.

Questions for the focus groups fell under four categories, three of which were also categories in the Partner Questionnaire: Perceptions regarding one’s **Own Congregation (OC)**, **Perceptions** regarding the **Partnership (PP)** in the Joint Lutheran Parish, **Pastoral Office (PO)** and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership, and **General**.

While each group dealt with the same questions, as might be expected, discussion did not always follow the same thread. The heart of the discussion for each question will be encapsulated. Participants in the focus groups were numbered 1 through 10 (the Grace focus group) and 11 through 19 (the Zion focus group). The entire transcript for each focus group is Appendixed (24, Grace focus group; 25, Zion focus group).

Numbers in parentheses indicate FG members, in the order the issue was addressed. Perceptions regarding one’s **Own Congregation (OC)**

1. Which best describes our church – commuter church or community church?

Grace FG - Participants suggested that both congregations are both community and commuter churches, but that we might have defined community differently a generation or two ago, as the congregation had more groups and activities. While we have our share of commuters (and there is a goodly number willing to drive a distance), there is often some

kind of family tie that exists by which people are drawn. The sentiment was expressed that the community aspect has diminished, (9, 1) although a few asserted that everybody “knows everyone else.” (4, 8)

Zion FG – Participants spoke of being both a community and a commuter church, with the latter becoming more and more a part of us as our lives become more commuter-like. (17, 16, 12)

2. What blessings does our congregation experience as a result of the Joint Parish Partnership (and where would our congregation be without this partnership)?

Grace FG – Blessings we experience as a result of this partnership include a special fellowship shared with another congregation, (9) and being able to share a lot of the common expenses of a congregation (10, 6, 4) which is both helpful to us and our partner. (9) A member noted that getting to know some of the children of the partner congregation through the school years ago was also a blessing. (9) Another noted that having the availability of two service times is helpful. (2)

Without this partnership, it would certainly be harder to meet financial obligations [support of a pastor, etc.], as noted above, but if each congregation had to support its own pastor, would there even be enough pastors to fill all the positions that would exist without such partnerships? (1) One member expressed concern that if the church had not been able to sustain itself and had to disband, how many members or souls would have fallen by the wayside? (5)

Zion FG – Blessings we experience as a result of this partnership include having a certain community feeling for those who are local (12) as well as the ability to support our children with tuition for Lutheran Schools. (17) Others noted that there might not still be a Zion congregation. (16, 17, 14)

3. What fears threaten our congregation?

Grace FG – Fears expressed by the group included dwindling attendance at special services, (8) as well as membership diminishment, (9) changing economy making jobs more distant, (4) lack of connections to the church for our youth, (10) the aging of the church and resultant loss of membership, (5) and the difficulty in cohesiveness we face with children attending so many different schools. (7) In addition, a member expressed a fear that the willingness of people to drive greater distances for church and to pass churches closer to their home might just mean a diminished commitment to their own church. (2) People are used to having things their own way in so many choices, that the church just might drop low enough on their priorities that they “wouldn’t care...apathy.” (2)

Zion FG - The biggest fear would be...the congregation shutting down. (12) Another member expressed the fear of keeping children involved and wanting to stay in our church. (13, 17) Another fear is that of losing members to “upstart” churches, or non-denominational churches that appeal to the emotions. (16, 12) One member also spoke of concern that there be sufficient pastors, teachers and leaders in the future. (18)

4. What kind of leadership in the local congregation is expected of its elected leaders? (Paired with question # 10)

Grace FG – An elected officer should be “a good example, in that he should be at church as often as he can, attend meetings, and encourage young people especially to get involved in the church,...be a good liason between the pastor and the members, be very friendly and outgoing.” (8) A good leader needs to keep “their eyes and ears open” and to address problems or concerns promptly. (10, 9)

Zion FG – It is important for the leadership to maintain what is here...but we are too reactionary, reacting to situations rather than being more proactive. (15) Leadership needs to

make sure the Gospel is proclaimed in its purity (14, 17), and set good examples to the rest of the congregation through worship and participation in the congregation's activities. (16)

5. What conduct or attitude(s) does the Joint Parish partnership require of me?

Grace FG – It requires that we be supportive and flexible, (6) “to be adaptable,” (2) as in the service time switch; it's just in everyone's best interest to be supportive. (6) The Joint Parish partnership also requires that “even when it's not my home church...[regarding attendance at Joint services] I vote with my feet and show up.” (1) It also requires that we share a pastor. “I think it's a really big thing to share the pastor...the pastor is not going to want to feel like he's being played like tug of war between the two churches, so I think we have to make sure he is shepherding Grace, but that we also allow him to shepherd at Zion.” (2) “[W]e have to work at that all the time, so that both congregations feel like they have a pastor.” (2)

It was pointed out that to the officers especially falls the responsibility to help newer members “understand what the Joint Parish is, what the guidelines are...so that [newer members] ...understand what all takes place with the Joint Parish.” (9)

Another member pointed out how when Grace had remodeled in 2012, Zion had immediately offered their sanctuary for use for Grace at the regular Grace service time, and that this was a good example of serving and offering to help where there was a need. (5) That kind of attitude and conduct which builds up the partnership “needs to be our first thought.” (5)

Zion FG – Attitudes and conduct required of us include “appreciate the other congregation and their members, [to] look up to them, work together.” (18) It “requires all

members to participate and to look out for the best interests of our partnership with each other. It's not just left up to a few individuals... It's not just a select few." (16)

One member pointed out how this requires us to be "welcoming" of others into the church (this being especially necessary because our partners are often visitors among us). (12)

6. What might be indicators (signs) of an unhealthy partnership? If such indicators exist, what might be done to remedy it/them?

Grace FG – Perhaps we are so far into the partnership, at fifty-one years, that assumptions have been made, and we have failed to see the need to continually educate "what it [the partnership] is and how we're supposed to behave with it." (1) "If we never talk about it as individual congregations or as a joint partnership, how do the people know what it is supposed to be?" (1)

As pointed out by a participant, "I think we're still individual congregations, that sometimes we don't need to give that up for the sake of being friends with each other." (10) This member also noted that when they joined this congregation, they "joined Grace; [they] don't feel they joined Grace-Zion, you know, as one partnership." (10)

One of the participants commented that poor attendance at the Joint Voters' meeting is unhealthy, (9) although another noted that perhaps participation would increase if things were not seemingly going well. (6) Another (citing an example from a couple decades prior) noted that we ought to take care how we make decisions that are not insulting to the other congregation. (1) Lopsided attendance at "Joint" services, where one congregation is scarcely represented also is not a sign of health. (2)

Educating as to the purpose and value of the partnership was the suggested remedy.

Zion FG – Signs of an unhealthy partnership might include, but not be limited to, “openly fighting between or arguing between the two congregations,” (12) “favoritism of one church over the other,” (13) “lacking social unity with our friends at Grace.” (15) One noted, there “just seems to be a bit of a social wall somewhere between here and Uniontown. I don’t know what it is... I don’t think there [are] any social things that tie the congregations together. I would love to see some...” (15) None mentioned this as if it were through animosity, but rather, as one member pointed out, is most likely due to the busy-ness of people’s daily lives. (16)

Possible remedies suggested were: “we need to put a focus on more social activities, more group social activities that are not Grace-formed or Zion-formed, but Joint Parish formed.” (15) One member commented that it was a bit difficult to overcome the discomfort to her comfort zone in order to attend Bible Study [at Grace], but that it became easier over time. Certainly more group interactions might help promote better health in the partnership. (17)

7. In what lie the strengths of the Joint Parish partnership? (What enables it to continue with strength?)

(The Moderator reminded the members that the Monday prior to the week of the Focus Groups’ meetings was the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the first joint meeting by which a Call was extended to a pastor. [May 12, 1963, was the first Call meeting.] The pastor whom they had Called did not take that Call, but that meeting signals a first in these two congregations taking that action jointly.)

Grace FG – The strengths of the Joint Parish partnership lie in “having members of both congregations that are supportive of a Joint Parish,” (6) having “faithful officers, Joint

Parish officers,” (9) and “the pastor we have that can manage both congregations and shepherd both congregations.” (5)

Zion FG – The strengths of the Joint Parish partnership lie in “the members,” (12) “the longevity of the existence” and “the ability of different people coming together to solve problems,” (11) the ability to still offer assistance with Lutheran schooling, (17) and “the pastor.” (13)

8. What qualities, ministry duties, and activities are important to you for the Pastor of the Joint Parish?

Grace FG – A member began by saying, “the pastor should be a good shepherd that would love the people in the pew right where they are, to instruct them in the truth of God’s Word and to help the people where they’re at to just keep growing in God’s Word.” (2) Another commented, “One thing that I expect from our pastor, and he has done so very well, is not to show any partisanship to either congregation.” (8) Another said, “I feel that Pastor’s responsibilities are to listen to both congregations, to try to support both of them and to keep both congregations working together, and I feel it’s being done as well as I think it can be done.” (4) Still another noted the importance of “being accommodating to either congregation or any individuals at whichever congregation that may have a need arise...that he does a good job of fulfilling those needs.” (6)

Zion FG – The discussion began by noting the importance of nursing home and homebound visitation, (13) along with hospital visitation of the sick and/or dying. (12) It went on to include the importance of faithfulness to the Church’s confessions, (17) bereavement ministry to our families, (12) being a good preacher, (16) good communicator, (19) an outgoing person, a people person. (16, 14) Finally, it was noted that the pastor

should be a “pretty good mediator also”...“discerning in knowing what is appropriate for the Joint Council, so as to not permit a rift between the congregations.” (16)

9. A multi-church partnership like ours might require particular or special gifts of its pastor. What comes to mind?

Grace FG – Discussion began by mentioning personality, the ability to be open-minded, understanding, ability to gain the people’s trust, the ability to handle situations that arise “in a respectful, positive manner.” (6) Added to this was the comment that, unlike a larger parish with specialized ministries and even multiple pastors, the multiple parish pastor “has to be good with you, has to be good with the elderly, has to be good making sick visits...that’s a lot of different hats.” (5) In addition was mentioned, “well organized and have things...organized.” (7) The importance was noted that the pastor not come into his position with his own agenda, but to serve the people in their needs, (2) and again “to shepherd them and to not come in with his agenda of what he thinks should be done to change.” (2)

Zion FG – Discussion noted that most of the comments that could be made here already were done under the previous question. Emphasized again were: “mediator,” (16) ability to multi-task, (13) a good communicator who can keep the communication between the partnership strong. (16)

10. What kind of leadership in the congregation(s) is expected of the pastor? (Do you see this as the same question as #4 or do you see a difference?)

Grace FG – Discussion began with a participant expressing concern that, while the pastor is Called to Word and Sacrament ministry, certainly the elected leaders of the congregation must also bear the responsibility of leadership, both within the congregation and at the joint level [that bridges the congregations] as well. (1) Another noted that it can



become too easy to expect the pastor “to be responsible for too many things that probably some other leadership in the congregation should address...it’s probably easy just to assume that the pastor is going to handle things that maybe aren’t his responsibility.” (6 is quoted; a similar thought was voiced by 8)

Another noted that “the kind of leadership expected of the pastor is preaching the Word of God.” (9) Other aspects of pastoral leadership included “to be flexible,” (2) as well as not pushing an agenda of his own, but to call upon his officers to help, wherever he sees a need, “to be sure to pull them in to help with the problem or concern.” (10)

Zion FG – The leadership expected of the pastor is “to be knowledgeable of the Word [of God] and the ability to lead, and counsel and teach.” (13) The pastor should, along with the leaders of the congregation, be certain that our worship is conducted in the appropriate manner...under the Lutheran way and teachings...following our Lutheran Service Book.” (16) The pastor needs to show – to lead by example... “that is the kind of leadership that should be expected of our pastor.” (16)

11. What observation – or what learning – have you made as a result of either the questionnaire [Partner Questionnaire] or the focus group discussion?

Here the Grace focus group participants addressed various (nearly three pages, single-spaced) questions from the Partner Questionnaire to round out the allotted time. Rather than attempt to summarize, which would be nearly impossible, the entire transcript is made accessible in Appendix 24.

Here the Zion focus group participants were turned loose to speak at some length (nearly six pages, single-spaced) about various questions and related thoughts. It would be impossible to summarize these concisely. The reader may access the entire transcript in Appendix 25.

### **C. Transition**

This study began with the original problem, stated as: *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share*

Much has been learned from those who participated in the data gathering as to how a significant number of participating communicant members of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches view their congregation, as well as how they view the partnership that they share. There remains the challenge of applying what has been learned to the ministry in the specific context of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish so as to make this study as useful as possible. Beyond that, there is the possibility that this study may contribute to broader contexts of ministry in multiple parish situations in various ways.

How has this study personally and professionally affected the researcher as a result of directing this project, and how this study might provide the basis for suggested further research (and how it might be carried out) is yet to be considered.

It is this and more which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study began by noting, “*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision<sup>348</sup> Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves and of the partnership they share.*”

The study has been undertaken, Partner Questionnaires have been prepared and administered. Focus Groups have met and their observations have been recorded and transcribed. Responses to the Partner Questionnaires have been examined, data from it has been digested and presented to members of the congregations through the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops, and evaluations of the same were submitted by nearly all the participants. Now it is time to summarize the outcome of the project and draw some conclusions about its implications for ministry. First will be noted contributions to ministry that this study makes, in the specific context of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches and their shared partnership. Next will be noted how the findings of this study contribute to the broader context of ministry, and to consider how this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge about congregations in partnership.

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<sup>348</sup> As noted in chapter 1, the word *vision* is here used in the sense of “the act or power of seeing,” one of the definitions given by *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (Tenth Edition). This study has attempted to discern, among other things, how the congregation members who participated in the data-gathering view their congregation, as well as how they understand the partnership (in its particulars) and how they view (value, appreciate, and perhaps seek to better) the partnership of which their congregation is a part.

It will then be noted how this study and the experience of conducting it has affected the life and experience of the researcher, and ways he has grown both personally and professionally as a result of directing this project.

Some practical application of the findings will be made, recommendations regarding additional research that might provide insight to the church at-large will be noted, and suggestions will be given how such additional research might be carried out. Finally, the need for additional resources pertaining to this ministry context or ministries in similar contexts will be noted.

#### **A. Contributions to Ministry**

The data from three aspects of the Partner Questionnaire, namely of one's Own Congregation (OC), Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP), and Pastoral Office and Presence (PO) enables consideration of three distinct and important aspects of dual, yoked, or multi-parish ministry settings from the perspective of those who have participated in the data-gathering. No longer are there only anecdotal or self-limited considerations on these matters, for now there exists actual data to consider in pondering each of these areas. Some of this data, while provided by only those who participated in the Partner Questionnaire, is significant enough (or voluminous enough) from which to draw some conclusions (although one must be wary in applying such conclusions to the entire membership of both congregations, since the entire membership did not participate in the Partner Questionnaire). While recognizing it to be possible that different views are held, on the basis of this study including over 60% of regular attendees on the days of administration, conclusions may be drawn and considered valid enough to make application. In addition, it was noted that there was sufficient cause to continually educate (in a subtle, low-key manner) members about the

subject of the fourth area, namely the Partnership Agreement (PA). This is to be done, in spite of it being a “task oriented” matter and not a “relationship oriented” matter, simply so that knowledge may prevail over ignorance about the binding document that unites these two congregations. Should there be some need in the future to address something in the foundational document,<sup>349</sup> the researcher has made the assumption that it is best not to have such details known only by a closed small group.

What are the implications of the findings of this study for this specific context of ministry?

The partnership (“dual parish,” as most refer to it) as it has existed is the best thing going for these two congregations. Are there drawbacks? Surely. Should the goal to be an independent congregation with its own pastor again someday? A noble goal, and well-intentioned, no doubt. But is it reasonable in the long run for either congregation? Not likely (for financial considerations to begin with) – and then, what happens to the “other” congregation if they are not in a similar position to “go it alone” or are turned loose by the other? It seems doubtful that both could ever be in such a position simultaneously. No, it seems as though this partnership, which has functioned for 51 years, will continue into the future.<sup>350</sup>

Are there other options available? Yes, but they have limitations and offer the congregations less autonomy, a sentiment for which, regretfully, no question was

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<sup>349</sup> This was done, for example, in 2011 to address an inequity in the way office and administrative expenses were shared by the congregations. (Joint Voters’ Minutes for 2011.)

<sup>350</sup> And indeed, it ought to be encouraged to do so. According to the Partner Questionnaire, question 39 (PP-3), while 28 responses either agreed (25) or agreed strongly (3) that the partnership “should be viewed by the partners as purely a business partnership,” sixty-eight (60%) either disagreed (62) or disagreed strongly (6). Clearly, there is a sense of loyalty to one another that has grown up over the years, at least as expressed by those who participated in the study.

formulated.<sup>351</sup> A cooperative parish is not the answer; such an arrangement would offer still less autonomy than the current arrangement, which 93 respondents (82%) agreed was a reason for the existence of the partnership.<sup>352</sup> A combined parish (merger) is not the answer, for reasons cited by those who have studied them.<sup>353</sup>

It seems important then, to recognize the blessings that have come to these congregations over the past 51 years of their partnership and to seek to continue and to maximize the opportunities for these congregations to be a witness and a blessing within their respective communities. There needs to be an on-going program of educating the members about the partnership, the benefits it supplies, and how the partnership is structured.<sup>354</sup>

Now it is time to look at some conclusions from the data, according to the Partner Questionnaire categories.

#### Conclusions Regarding One's Own Congregation (OC)

Each congregation should consider how to create more fellowship and togetherness events, as question OC-3 of the Partner Questionnaire indicated by a significant degree. Efforts at this ought to be encouraged, and such opportunities should be created with newer

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<sup>351</sup> Perhaps a question as simple as, "Our own congregation's autonomy is very important," with five possible responses.

<sup>352</sup> According to the Partner Questionnaire, question 17. Only 4 disagreed, while 17 were undecided with regards to the question: "The partnership exists so each congregation may retain its separate identity and function." Since so few admitted to actually having read the Partnership Agreement, this must be considered a "gut feeling" that exists among those who participated. Cooperative parishes, on the other hand, being different than multi-church parishes, diminish congregation autonomy, according to Wilson, pp. 70-71.

<sup>353</sup> According to Schaller, in his discussion on cooperative parishes, they are "very fragile institutional expressions" of the church, whereas "the parish church is a very tough ecclesiastical institution." (163ff.) See Schaller on "mergers," 176-178, as well as Wilson, 83-84.

<sup>354</sup> Plans are being drawn up to have a monthly informative article in the newsletter describing various aspects and characteristics of the Joint Parish, including, but not limited to business matters, congregational commitment, and useful history, with attention given to timeliness to encourage attendance at Joint Voters.

members and friends of the congregation in mind as well.<sup>355</sup> However, there being so few organizations in the congregation to host such events, it will be a matter of exploration as to how this can best be accomplished and by whom. Table discussion at the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop provided starter lists of activities or events to consider.

The Partner Questionnaire indicates a significant optimism for the future (OC-6) present among those who participated. This is a positive time in the life of these congregations, something to be shared on a wider basis than merely with those who attended the Gospel Partner Awareness Workshops. This is a strength upon which to build.

There was a significant majority of participants who believed that the members of their congregation highly valued the partnership (OC-10). Furthermore, since a majority disagreed that the partnership should be viewed as purely a business partnership (PP-3) and a majority considered it should be more lasting, like a marriage (PP-2), this partnership has a future. This is a time to remind the participants of the symbiotic relationships God has created in nature, and to remind the congregations that they need each other and that they can be a blessing to each other, for they are, indeed, partners in the Gospel. To do this, we might consider identifying a Sunday annually which can be for an emphasis on highlighting the Partnership and how it has been a blessing over the past half-century.

#### Conclusions Regarding the Partnership Agreement (PA)<sup>356</sup>

Since a significant number of respondents admitted they had never read the Partnership Agreement,<sup>357</sup> it is clear that some encouragement regarding this needs to take

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<sup>355</sup> Schaller, 143, had noted how “the churches must carry a greater burden in helping people become better acquainted,” as smaller congregations find themselves more of a bedroom community with fewer day-to-day connections. It may well be that not everyone “knows everyone else.”

<sup>356</sup> Meyer, 52: “A common parish model in rural ministry is the dual and multiple parish. A working document of agreement by the congregations involved is a necessity.”

place.<sup>358</sup> The simplest explanation for the partnership agreement (“Joint Parish Guidelines”) is, as was made plain at its outset, “namely that one pastor shall serve both congregations.”<sup>359</sup> The Guidelines are not merely a downsizing of something from a larger parish or congregation, but rather, spell out this partnership at its lowest common denominator, namely, the sharing of a pastor, office administration, and worship schedule. Since 78% of respondents agreed that the annual service-time switch was important to maintain a feature of fairness, it is clear this will remain into the future.<sup>360</sup> It remains up to the pastor to make sure worship is planned and carried out in such a way that the “most productive minutes in the week,”<sup>361</sup> namely the pre- or post- service time for greeting and visiting is not lost. Since this area (PA) dealt with the “task oriented” aspect of the partnership, the more “relationship oriented” matters will be noted under the Partnership Perception (PP) section.

### Conclusions Regarding the Pastoral Office (PO)

It is important that a worship schedule be preserved which does not crowd out the significant after-service greet-time (PO-2). This places responsibility upon the pastor from the planning of worship, to the fine-tuning of his sermon for tight delivery, to the possibility of truncating the liturgy as needed, in order to preserve this important after-worship time.

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<sup>357</sup> According to the Partnership Questionnaire, 68% (78 respondents) had never read them, and 21% (24 respondents) had not read them in the past five years.

<sup>358</sup> The only source in the literature review that touched on this was Wilson, who mentioned tension over sharing finances, and renegotiation of the financial commitments as necessary. (52) With this comes the presumption of a public awareness of the agreement (financial or otherwise) to be renegotiated.

<sup>359</sup> Minutes of the Zion Voters’ Assembly, March 31, 1963. In addition, on March 22, 1963, the first resolution adopted by the Joint Committee was “That both congregations remain separate and [C]all a single pastor to serve both.” (Joint Voters’ Minutes, March 22, 1963.) One could argue from the outset (and from the history) that the separateness mattered greatly to the congregations pledging to do what they must to have a pastor to serve them. Also Meyer, 52: [The congregations] “normally desire and request separate identities.”

<sup>360</sup> The researcher recalls presenting, in the annual meeting in December, 1991, that he had brought forth a proposal to have a permanent Sunday schedule, with three reasons cited: 1. Publications containing our service times would never be obsolete; 2. Possibility of Pastor-led Bible study at either church, regardless of the year; and 3. Possibility of a longer Sunday School/Bible Class time prior to early service. It was voted down. (The Church bulletin for December 8, 1991 contained a synopsis of this action.)

<sup>361</sup> Schaller, 91.



Figures from the Partner Questionnaire indicate a fairly high degree of good will exists between the congregations at the current time (no signs of animosity in terms of the pastor giving one congregation favored treatment, PO-3), and it does not seem to be a bone of contention where pastor's family attends (PO-5) or where he resides (PO-6). Nor does there seem to be contention that the larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership (PP-10).<sup>362</sup> Among other things, this is a non-threatening time to explore how the current pastoral stability has come about, especially since a significant number of respondents (101) agreed that "stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for our partnership," with none disagreeing, and thirteen undecided (PO-8).<sup>363</sup> The discussion might include, but not be limited to salary and benefits (retirement, level of health care, etc.). It might also include Lutheran education for the children of the parsonage, additional vacation time to connect with distant family, continuing education for the pastor, as well as other considerations. It would best be facilitated by someone other than the pastor who also possesses awareness of employment/personnel matters, and who sees pastoral tenure as important in the life of a congregation. In such a discussion, David R. Ray's insight which likens pastor-congregation relationships to three kinds of male-female relationships<sup>364</sup> might be shared, and members might be urged to consider "How can we find and keep the best possible pastor for our situation?" When employing the denomination's Call process, they certainly might want to interview and boldly ask, how many years will you give to this church [these churches]?<sup>365</sup> This is worth doing because healthy, stable pastoral relationships

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<sup>362</sup> Having been among them for nearly twenty-five years, the researcher is well aware that this was not always the case, although no effort to document has been made, and so many of that generation have been laid to rest.

<sup>363</sup> Jung, et. al., 198; Schaller, 98; These, along with the resources in the following three notes contribute to the discussion. Mead, reviewed in chapter 3 is a solid resource for this discussion.

<sup>364</sup> Ray, 175-176. His discussion is abbreviated in chapter 3 of this study.

<sup>365</sup> Ray, 196.

matter greatly, short pastorates often contribute to low morale and poor congregational self-esteem.<sup>366</sup>

Since a significant number of those who participated (79 out of 114) consider it important that there be regular, Pastor-led Bible class in their congregation each year (especially considering the worship and Bible Class time switch each year), steps will be taken to make this happen, with the elders having input as to offering short-term, multi-session Bible classes on-site quarterly. It is clear that the participants (PO-10) conclude that having a relationship with their own pastor matters. This is reflected in the word “pastor” (from the Latin for “herdsman”)<sup>367</sup> which suggests the sheep-shepherd relationship, such as was noted in I Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28 in chapter 2.

#### Conclusions Regarding the Partnership Perception (PP)

While the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish exists on the basis of the Partnership Agreement (PA) noted above, this section is where one might gain a perception as to the relational aspect of the partnership. In other words, the partnership being a given,<sup>368</sup> how is it perceived by those who participate in it?<sup>369</sup>

The responses from questions PP-1, 2, and 3 indicated that the partnership is valued more than a mere business partnership, however, there seems to be greater valuation on maintaining separate congregational identities. Respondents did consider the partnership to be more like a marriage union than a mere business partnership. Is it possible they have a notion that there is a spiritual nature to their partnership? Nevertheless, with support less for

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<sup>366</sup> Meyer, 26, 38; Ray, 175, and Hunter, 60.

<sup>367</sup> *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Ibid., 848.

<sup>368</sup> Meyer, 52: “A working document of agreement...is a necessity.”

<sup>369</sup> Considering also that the partnership –at the structural level- exists to facilitate maximal congregational autonomy (and has for half a century), one wonders if a relational component to the partnership ever was intended by the founders.

the idea of a “marriage union” than the support expressed for maintaining separate congregational identities, the latter idea appears to take precedence. Experience over the years has demonstrated that any activity billed as a “Joint” activity receives little to no support, regardless of where it is hosted. It might be that the slightest yield of autonomy might be perceived as a slope toward consolidation, in which they would lose their identity. For the very few who have ventured forth for a few of these occasions, it is to be noted that the attendees, for the most part, did not grow up in these congregations. This might signal change going into the future, as question PP-5 solicited.

It seems there is a likelihood that well-chosen matters of ministry which call for partnership between the congregations might receive significant support (PP-5). For some, clearly there is a desire for more than merely congregational autonomy, but to engage in matters of ministry, considering that the best way to start is with those along for the ride in this partnership.<sup>370</sup> This is a perception that goes beyond what “is” to consider what “might be,” that opens the partnership to new possibilities in the future which have not been a part of their past. Furthermore, the “undecided” responses are fascinating: are they open to persuasion to partnering more on matters if they could be convinced that it was for the good of their congregation and not a threat to their congregational autonomy? If so, this might increase the support of such ministry matters. This willingness of some to work together is a strength upon which to build for the future.

With regard to the helpfulness of the monthly newsletter, helpful guidance was received. Is pastoral time being well-spent in producing the newsletter (PP-6)? This

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<sup>370</sup>History has demonstrated that congregational autonomy wins here. Mogilka and Wiskus note that, “[i]n general, the greater the distance between parishes, the harder it is to facilitate growth and interparish cooperation and collaboration.” 81. Owing to the relatively close proximity of these congregations, perhaps this is a hopeful note.

response says “Yes.” It is the conviction of the current pastor that matters of interest to one congregation ought to at least be given exposure to the other congregation (and vice versa), and that ignorance of each other’s activities is not a blessing. This, then, is still a useful communication tool.

Furthermore, in seeking the well-being of the partnership, the congregational leaders would do well by studying the recommendations (identified by others) by engaging in “best practices,”<sup>371</sup> and possibly identifying from their own experience what might be termed “less than best practices,” and avoiding them.

It would be time well spent to develop a PowerPoint or video presentation on the history of the Joint Parish and how it functions, so that all new members are exposed to it and challenged to understand this valuable working relationship which quite literally allows their congregation to remain viable in its current form.<sup>372</sup> Plans are being drawn up to do this very thing.

In light of the importance of sufficient finances to keep a partnership stable, there is an ongoing need for stewardship education and to challenge the people of God to be faithful stewards across all the spectrum of the Christian life. This includes time, talents, and treasure, as well as promoting designated gifts in wills, advanced planning vehicles, and endowments.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Mogilka and Wiskus, pp. 111-136. In describing what is a “best practice,” they note: “The goal of best practices is not necessarily to reduce expectations, but to increase the number of resources. In other words, these best practices help the pastor place a higher priority on those activities that provide the most benefit for the expenditure of time and talent.” (112) Researcher note: Some of the “Best Practices” that are identified are peculiar to a Roman Catholic context; it would be useful to have something drawn up from the experience of LCMS parishes and pastors.

<sup>372</sup> I will work with the elders on how this can be done within the current calendar year.

<sup>373</sup> Hunter, 122-131, in a chapter titled “Rural Church Finances” notes how rural congregations must take into account the enormous fluctuations in income, sporadic income, illiquid assets, and more in considering the financial picture of members, and how it may relate to the financial picture of the rural congregation.

Another way in which ministry has been impacted by this is how the researcher has been so easily able to draw things from this study into Bible class teaching. Having been sharpened on the distinction of immediate and mediate Call from chapter 2, it was possible to give a presentation on this in Bible class in such a way as to encourage the saints who were present that it is not necessary to think that human involvement “taints” a Call, but that such mediation is observed in Scripture and yet credited to God. Today’s congregations can have the same confidence.

Knowing the historical backgrounds and contexts of each congregation will continue to be a blessing. As this project draws to completion, Grace will be celebrating a 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Knowledge gained about the founding of Grace Congregation as well as the mission zeal of the founding pastor and his sons and the fruit that came from the first generation of immigrants in the midst of their struggles as the faith grew in this community of believers can be both uplifting and challenging to the present generation, and recoded for future generations. Such awareness would be dimmer, had it not been that it was encountered in the resources consulted in the chapter 3 historical context study.

As noted in chapter 3, this study among these congregations takes place within what someone has called a Lutheran church-saturated community. (See the map of Perry County LCMS active congregations, Appendix 4.) Since these congregations have received transfers of membership from persons and families who have not changed their physical address, a few thoughts come to mind. It has been said that this is a day of decreasing loyalty to denominational and congregational ties. If this is so, then it is only faithful to be teaching loyalty and faithfulness: loyalty to the body of Christ –a real assembly or congregation comprised of one’s brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as faithfulness in worship.

Certainly this can be spoken of in sermons when warranted. It would seem wise to receive membership transfers by employing the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* rite, page 32 (“Reception of Members by Transfer or Profession of Faith”), for this encourages faithfulness and steadfastness in worship, as well as elevating membership by noting its privileges and responsibilities. This may help to teach the people loyalty to Christ as well as to Christ’s people. Such loyalty may enable their congregation to survive differences of opinion, adverse circumstances, and rocky pastorates, in addition to seasons of pastoral vacancy. No gimmicks here, it may simply be sought to demonstrate the “body-ness” of the congregation (see chapter 2) and to remind each person of their part.

Since these congregations are a part of a church-saturated community, and people *do* drive a distance to go to church, outreach thinking should be local, yes, but also beyond. At this point, the congregations do not have any plan for outreach, either local or beyond, but it is clear that if one-third of the respondents to the Partner Questionnaire (question 2) reside 6 miles or more from their church, restriction on outreach or publicity ought not be any less than the distance the people typically travel.<sup>374</sup> In addition, it is important that these congregations are noted for their love, quality worship, and community; they ought to offer people every reason to come to these places of worship.

The Joint Parish is not static. One evidence of this is the Vacation Bible School that is held every summer at Grace. There was a time in the researcher’s earlier years as pastor when there were no children or helpers from Zion either participating or assisting. In July of 2014, the VBS resembled more of a Joint undertaking, with Zion’s representation including 10 children attending, 6 adults helping, and 4 unchurched children brought by Zion

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<sup>374</sup> Hunter, 70. While there are exceptions, Hunter notes that the outer boundary that people are willing to drive to church can range from 12 to 20 minutes because people are more accustomed to traveling longer distances. Currently there is no plan to do this, but the Elders will be considering it in 2015.

members.<sup>375</sup> This merely demonstrates that change happens within the Joint Parish relationship, and can work out for good.

It was personally gratifying that a few questions which could have indicated negativity did not. From the background readings and anecdotal evidence, the perception that one congregation was receiving preferential treatment from the pastor, or dissatisfaction with the location of his residence, where his family attends, or a general perception that the greatest benefit generally fell to the larger congregation (Partner Questionnaire, questions 29, 31, 32, and 46) could all possibly be points of contention. Thankfully, in the present situation, this does not appear to be the case; in fact, the responses were quite charitable. Schaller, however notes, that lengthy pastorates often have a way of navigating these issues so that they are not quite as contentious.<sup>376</sup> After discussing pitfalls of some of these issues in the small-membership church he notes, “A long-term pastorate is an exception to much that is written here.”<sup>377</sup> Perhaps this is the case in the current study.

These observations give a more objective glimpse of the vision these partnered congregations have of themselves and of the partnership ministry they share, both by the qualitative and quantitative data which has been gathered. This data will be available to the leadership of these congregations for years to come, so that planning for ministry might include the considerations of a significant portion of the membership, namely, those who participated in the data gathering.

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<sup>375</sup> From the pastor’s notes.

<sup>376</sup> Wilson discusses these matters concisely, 40-44.

<sup>377</sup> Schaller, 181.

## **B. Contributions to the Broader Context of Ministry**

Dual parish and multiple parish partnerships are here to stay. How vital that the members of them be moved to consider how important it is that they function well together! This begins with a good founding document,<sup>378</sup> but also works toward willingness to truly consider one another partners on a relational level. It is one hope that insight from this study might be gained to assist others who are exploring “birthing” a partnership such as this one. Not mentioned prior to this is the note that paying tuition for Lutheran schools for the young families who choose Lutheran schooling has encouraged these young families not to depart (by way of transfer to congregations with a school), and has most certainly prolonged the life of these congregations.

The finding that a high percentage of respondents (arguably, these are committed folks if they were at worship and they remained to complete the Partner Questionnaire) had never read the Partnership Agreement was noteworthy. In other arenas of multi-parish ministry, it is important that the participants be encouraged to be fully aware of the document to which they, by way of their congregation’s pledge, are committed. It is also incumbent upon those in leadership to take occasion to instruct in the basics of how the partnership functions. This had not been done in recent memory, and the Partner Questionnaire indicated a goodly number of participants were unaware of such a document.

The theological foundation in chapter 2 can provide reassurance to pastors and parishioners alike that smaller, partnered congregations are indeed a part of the Body of Christ with the resultant Gospel gifts. Furthermore, when a mediate Call has been extended and received, they can hold their heads high and work together in Christ-like confidence that this arrangement has God’s blessing as they gather around Word and Sacrament.

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<sup>378</sup> Meyer, 52.



The literature review in chapter 3 can be a benefit to someone who wishes to gain insight from a variety of resources about rural ministry, smaller congregations, as well as pastoral tenure and the interplay of these matters among congregations in multi-parish partnerships. Pastoring congregations in these kind of situations is truly a unique, complex, and not easily understood undertaking. Key points of the Literature review include the following:

“The multi-church parish in which one pastor serves two or more churches has long been and will continue to be a ...feature of American Protestantism.”<sup>379</sup>  
Relatively few materials exist addressing multiple parish ministry. (Much church literature is written with larger, urban churches in mind.)  
Multi-church settings of ministry are typically smaller, rural congregations.<sup>380</sup>  
Rural churches tend to be tenacious.<sup>381</sup>  
Rural churches possess unique characteristics unto themselves.<sup>382</sup>  
Small(er) congregations possess unique characteristics unto themselves.<sup>383</sup>  
Due to location and situation, most of these situations are unlikely to experience significant growth.<sup>384</sup>  
“For the minister, serving two or more congregations is a complex and demanding task.”<sup>385</sup>  
Pastoral retention is often difficult in these settings.<sup>386</sup>  
“The minister serving two or more small congregations will unfortunately be perceived by his or her peers as having a less prestigious position than the person with only one church.”<sup>387</sup>  
Congregational self-esteem is often an issue (in that it is low).<sup>388</sup>  
Short pastorates -as well as vacancies in between- tend to negatively affect things like congregation perception of well-being or self-esteem.<sup>389</sup>  
Lengthy pastorates have a tendency to navigate potentially contentious issues so that they are much less so.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Wilson, 18.

<sup>380</sup> Wilson, 22.

<sup>381</sup> Hassenger, et. al.

<sup>382</sup> Hunter; Meyer; Jung, et. al..

<sup>383</sup> Schaller; Ray; Pappas.

<sup>384</sup> Wilson, 21-22.

<sup>385</sup> Wilson, 22.

<sup>386</sup> Wilson, 39; Schaller, 71-72; Ray, 175-183; Meyer, 24.

<sup>387</sup> Wilson, 23.

<sup>388</sup> Schaller, 58-61; Ray, 92; Hunter, 66; Meyer, 26, 38;

<sup>389</sup> Meyer, 24; Ray, 175; Schaller, 60-61; Hunter, 60

<sup>390</sup> Wilson, 40-44; Schaller, 181.

The procedures and resources provided in chapter 4 and the Appendices may be beneficial to conducting further study in contexts beyond this one. It is certainly hoped such study takes place in order to broaden what is known about such ministry contexts.

It does not seem that the findings revise any existing body of knowledge. Since previous studies appear lacking, one may only say that some of the comments made by those in the literature review were on target: for example, a long-term pastorate seemed to make certain potentially-contentious matters far less so.<sup>391</sup>

### **C. Contributions to Professional and Personal Growth**

This project has made it possible to learn more intimately the background that led to the formation of the Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership in which I currently serve. There had been no reason to discern the background in such detail in the previous years of ministry, and it is doubtful any reason to do so would have arisen except for this study. Not only has it been researched, but it has been dutifully documented and now published so that a faithful accounting exists that can benefit the current pastor and current members, as well as those of the future.

This project has allowed the opportunity to explore the place of the local congregation in the Body of Christ and the Church universal, as well as the Office of the Ministry as God has given it to the local congregation. Furthermore, in exploring the mediate Call in the Scriptures, I am more convinced than ever that God brought me here to this Call.

This project has afforded a unique opportunity to explore the world of small and rural congregations, congregations in partnership, and the importance of pastoral care and pastoral

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

stability, particularly in view of these contexts. This project convinced me of the vital importance that there be local thriving congregations in rural and small-town contexts, lest the light of the Gospel be extinguished. It has also caused me to grow in my conviction of the importance of Article Fourteen of the Augsburg Confession by which those in the LCMS pledge to walk together. It is best for a congregation to have a pastor they can call their own, properly Called, and not just a temporary fill-in.<sup>392</sup>

In addition, this study has imparted an even greater awareness of the peculiarity of multiple parish ministry, and an increased appreciation for those who engage in it, as well as those who are served by it. Perhaps the day will come when such ministry is viewed as a “specialty area.”

Having conducted various congregational surveys over the years, this was different, and much more challenging. This study had to be done with the strictest care in order to preserve integrity and provide validity and usefulness. As a result, I have become more respectful of the process by which a study such as this is conducted and data is gathered, digested, and reported. To attempt to gather a like amount of data without the precision, care, and standardization this project required would have been self-defeating, incomplete, and thus a waste of time and effort (lacking the necessary protocols to produce useful and valid data).

Similarly, this project required a standard of persistence and excellence beyond anything undertaken to date. It has humbled me, yet given me confidence that more is

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<sup>392</sup> The response to Partner Questionnaire # 36 (PO-10), bears this out: “It is important to have someone whom we can call ‘OUR’ Pastor” bears this out. One hundred and three respondents (fifty three of them strongly) agreed. Only four disagreed, with seven undecided. Thus pastoral retention is and ought to be a matter of concern for those involved in multi-church parishes.

possible than originally thought, and also given a thirst to explore other matters with a higher degree of persistence and competence.

The execution of this Project has also served to help me be more guarded against generalizations with regard to congregational matters, accepting comments as they are: anecdotal, but not necessarily speaking for anyone other than the speaker.

Another step in professional growth which this project occasioned was in the presentation of the data. This was a first in terms of preparing and presenting a PowerPoint presentation to the members who were present for the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop. This is a step in a new direction, and I hope to go further with modern digital imagery.

One aspect of both personal and professional growth has been an increased appreciation of the smaller, rural congregations that are so much a part of the LCMS' fabric, and increased compassion upon the plight of those who gather there to maintain a worshipping body of Christ in a location where membership and attendance is diminished from what it once was. In many cases, town and city churches are great beneficiaries of the labor of rural congregations to instruct and nurture her young in the faith as those young grew up and sought out educational and employment opportunities. The rural churches were "sending" bodies: their young go forth and seldom return to live their lives among them. They must be concerned with sending forth faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ! Furthermore, prior to this study, it was much easier to consider that some smaller, more rural congregations perhaps have good reason to close, merely as a matter of good and faithful stewardship of financial resources. But this opinion has softened, realizing how important it is that there be rural congregations gathered around Word and Sacrament, regardless of size or less-than-rosy future. In the words of a colleague, every congregation, regardless of its size, has the

Word, the Sacraments and the Keys.<sup>393</sup> Yes, such a point of closure may come, but it is possible to look it in the eye and be healthily prepared for the event.<sup>394</sup>

For many of these places, they are facilities with a sacred history (for they are sacred places, and they may indeed be historical as well), and a part of this history is to be seen in the cemetery which is often alongside, behind, or nearby. Where there are living, worshiping bodies of believers, it seems important that such be encouraged and maintained, for the sake of the witness it bears to the Gospel. The closure of a congregation (and its subsequent removal of a building or buildings) is but a step away from removal of the tombstones and reverting the land to its original state, with scant evidence that the Gospel had ever been there, once calling, gathering, and enlightening human souls. Rural congregations merit our prayers and encouragement. If the Gospel voice should fall silent in that location, where and when will it be heard again? If all that is witnessed is a continual diminishment of the Gospel witness across the rural landscape of America, except for stable and growing populations, this can surely not work out for good, can it? Here, Luther's comments about holding fast the Word while we have it come to mind: "Make use of God's word and grace while it is there! For you should know that God's word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been."<sup>395</sup>

On both a professional and a personal basis, it was also a challenge to maintain intensity in conducting the research without speaking so much about it to others that it was premature, or that they wearied from hearing about it. In keeping silence until appropriate times, it seems that the maintained silence became my "dark side." Yet this was necessary to

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<sup>393</sup> For the reader unfamiliar with the term "Keys," this is a very Lutheran way of speaking about the power of Absolution, or forgiveness of sins. See *Luther's Small Catechism*, "the Office of the Keys."

<sup>394</sup> Hunter, cited in chapter 3, gave steps to enable a congregation to face "death with dignity," 111.

<sup>395</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 45: *The Christian in Society II*, J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, eds. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 352.

avoid confusion and keep the project components under wraps until the proper time to begin to publicize it and so fan the interest that hopefully “peaks” when it is best for it to do so. The discipline of silent diligence has also accompanied me as the completion of this project drew near; as the Bible says, “Let not him who puts his armor on boast like him who takes it off.”<sup>396</sup> Another important component of this silence was to keep a public availability; I did not want to find out that someone failed to contact me when there was a need because, “Pastor is too busy.”

This was also a colossal distraction from the day-to-day work of ministry. The amount of writing, reading, proof-reading, and fact-checking all kept me at my desk and wrestled from me precious time for visitation, family, or personal matters. To squeeze all that was necessary to bring this to completion amid a busy pastoral schedule has been a challenge. Over the weeks and months, problems and questions would arise, often unanticipated, leaving me at a loss how to proceed. My prayer was often that God would guide and lead me to answers where I saw only questions, and to solutions where I saw only problems. Fortunately, the following hymn verse was part of my devotional practice during the entire project at least three times per week, from the hymn, “Now Thank We All Our God”--

Oh may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,  
With ever-joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us  
And keep us in His grace and guide us when perplexed  
And free us from all ills – in this world and the next! (LSB, 895.2)<sup>397</sup>

Time and again, God’s faithfulness came as the solution (or the steps to solving a riddle) to a perplexing problem dawned, in answer to the prayer. I found myself growing

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<sup>396</sup> I Kings 20:11. All may put their armor on; only the victorious take it off; anyone may begin and undertake a study, while only the victorious bring it to completion.

<sup>397</sup> “Nun Danket Alle Gott,” by Martin Rinckart (1586-1649); translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878). Included as hymn # 895 in *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

confident that God would provide solutions and answers. In addition, God's presence was always close at hand, as He also granted an (nearly) ever-joyful heart and blessed peace. For this I am deeply grateful.

It was a matter of personal growth to note that there were some members who wanted no part in the Partner Questionnaire, even though it would require a relatively brief time to complete. How would I respond to such people and such attitudes? My challenge was to smile, greet them at the door, and love them just the same, neither being dismissive of them nor being disappointed in them, and to quickly forget who opted out, so as to maintain no negative recollection whatsoever.

This project also heightened an awareness of time, and the necessity to seize it in order to accomplish the myriad of tasks that were necessary to bring this through to completion. It is recalled that the District President warned me early on in the project that it would be impossible to keep on doing everything one normally does in the ministry; I would need to make wise choices. May this be a testament to growth in this matter.

It also is a matter of personal growth in recognizing that the helpfulness, understanding, and support of my wife (the Pastor's wife) in this Calling is incalculable! While in the LCMS there is no developed theology of the woman who accompanies her husband as he takes a Call, her role has proven indispensable in helping to identify with both congregations, as well as in dispelling the shadow of favoritism. Her presence alongside me in this Calling has been an immeasurable blessing!

I have personally grown in an awareness that there might be a certain giftedness or mix of gifts which it is beneficial for a pastor to possess in engaging in multiple parish

ministry. This has brought about a growing conviction that I am Called by God to these people in these places because God has prepared and equipped me for service to them.

It is also a matter of personal conviction and professional growth that I believe I have been truly blessed to be in a position to undertake this project. It has been a privilege to not only reside within reasonable traveling distance to Concordia Seminary, allowing opportunity to undertake the studies toward the Doctor of Ministry degree. I have also been blessed with the encouragement of many of our people, and the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish has generously assisted with tuition. To be in the position to undertake a study such as this for the benefit of these congregations has truly been an immeasurable blessing.

As for the entire Doctor of Ministry program, I count myself exceedingly fortunate to have had the opportunity to study under the professors whom I have, to be exposed to the readings and resources that I encountered, and to have studied with, made friends with, and learned from colleagues in so many varied ministries. The program was begun rather tentatively, not necessarily seeking the degree, but seeking to grow and to not petrify (having been out of seminary nearly twenty years). The further the studies progressed, the more I welcomed them and enjoyed the challenge of growth. I thank God for this opportunity.



#### **D. Recommendations for Additional Research.**

What follows are recommendations that address gaps in knowledge and how those gaps might be remedied.

##### Current Data on the Presence and Persistence of the Rural Church

1. The presence and persistence of the rural church can be understood from the three decades of change (1952, 1967 and 1982) studied by Hassinger, Holik, and Benson.<sup>398</sup> Since their longitudinal study is unique, it would be very worthwhile to see it continued. What, for example, has happened in the next three decades of change? What might be learned if such a study were revisited and undertaken just as the previous ones? The world of rural church study awaits such a follow-up.
2. Seemingly absent from the literature is any kind of longitudinal study or tracking of multiple parish congregations over time. Such a study or studies might be able to validate a claim such as Schaller makes in the foreword to Wilson, that such congregations will either “plateau in size,” or “experience a gradual erosion in numbers,” to which he adds: “This book makes it clear that numerical growth and multi-church parishes rarely go together.”<sup>399</sup> Clearly, such a study ought to be carried out in our LCMS context. This could be undertaken by a regular tracking of the basic information (membership, attendance) that is submitted by each congregation in each year’s report to Synod, provided such information is submitted by the congregations. Sufficient data has been included about these congregations in the current study that such a follow-up study might be conducted among them in the future, if desired.

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<sup>398</sup> Reviewed in chapter 3, *The Rural Church*, by Hassinger, Holik and Benson, bears the subtitle “Learning From Three Decades of Change.”

<sup>399</sup> Wilson, *Ibid.*, 14. (As noted, these words are not by Wilson, but from the Foreword by Schaller.) Schaller writes in *The Small Church IS Different*, 61, that “it is rare to find a small congregation that has experienced substantial numerical growth and sustained that growth without the benefit of a long pastorate.”

## Effective Ministry in Multiple Parish Ministries

Since ministry in multiple parishes is so little understood by those who have not experienced them, it is noted that Wilson says it is “a complex and demanding task.”<sup>400</sup> Mogilka and Wiskus listed fifteen pastoral tools or skills necessary for effective leadership by the pastors of multiple parishes.<sup>401</sup> Meyer also acknowledged the need for “special gifts for ministry” in such a setting.<sup>402</sup> Schuth chronicles some of the difficulties that accompany this type of ministry, including, but not limited to duplication of services, meetings and other functions, shifting contexts (from one community to another) as well as drive time.<sup>403</sup> Add to this the possibility of hospital and nursing home visitation in different (even opposing) directions, and dealing with different leadership with different community or cultural characteristics. This begins to sketch the picture why this is a peculiar kind of ministry.

3. It would be valuable to the church to see a study of pastorates in dual or multi-parish partnerships where things are considered to be going well (this might be a challenge to define). What are congregational strengths (as viewed by both leaders and pastor) and what are strengths in the Pastor (as viewed by both groups). As a part of the same study, partnerships where things are deemed to be going poorly should also be studied.<sup>404</sup> An inventory, along with focus groups and interviews might be utilized to chronicle the difficulties, as well as to offer suggestions as to what might be done to address them. Since a listing of “best practices” in multiple parish ministry already exists from one [Roman Catholic] source,<sup>405</sup> it would be good to see a study undertaken that would identify best

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<sup>400</sup> Wilson, 22. Also his chapter, “Managing the Multi-Church Parish Effectively, 45-53.

<sup>401</sup> Mogilka and Wiskus, 37.

<sup>402</sup> Meyer, 53.

<sup>403</sup> Schuth, 89-90.

<sup>404</sup> This might be a starting point to develop a “worst practices” listing.

<sup>405</sup> Mogilka and Wiskus, 111ff. Self care for the pastor tops their list. No ministry can be done when he falls prey to burnout. Stress management and ministerial self-care are tools worth nurturing. 56-57. Staffing for

practices (perhaps ten of them), and square them with faithful Lutheran theology, so that such ministry might be undertaken unquestionably and with confidence by a Lutheran pastor, without having to “baptize” resources from other theological backgrounds.

4. Conversely, it might, at the same time, be good and helpful to identify “worst practices” (or pitfalls to avoid).<sup>406</sup> Such practices might best be identified by those who have served in multiple parish ministry settings, or who currently are serving. Perhaps those with lengthy tenures in situations that seem to be working should be consulted. Such a study might be conducted by a combination of questionnaire, focus group, and interviews. The input of those in multi-parish ministry should be sought, as well as congregational leaders of congregations who have experience in multiple parish ministry. Questionnaires and focus groups could go a long way toward this goal.

5. A study could be conducted (perhaps in conjunction with the previous recommendation) that might help to identify characteristics, qualities, gifts, and skills most useful in candidates for multiple parish ministry. Conversely, might there be characteristics indicating a candidate ought best *not* be placed in such situations, lacking a critical mass of necessary gifts or skills for such a ministry?<sup>407</sup> Consideration should be given as to how to identify such men<sup>408</sup> and steps taken to better prepare and equip them for this unique type of ministry. More study needs to be done to identify the unique factors which converge in this kind of ministry context.

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administrative tasks is important, for “[w]ithout staff, administrative duties can so monopolize their time that they are often unable to focus on the pastoral and life-giving aspects of ministry.” 61.

<sup>406</sup> Schuth, 162. A listing of “Top Ten Biggest Mistakes” is as close to this as we have found.

<sup>407</sup> This comment is not made lightly, but takes in mind the effect of pastoral “mismatch” as described by Meyer, 24-25. What role might indebtedness [educational loans] play in this?

<sup>408</sup> It should read “and their families,” as spousal education and employment, children needs, etc., are all a part of the picture.

## Multi-parish Partnerships and the Pastors who are Called to Serve Them

6. A separate study needs to be undertaken that can give the LCMS a clearer picture of multi-parish partnerships and the men Called to serve them. Are there figures on the typical length of a pastorate in multiple parish and partnered congregations? How does it compare with single-congregation pastorates? Do multi-parish partnerships typically have longer vacancies? Do multi-parish partnerships more typically Call from the field or directly from the seminaries? What do District Presidents look for (qualities, experiences, family situations, etc.) as they compile Call lists for multi-parish partnerships? Do pastors who take a Call away from a dual/multi-parish partnership typically gravitate toward a single-parish?<sup>409</sup> Is it rare for a single-parish pastor to be Called (and to take the Call) by a multi-parish partnership? Such a study should go beyond the current situation and explore the possibilities for the future. How many multiple parish ministry situations are anticipated to precipitate in the future? The Church must be prepared to serve them with both answers and workers.<sup>410</sup>

Is it known (or is it ever sought to know) how many seminarians experienced a multi-parish congregational experience of some sort (or a rural upbringing) in their formative years? Furthermore, what is done at the seminary level to identify and prepare potential candidates for multiple parish ministry? Do any vicarages provide experience in multiple parish ministry and the “balancing act” required of such? What is done after Call Day to prepare those pastors-elect for multiple parish ministry who have received such Calls?

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<sup>409</sup> Note: “single-parish” is hyphenated because in the next usage it would be unclear as to whether the marital status of the pastor is being referenced.

<sup>410</sup> Mogilka and Wiskus, 138, write, “The situation leading to more multiple parish ministries in the U.S. isn’t going to change soon.”

While some of these questions might be answered simply by a careful tracking of data from questionnaires, others would require possible interview or focus group format to acquire data.

If pastoral retention in multi-parish settings is difficult, to which some sources have alluded,<sup>411</sup> this, too ought to be explored. What factors are cited as contributive by those who have departed multi-parish ministry for some other ministry arena? For those who remain in multi-parish settings, what do they value most about their experience, and what factors work in their favor in enabling them to continue to serve in their setting? What do they find most frustrating and most draining? Such data might be obtained by a combination of questionnaire, focus groups, and interviews.<sup>412</sup>

Why do studies such as these deserve attention? While some might dismiss this as an insignificant pursuit to obtain such answers, in reality it is not.<sup>413</sup> In July of 2013 the LCMS had 493 dual or multiple parish ministry settings.<sup>414</sup> Since it was reported in 2013 that there were 6,153 congregations in the LCMS,<sup>415</sup> this concerns not merely 8% of the congregations (the result of 493 divided by 6,153), but rather 16% or more of the congregations (since the 493 represents more than double that number of congregations, some of them being triple or quadruple parishes).<sup>416</sup>

In conducting a study such as this, a number of things might be done differently to improve the study. For example, in corraling the facts in chapter 3 on membership, it may

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<sup>411</sup> Meyer, 24. Often diminished congregational self-esteem accompanies –or is accelerated- by this, he notes.

<sup>412</sup> Schaller, 60-61, 91, offers some reflections on this to begin the discussion.

<sup>413</sup> Wilson, 82, says: “The basic fact the Protestant denominations and their clergy must face is that there are – and will continue to be – large numbers of small membership churches without sufficient resources to justify or be able to support a full-time pastor.” Furthermore, he adds: “As long as there are people who want to be members of small congregations there will be such churches, and many of them will have to share a pastor.”

<sup>414</sup> According to an email from the LCMS denominational headquarters at the LCMS’ International Center.

<sup>415</sup> Figure published by the LCMS’ Church Information Center.

<sup>416</sup> Schuth, 153, notes: “This kind of ministry can no longer be considered an exception.”

have been beneficial to have a committee of members from each congregation put the numbers together. This might have increased interest and anticipation, leading to better participation. Perhaps it might even work to have a committee of members drawn from each of the congregations in the partnership drawing up the questions, so as to see which data and information is most desirable from their perspective for their context, and how best to obtain data regarding such. This might have the effect of increasing “buy-in” and participation as word about what they are doing spreads among family, relatives, and friends. No goals were set and publicized as to participation in the Partner Questionnaire or the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops. Could there have been even better participation? It will never be known, but in hindsight it seems that setting a reasonable goal (and challenging the members to attain it for the well-being and future of their congregations) might have helped.

It is noteworthy that in the earliest days of the LCMS, there arose a situation much like a multi-church parish in St. Louis, called the *Gesamtgemeinde*.<sup>417</sup> Rather than breaking apart into separate and individual congregations (as *Kirche und Amt* might suggest should naturally occur), rather, these were kept together for many years with Walther as the authority. Knowing the lessons they had learned about authority and liberty in church structure, the researcher is puzzled why this authority structure was maintained until after Walther’s death. This Joint Congregation was dissolved (into separate congregations) within two years of his death.<sup>418</sup> If it has not yet been explored, one wonders, why did it continue so long when these congregations could have been self-standing congregations?

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<sup>417</sup> Suelflow, *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*

## **E. Additional Resources Needed**

1. There exists, within the LCMS, a need for a congregational guidebook to shepherd congregations (or more clearly, congregational leaders) exploring the possibility or seeking to establish a partnership. Actually such a resource exists; it is found in the most recent (2012 Revision) of *The Circuit Counselor's Manual* of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, pages 81 to 89, but only the Circuit Visitor knows about it and has access to it. In it are included a wealth of resources to assist congregations, from the exploration stage all the way through the creation of a multi-congregation parish. Matters for consideration, Discussion Questions, Pros and Cons, Steps of Negotiation, Drawing up the Agreement, and a Checklist are all included.
2. There exists a need within the LCMS for a clearinghouse of partnering agreements and the particular characteristics thereof and the benefits and drawbacks of each that have been acquired through experience. (E.g., the advantage of a Joint Treasury, who assesses each congregation...) Perhaps the LCMS' Rural and Small Town Ministry Office could be the compiler.
3. There is also a need for a workshop to prepare Seminarians<sup>419</sup> who have received Calls to a Joint, Dual, Multiple or Yoked setting in small town/rural America.<sup>420</sup> Such a workshop might expose these candidates to the literature review included in this study and a few more recent texts.<sup>421</sup> Perhaps the most important part of this might be pitfalls to avoid in the earliest days, as identified by pastors in such a ministry context who have replied to the

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<sup>419</sup> Mogilka and Wiskus, 18, "Training [in multiple parish ministry] is essential for the pastor."

<sup>420</sup> Schuth, 38, in her extensive study of Romans Catholic priests in multiple parishes found that about 10% say they received some form of special orientation, while 90% did not.

<sup>421</sup> Schuth, 171, writes: [this kind of ministry] "is not understood well enough." She says this regarding why such ministry is not an organization priority [in the Romans Catholic church].

question, “What do you wish you had done differently in the early days of your ministry, and what have you learned as a result of this?”

4. While there is a wealth of resources in Lutheran Service Book and the LSB Agenda, there is no service or format for the initiation of a Partnership. This would suggest that either the pastor overseeing such a birthing of a partnership develop one of his own, or the occasion passes more as simply a business matter, with no public congregational acknowledgement. Such a service has been drawn up; it may be found in Appendices 34 (annotated) and 35.

5. Finally, since the LCMS prepares and employs Intentional Interim Pastors (IIP) for certain vacancy situations, it seems that due to the unique nature of multiple parish partnerships, it might be worthwhile to explore the possibility of IIPs with multiple parish partnership experience.

## **F. Summary**

The Project began, “*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves and of the partnership they share.*”

Now it has been researched. The history of the congregations has been explored, certainly enough to better understand the circumstances which brought them into the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership in the Gospel.

The data-gathering instruments have been composed, employed, tallied, and surveyed, and analysis has taken place (with more to come). Some conclusions have been drawn, while perhaps a re-examination of the data may reveal still more.

Much has been learned about the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves and of the partnership they share. This partnership has enabled the Lutheran



Christians in these locations to have a regular worship life, Christian education, and pastoral care, among other things, for over fifty-one years. The intent is to use what has been learned for as long as possible to help the congregations in this partnership to maintain a faithful witness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in their respective communities. Much has been learned that may prove useful to others in similar contexts. And need has been noted for further study and resources. May God bless these labors with fruit according to His rich mercy!

APPENDIX 1  
A SHORT HISTORY FOR GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
AT UNIONTOWN, PERRY COUNTY, MISSOURI

(This is taken from the book containing the first 160 years of the Records of Grace that was published through the Perry County Historical Society. Only grammatical, spelling, or factual errors have been corrected.)

A Short History and Some Statistics  
of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Congregation  
at Uniontown, Perry County, MO

In late 1838, several hundred immigrants left their homeland, Saxony, for faith and conscience's sake, to come with their leader, Pastor Martin Stephan, to the state of Missouri in the United States of America. After arrival in New Orleans, they journeyed by steamer up the Mississippi to St. Louis in early 1839. Some 120 remained in St. Louis and soon found work and earnings, while more than 500, few of whom were farmers by trade, came to Perry County to settle down. The outlook here was all but alluring. On the contrary, sorrowful times and intense misery awaited them, which they had not foreseen. The immediate weeks, months, and even years were indeed very trying for them. No arrangements of any kind had been made; even shelter for so many people was lacking. Large sheds or camps were put up as soon as possible. There the families had to house together as well as circumstances permitted, even during the following winter.

Climatic fevers soon made their appearance and played havoc. Death claimed a very heavy toll. Others lay there in their fever void of proper care, as not any were well enough to care for others or themselves. And then in the month of December 1839, another group of immigrants landed. Pastor C.F. Gruber from Reust in the Dukedom of Saxony-Altenburg was the leader of this group of people. This group arrived at Wittenberg after a long and at times tempestuous voyage, comprised of 141 Lutherans, including the children. Pastor Gruber had held together with Stephan on account of his resolute testimony for the old, unadulterated [Lutheran] faith, but circumstances had delayed his emigration nearly a year. With him came many that stayed back the year before, who had either not been fully decided or were not ready to depart. In some cases they were acquainted with or related to the earlier Saxon immigrants. This new group of fellow Lutherans settled down in Perry County, about 9 miles west of Altenburg. They called their settlement Paitzdorf (near the place now called Uniontown), and Gruber served as their Pastor. They chose for their settlement the valley of the Indian Creek and surrounding area, which had recently been vacated of Shawnee and Delaware Indians (hence the creek's name).

Already February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1840, an evangelical-Lutheran congregation was founded at Paitzdorf with fifteen charter members. They called themselves "The Old Lutheran Congregation at Paitzdorf, Perry County, State of Missouri." (While being a new congregation, they wished to dissociate themselves from newer, more liberal minds of theology in Europe, rather identifying with the older teaching associated with the original followers of Dr. Martin Luther. The present name, Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, became official in 1929.) The list with the names of the founders no longer exists. Also gone are the minutes of the first fifteen years of meetings. However, with quite some

certainly the following are mentioned: Gottfried Hemmann, Michael Bock, Johann Gottlob Fiehler, Michael Hopfer, Michael Jacob, Gottlieb Wunderlich, Johann Gottlob Frentzel, G. Lorenz, C. Nagel, and Johann Gotthold Sittner. Very likely a school was opened immediately, for already during the voyage Pastor Gruber had gathered together the children on the ship and taught them.

In the earliest days, divine services were conducted in the homes of the people. After some time a log building was erected for church purposes. After the new brick church was finished in 1876, this log building served as school until a new school building was erected in 1906. The old school house, which had been erected in 1857, then became the Confirmation room.

The fact that the congregation has three cemeteries is explained in this way: In the year 1857, the spring which then supplied water for the church properties, parsonage, school, etc., was believed to be contaminated by its proximity to the cemetery, and a second cemetery was established on a hill farther to the north. Both cemeteries, however, continued in use, even after the new cemetery, directly north of the church was consecrated as a burial ground in 1938, with a few graves on the older cemeteries bearing dates as recent as the early 1950s.

Carl Friedrich Gruber was the leader of the immigration group and founding pastor, serving them from 1840 to his death in 1858. Gruber was the father-in-law of Pastor Georg H. Schieferdecker who was called to the Altenburg congregation after Rev. Loeber's death. It was Schieferdecker who started the controversy about the millennium, which finally brought about a split in the congregation at Altenburg. Gruber agreed with his son-in-law, but did not come out so openly about his views. Gruber's son, Carl (sometimes spelled "Karl") Theodore had been Assistant Pastor together with his father for several years. Carl Theodor accepted a Call to Frankenburg (now known as Friedenber) in 1856, and in 1864 he took a Call to Washington, MO. [Later information would reveal him to be instrumental in the founding of numerous congregations in Seward County, Nebraska, where he was laid to rest, having died December 4, 1889.]

The Paitzdorf founding Pastor, Carl Frederick Gruber, died September 2, 1858 and was laid to rest Sept. 4 on the "old cemetery" (middle cemetery). Pneumonia and chills brought on his death at the age of 63 years and 5 days. Pastor Schieferdecker preached the funeral sermon. Pastor Rennike was Gruber's successor at Paitzdorf, serving until 1864. His successor was Rev. Wilhelm Adolph Bergt, who was among the original Saxon immigrants. Pastor Bergt also served Salem's congregation (Farrar), which had been served by the younger Gruber from Frankenberg. His mode of travel between Paitzdorf and Jammerthal (Farrar) was on horseback. Rev. Bergt served until 1879. It is likely that during Rev. Bergt's time that one teacher taught in both locations. Teacher Weck alternated teaching one week in Paitzdorf and the next in Salem and so on.

During Pastor Bergt's pastorate here, the church building, which we behold on a mild elevation between the school and parsonage, was built. It was in 1874 that plans were made and pledges taken for the new church building. In the very first meeting that was called for this purpose, 28 members pledged \$2,580. The opinion was that the building could be erected for \$5,000. The building was to be 55 ft. long, 34 ft. wide, 20 ft. high and a steeple 75 ft. high. The bricks for the building were made west of the picnic grove. When the building was finished, the sum of \$5,000 had been exceeded by more than \$1,000. The Young Men's League pledged \$210.75 for a bell. On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1876, the building was

dedicated to the Triune God. The speakers for the occasion were the pastors: W. Mueller from Chester, IL; Rev. Polack from Cape Girardeau; and Rev. Demetrio from Perryville. In 1878 Mr. Ernst Wambsganss was called as teacher. His wife being sickly, he accepted a Call to Michigan after a few years. Already at that time the founding of a cemetery near the church was discussed, but did not become reality until 1938.

In 1880 a new parsonage was built. The bricks were hauled from Perryville. Rev. Polack was pastor here at that time. In 1881 it was resolved to buy a clock for the church. In 1882 Teacher Lohhoff accepted a Call to this congregation. Pastor Mende succeeded Pastor Polack in 1886. He held this pastorate until 1892. After Teacher Lohhoff departed, Teacher Kaepfel was Called. At this time in 1889 a second-hand pipe organ was installed in the church. The following year, 1890, the congregation celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with two services. Pastor Roesener from Altenburg and Pastor Mayer from New Wells were the speakers. Lightning struck the church steeple in 1892 and badly damaged it as well as the organ and the clock. The repairs amounted to \$309.65.

Some English instruction at school had begun as early as 1883; however, it would not be until 1927 that English services were held, and then only once per month. Sunday Christian instruction ("Christenlehre") remained conducted in German until at least 1943.

Several things impress us in looking back upon the early years. Instead of going to court, disputes were handled within the congregation, and not always to the instant satisfaction to all involved. In addition, the minutes made it clear that the congregation was always willing to help out with special requests, whether it was a plea to help a storm damaged church in Kansas, a new mission start-up, or some other plea for mission assistance.

In 1892 Pastor O. R. (Otto Raphael) Hueschen from Hanover Lutheran Church in Cape Girardeau accepted the Call to this congregation. In 1897 the church steeple from the roof up was covered with corrugated metal sheeting and the next year the church was treated to a tin ceiling. This material was purchased from the firm Rice and Roy in St. Louis for the price of \$265.00.

For the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church dedication Pastor Roesener from Altenburg and Pastor Winkler from New Wells served as speakers. In the same year school desks were purchased at a cost of \$75.33. In 1906 a new school building was erected for the sum of \$1,017.36.

In 1913 an addition was built to the rear of the church to serve as a vestry and as a room for the confirmation class. The diamond (75<sup>th</sup>) anniversary of the congregation was celebrated in 1915. Reverend Bernthal from St. Louis and Pastor Winkler from New Wells were the speakers. The teacherage [south and west of the church] was purchased in 1921 from John Leonhardt for \$1,500. The old teacherage [north of the church] was sold with about seven acres of land to Mrs. Ben Oberndorfer for \$1,025. In 1926 the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church dedication was commemorated with morning and afternoon services. Pastor Carl Hoeh from Des Peres, MO, and Pastor Fiehler from Hoyleton, IL, both sons of the congregation, were the speakers. In July the same year Pastor Hueschen, after having served here for 34 years, retired from office to live with his daughter, Amanda, and son-in-law, Oscar Schmidt, in St. Louis.

Rev. R. J. I. Mueller accepted the Call extended to him. Installation took place the first Sunday in Advent. Mr. William A. Kramer was the teacher here at that time with 71 children in school. Toward the close of the year 1927, teacher Kramer accepted a Call to

Strasburg, IL. He and his family moved to that place the latter part of the month of January 1928. The Pastor took over the school duties. Having Called several times in vain, we sent a Call for a graduate and candidate E. H. Brockmann from Concordia Teachers' College in Seward, Nebraska was assigned. Mr. Brockmann was installed here on the first Sunday in September, 1928, and he remained until 1943.

In December of 1935 the church building as well as the teacherage and parsonage were wired for the electric current and connected with the power-line; some time later the school-house was also wired and connected.

The same year a different pipe organ was purchased through Mr. Treu for \$425.00, and in exchange for the old organ, which had served here for 48 years. The present organ had served in Pastor Hoeh's church in Des Peres, MO, and was refurbished prior to its installation here. The centennial of the Saxon Immigration was celebrated in 1939, and we joined in celebration with the Frohna, Altenburg, and Wittenberg congregations. Centennial booklets (both German [script] and English) were published jointly by the four congregations.

From the founding of this congregation, February 2, 1840, until March of 1939, there had been 1,119 Baptisms performed, 655 Confirmations (unfortunately, the records for the first 21 years of these are lost), 274 couples married, and 469 burials conducted. It was notable that in 1848 and 1849 no death occurred in this congregation, although the cholera held sway in this county during those years.

During the many years there were also different societies in the congregation, such as: Young Men's Society, Young Ladies' Society, Mixed Choir, Men's Choir, Brass Band, Walther League, Ladies' Aid and LLL Men's Club.

At its centennial the congregation numbered 371 baptized members, 256 communicant members, 80 voting members, and 42 school children.

Concluding the centennial booklet, it was noted that many more things happened during the century; barns and woodsheds were built, cisterns were dug, cement sidewalks were laid, fences and garages were erected. Such things (and more) were too burdensome to list in further detail.

World War II brought scrap iron collections, special offerings for military chaplaincies, and the first appearance of flags in the church. Plaques with Honor Roll listings of those serving in the Armed Services were displayed. Rev. Mueller died after an extended illness in July 24, 1944, and Rev. Adalbert Stoehr was installed October 15<sup>th</sup> of that year. The conclusion of the war brought a special Peace Thankoffering, which was well supported. Special services were held to thank God for victory in Europe, and later in the year, Japan.

A new teacherage was built in 1946 [west of church] and the old one sold to Theo. Mueller. Pastor Erwin Boeschen served Grace from 1949 until 1963, during which time the present school building was built in two stages. The basement, completed in 1951, being subdivided, served as our school until the upstairs was completed and dedicated in 1954. In 1953 under Pastor Boeschen's leadership, Sunday School and Bible Class were begun. It was in 1950 that offering baskets replaced the long-handled "Klingelbeutel", and in 1952 the parsonage was built. The decade of the 1950s saw a fair amount of turnover of teachers in our school, especially in the lower grades.

An extensive remodeling of church took place in 1958. Gas furnaces replaced the wood stoves, a center aisle replaced the side aisles, a new altar/chancel/pulpit area was constructed and new pews were installed.

The end of Pastor Boeschen's ministry at Grace brought with it the beginning of a new era. The shortage of pastors to serve the many vacancies in Synod was quite critical. The neighboring congregation of Zion in Longtown was experiencing the same difficulty in finding a pastor. Under the leadership of vacancy Pastor, Rev. Keith Kiihne, and circuit counselor Rev. A. M. Lohmann, the two congregations voted to form a dual ministry, Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish. They together called Pastor Robert Koenig, who was installed as pastor to both parishes on August 11, 1963. Pastor Koenig's ministry was brief, serving until July of 1964 when he accepted a Call to teach at Concordia College in Austin, Texas.

Seminary graduate Erhard W. W. Wolf was assigned to Grace and Zion by Synod's Board of Assignments, and was installed as Pastor September 6, 1964. Pastor Wolf brought with him some years of teaching experience, prior to graduation from Concordia Seminary in Springfield.

During Pastor Wolf's years of service, the formal guidelines for the dual parish between Grace, Uniontown and Zion, Longtown were adopted in 1967.

December 15, 1971 will be long remembered here at Grace, Uniontown. At approximately 2:30 a.m. a tornado struck unexpectedly, toppling the tower and steeple onto the roof after first removing most of the roof itself. The interior suffered minor water damage. In all, however, repairs amounted to almost \$10,000. Thus, on May 21, 1972, the church took on a "new look" with a new fiberglass steeple atop the bell tower. The tower and steeple rise 42 ft., 7 ½ in. above the rooftop.

While Pastor Wolf remained the relatively long time of 9 years (from 1964 to 1973), that would not be the case for the candidates and pastors soon to follow. Candidate Gary W. Phelps, for example, would only stay from his installation, November 24, 1974 into the year 1976.

Candidate Daryl Bergelin would be the next pastor assigned to Grace and Zion in 1976. He would stay until 1979.

When it came time to Call a pastor again, the Joint parish decided to Call from the field in the hope of getting someone to stay longer. In this hope, Pastor Loyle Vogt was installed in July, 1979. His pastorate, however, would be cut short by his untimely death when his private plane crashed Thanksgiving week upon a return trip to his former congregation in Nebraska.

Another candidate would be assigned to Grace and Zion in the spring of 1980. This would be Candidate Vaughn Whiting. He would only serve through most of 1982. During his term of service, major repairs were completed on the organ, the front concrete platform in front of church was built, and a ramp was put on the east side.

The vacancy this time would not be for long. On April 17, 1983, Pastor Wilbert Bok was installed. Near the end of his pastorate, the church windows, over a century old, were replaced. In 1983 we replaced the roof on the teacherage and installed the new front entry doors with stained glass windows. For the first time, elders would be given permission to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion.

On May 6, 1985, the vote was taken to close our school. This measure was taken because of dwindling enrollments, coupled with ever-increasing costs. Even though we closed the school, this did not mean the end of Christian education. The congregation would

still pay the tuition costs for the majority of our children to attend neighboring Concordia-Trinity Lutheran School in Frohna and Altenburg. After 1985, the school building was used for a number of years for a Christian pre-school, although this was operated largely independent from the congregation.

In July 1986 the teacherage was sold. In 1987 aluminum siding was installed on the parsonage and portions of the church. The school hallway was carpeted and a new round stained glass window was installed at the top of the church entrance. In January 1988 we had the two north windows on either side of the altar replaced with stained art-glass windows.

Congregational activity exhibits itself in Worship, Sunday School and Bible Classes, Vacation Bible School, occasional youth activities, Lutheran Women's Missionary League, Dartball team, and a local branch of Aid Association for Lutherans. Annual highlights include the traditional Christmas Eve Children's service, organized and presented by the Sunday School staff and children.

Pastor Paul Winningham was installed in July of 1990. In the decade of the 1990s the congregation continued to make improvements by remodeling the interior of the church, adding air-conditioning to church and school, and employing computer technology for record-keeping. In addition, existing congregational records and Voters' minutes were translated from the old German script and better organized. Emphasis has been placed upon Bible Class and making worship more user-friendly. In early 1999, the church office was relocated from the parsonage to the school, increasing space and efficiency, as well as giving easier access to members.

Grace congregation has been blessed for 160 years now to openly proclaim Jesus Christ as the only hope of mankind for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. May God enable us to be faithful to Him and His Word until the return of Jesus Christ, all to his eternal glory!

Out of this congregation the following have studied for and become ministers: Karl Theodore Gruber, Ad[olf] Bergt, Martin Telle, Carl Hoeh, Alfred Fiehler, Herman Schaefer, Enos Frentzel, Ernst Bultmann, Walter Hueschen, Hy Schaefer, Ernst Mueller, Otto Mueller, Louis Hemmann, Roy Bingenheimer, and Donald Boeschen. Men who studied for and became Lutheran teachers out of this congregation were: Benjamin Hemmann, Louis Otto Schaefer, Carl Kasten, Otto Kanke, Paul Bachmann, Erich Hueschen, Walter Mueller, and Lindolf Mueller. Former teachers James Moll and Steven Dressler went on to seminary and became pastors. Missionary service was rendered by Ernst Mueller (Argentina), and Paul Bachmann (India).

*This congregational history made extensive use of the congregation's portion of history from the Centennial Booklet of 1939 (written under the guidance of Rev. R. J. I. Mueller) and from the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet (written under the guidance of Rev. Robert Koenig). Members of the committee completing this history were Herbert Kramer, Harold Luehrs, and Rev. Paul R. Winningham.*

PostScript, 2000-2014

Handicapped-accessible entry with two restrooms was added to the school building in 2002. In 2008 a fully handicapped-accessible narthex was dedicated, with covered ramp and porch, along with two fully accessible restrooms, with room to congregate before or after worship. The sanctuary was redecorated with carpet and wood flooring in 2012.

Two annual suppers (fried chicken in May, and pork sausage in October) are popular in the community. Within the congregation, there exists and LWML (with a few members from Zion), Dartball for men, a Wednesday morning breakfast Bible Study, and an annual VBS week in the summer (which is drawing more involvement from Zion year by year). Grace congregation assists with tuition to families who send their children to Lutheran schools, of which the children attend three: St. Paul in Jackson, Immanuel in Perryville, and United in Christ Lutheran School (UCLS) in Frohna. Worship service and hymns are typically drawn from the Lutheran Service Book, adopted in 2006 shortly after its publication. With few available organists (currently none in the congregation), in worship the clavino and piano are relied upon more and more.



APPENDIX 2  
A SHORT HISTORY OF ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH  
AT LONGTOWN, PERRY COUNTY, MISSOURI

(What follows was included in the 1997 Zion Centennial Book, produced by the Committee. Excepting a few spelling and grammatical changes, it is largely unchanged.)

The Lutherans of the Longtown community were in need of a Church and Christian Day School. This was in the late 1800s when most of the area residents were attending services and school at Peace Lutheran Church at Friedenberg, which was quite a walk or buggy ride from Longtown.

The dirt roads would be impassable in wet seasons or freezing temperatures. They were either ankle deep mud or frozen ruts. Creeks became too heavy to cross during heavy rains. Consequently school attendance was poor.

It was in the summer of 1897, Monday, July 19, that a group of early settlers met in the home of Fred Schade in Longtown for the purpose of organizing a Church in their midst. After a dismissal from Peace Congregation in Friedenberg and under the leadership of Rev. O. R. Hueschen of Uniontown, this group of men adopted a constitution and Zion Evangelical Church of Longtown was organized. Fifteen charter members signed the constitution and their names are recorded in grateful memory. They were: Fred Schade, Herman Funke, Andrew Hacker, Christ Hacker, Emanuel Hacker, George Krause, August Meier, M. G. Funke, Adolph Funke, Theo. Ochs, Aug. Ochs, Wm. Klemp, George Wirth, Wm. Heise, and Emanuel Popp. These few men with their families were the actual founders according to the records. The congregation membership quickly grew in number.

Divine services and meetings were held in a brick building which stood near the current location of the Church Hall. It had been erected by members of the Baptist Church.

Rev. O. R. Hueschen, Pastor of the Uniontown congregation, supplied the newly founded Church with God's Word and Sacraments until he installed the first Pastor, Rev. G. D. Hamm on Sept. 12, 1897. Rev. Hamm immediately took complete charge of the Christian Day School which opened the year with 17 pupils. At year's end, the congregation numbered 26 voters, 75 communicants, and 133 souls. The parsonage was erected in 1899. Rev. Hamm served as Pastor for six years until he accepted a Call to Salisbury and Moberly, Missouri.

Rev. A. Wehmeier was installed Aug. 8, 1903. The first organ, an excellent reed instrument, was then purchased to accompany the singing of the congregation. Wehmeier served seven years before moving to Jericho Springs, Missouri. The year was 1910 and Zion numbered 246 souls, 184 communicants and 45 voters.

Rev. Ernst Mueller was installed March 14, 1911. The brick building that served as a Church and School for 15 years was now much too small, so in a meeting on Jan. 14, 1912 it was resolved to erect a new Church at the present location. According to the Perry County Newspaper, the building of a new Church had been discussed as early as January 1909. The clipping states, "We are informed that the Lutheran Congregation at Longtown are making arrangements for the erection of a new Church building at the place. The new building is to cost \$7000, part of this amount has already been subscribed."

In the Spring of 1912, actual foundation work was begun. For a group of less than 200 communicants, this was quite an undertaking. The cornerstone was laid June 23, 1912

with a impressive Church service led by Rev. Hueschen of Uniontown. Into this cornerstone were placed the following items: Bible, Catechism, Hymnal, "Der Lutheraner", "Missions Taube", a membership list with officers and pastor, constitution of the congregation, a daily newspaper, a county newspaper, and some United States coins.

The total cost of the Church, 42 x 70 feet, including altar, pulpit, baptismal font, bell, pews, and furnace was about \$8000. The building committee included the following: Fred Bergman, Fred Metzger, August Meier, Martin Moeckel, Konrad Rauh, John Bohnert, Adolph Weinrich, George Wirth, and George Bingenheimer. Mr. Charles Kiefner of the Kiefner Lumber Firm of Perryville was the contractor. The members of Zion in the year 1912 gave many toiling hours of labor and gave their money to build the house of worship. With the love and blessings of the Lord, the task was completed.

On Sunday, November 3, 1912, a new house of worship, one of the most beautiful Lutheran churches in the county, was dedicated to the service of the Triune God.

Pastor Mueller had to resign due to failing health and preached his farewell sermon on June 23, 1918.

On August 23, 1918 Rev. L. F. Dippold was installed by his father-in-law, Pastor Griebel of the Perryville congregation. Pastor Dippold could preach in English! The transition from German to English was gradual and was not at any time responsible for any disruption. During this time, the monthly envelope system was introduced.

Zion was now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year and held a special anniversary service on July 9, 1922, with Pastor Ernst Mueller of St. Louis preaching the morning German service and Pastor G. D. Hamm preaching the afternoon service in English. The records show that there were five original founders still present at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. They were George Wirth, Christ Hacker, Emanuel Hacker, (Longtown members), Theo. Ochs of (Trinity) Cape Girardeau, and Emanuel Popp of (Concordia) Frohna.

After Pastor Dippold accepted a Call to New Wells, a Call was sent to Rev. Theophil Weinhold of Pevely, who declined. Then a Call was extended to Rev. Oscar Hemmann, who was teaching in the Lutheran Parochial School in Perryville. He accepted and was installed April 23, 1926, and served as Zion's Pastor until his retirement in 1962.

In 1930 the ladies of the Congregation began fund-raising for the Church by organizing a Ladies Aid. They held their first meeting in the home of Mrs. August Oberndorfer in Longtown on February 9. They formed the Zion ladies Aid with 16 charter members who were: Mrs. August Oberndorfer, Mrs. Martin Moeckel, Mrs. Clarence Ochs, Mrs. Clara Ochs, Mrs. John Ochs, Mrs. B. M. Hemmann (Pastor's mother), Mrs. Gilbert Rudisaile, Mrs. Arthur Dickman, Mrs. Fred Hoehn, Mrs. John Weinrich, Mrs. Geo. Bingenheimer, Mrs. Henry Bergman, Mrs. Elmer Schaupt, Mrs. Peter Wills, Mrs. Christ Hacker, and Mrs. O. Hemmann (Pastor's wife).

On February 6, 1935 a motion was made and approved to build a 16 x 30 [feet] building to house the Ladies Aid for the purpose of quilting. It was constructed with donated labor and materials from Church members for \$800. On Oct. 6, 1936 the ladies took possession of their new building, which to this day serves as a Town Hall meeting house. Records show the numerous contributions the Ladies Aid made to the Church. In 1941 they contributed \$1145 toward the purchase of the \$1600 Wicks Organ which is still in use today.

Up until 1946 the respective Pastors also taught classes for the Christian Day School with the exception of a few years during Pastor Mueller's calling when his daughter taught the school. Since the Fall of 1927, English was the only language taught.

In 1946 the Friedenborg Parochial School consolidated with the Longtown Parochial School and they employed a teacher. The school flourished with 27 pupils enrolled, taught by Miss Dorothy Bock of Perryville, and Pastor Hemmann taught the religion classes.

On Sunday, Nov. 23, 1947, Zion Congregation observed its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The congregation now numbered 67 voters, 200 communicants, and 250 baptized members. A commemorative booklet was prepared for this occasion. Of the original charter members, three were living: Emanuel Hacker, Zion member since 1897, Theodore Ochs, member of Trinity, Cape Girardeau, and Emanuel Ochs, member of Concordia Lutheran Church of Frohna. They were honored guests at the anniversary celebration.

In 1954 the Church was completely renovated with the chancel being remodeled, adding a railing from which to receive the Lord's Supper instead of kneeling at the altar as previously practiced. A special re-dedication service was held on November 28, 1954. At this time, only one charter member was still living, Theodore Ochs of Trinity, Cape Girardeau.

On November 4, 1962, special services were conducted in remembrance of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the construction of the Church building.

The year 1963 brought changes. The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish was formed, combining Zion with Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown. The Joint Parish shared one Pastor. Rev. Robert Koenig was installed August 11, 1963, and served until he accepted a Call to teach at Concordia College, Austin, Texas.

On September 6, 1964, Pastor Erhard W. W. Wolf was installed as Pastor of the Joint Parish. Parochial school had been discontinued in Longtown. Children were transported to the Parochial School in Uniontown. Due to the children's schooling needs, many families either moved or transferred their membership, causing Zion's membership to diminish.

That same year the brick building that served as a former School and Meeting House was replaced with a modern Parish Hall. The new hall was dedicated in a special service on December 6, 1964 by Pastor Wolf. Members generously donated their time and their funds. The Ladies Aid is remembered for their gift of \$2,500 toward construction of the Hall.

Other improvements over the next decade included the purchase of the Laupp Property adjacent to the Church (to allow for more parking space), installation of the public address system, repainting of the spire, putting a new roof on the Church, furnishing the Pastor's study in the Hall, installing a natural gas furnace, gaining access to public water and installing a fire hydrant.

In 1972, Zion celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with services conducted by Pastor Wolf. Speakers were Rev. Robert Koenig and Rev. A. M. Lohmann. Membership included 183 communicants and 216 souls.

November 1974 brought the installation of Rev. Gary Phelps. In July of 1976, Rev. Darrell Bergelin began his service. In August 1979 Rev. Loyle Vogt was installed as Pastor, but his service was cut short when he was killed in a private plane crash on November 20, 1979. His plane was found in a wooded area near New Boston, Missouri on Thanksgiving Day, November 22, 1979.

June 1980 brought Rev. Vaughn Whiting, who later resigned. Rev. Wilbert Bok was installed in April, 1983. Pastor Paul Wunningham began his service at Zion on July 1, 1990.

Further improvements to the Church properties included air conditioning the Church and Hall, additional bathroom facilities, and the addition of ramps for the handicapped.

In 1993, Zion celebrated its 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on September 5, with services at 8:30 a.m. led by Pastor Winningham. The 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary marked the completion of the Church redecoration. Of interest regarding the artistic interior painting is the fact that the painter, Ted Mueller III, followed in his father's footsteps, the late Theodore Mueller Jr., who used his talents to beautify the Church in the late 1940s and again in the 1970s. The year 1997 brought a complete roof replacement for Zion.

Zion members through the past 100 years have by the Grace of God remembered the Church and given thanks through generous monetary memorials, some of which stated the bequests be used for specific improvements only. The Zion house of worship is fortunate in its wealth of items donated in memory of loved ones.

The continuing success of Zion Lutheran Church is dependent upon the labors of the Congregation, and their willingness to give their time and special talents to further the work of God's Kingdom.

We praise You, O God, and magnify Your holy name, for You have been our help in all generations.

*Grant that we Thy Word may cherish  
And its purity retain,  
Lord, unless thou art the Builder,  
All our labor is in vain.  
Keep us from all pride and boasting,  
Vanity and foolish trust,  
Knowing, that our work without Thee  
Soon will crumble into dust.  
God of Grace and Love and Blessing,  
Thine alone shall be the praise;  
Give us hearts to trust Thee truly,  
Hands to serve Thee all our days,  
Lord bestow Thy future blessing  
Till we join the heavenly host,  
There to praise and serve Thee ever,  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

(The beautiful verse above is reprinted from the last page of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book, 1947.)

PostScript, 1997-2014

Some modest attempts at community-building have taken place at Zion in recent years. These include a congregational picnic in June, a Fall activity in October. Some visibility has come through the use of the Hall for two rummage sales yearly. The Hall has been upgraded with two restrooms on the main level, one of which is completely handicap-accessible. Zion has been having children's Christmas Eve services for over a decade, and has Sunday School again. Zion congregation assists with tuition to families who send their children to Immanuel Lutheran School in Perryville. Worship service and hymns are typically drawn from the Lutheran Service Book, adopted in 2006 shortly after its publication.

APPENDIX 3  
WHY WERE THERE FEWER GRADUATES AVAILABLE FROM CONCORDIA  
SEMINARY (ST. LOUIS) AS THE GRACE-ZION JOINT LUTHERAN PARISH  
WAS FORMED?

In the Centennial Convention (1947) of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, in order to meet the recognized need for better ministerial education, the Synod resolved to establish a senior college,<sup>1</sup> at which Synod would require attendance of all junior college ministerial graduates prior to their entering the seminary.<sup>2</sup> Hampered by lack of finances, the establishment of a senior college was on the agenda in 1950, along with several proposals designed to help meet the growing demand for both teachers and pastors within the Synod.

Prior to this time, the Synod’s standard “system” for training ministerial candidates consisted of four years of synodical residential high school, plus two years of synodical junior college prior to entry into seminary. Students wishing to enter the ministry who already had college degrees, or were second-career students would attend the Synod’s seminary in Springfield, Illinois. Those students would then experience a two-year delay prior to entry into Concordia Seminary for a four-year course of studies. This delayed entry into seminary of an entire class for two years would mean a delay in graduation for a like amount of time. The 1950 Proceedings document reads as if seminary had been five years, but would now be four years, implying some of the previous studies to be farmed out to the senior college.<sup>3</sup>

The senior college was dedicated Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1958, and already in 1960 more than 300 students had gone on from Ft. Wayne to the Seminary.<sup>4</sup> But there would prove to be a “gap.” According to a phone interview with Rev. Vern Gundermann, a 1963 graduate of Concordia Seminary, some actions were taken to lesson this “gap.”<sup>5</sup>

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis Graduating Classes<sup>6</sup>

Year	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
Graduates	159	174	157	153	153	75	92	105	NA

The point: at the critical time that Grace and Zion were seeking pastors, there was a diminished number of graduates from previous years.

This critical shortage (of ministers) had come about as Grace and Zion found themselves vacant in early 1963. With this knowledge, Rev. A. M. Lohmann, vacancy

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<sup>1</sup> “Proceedings of the Forty-First Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod” (assembled at Milwaukee, Wisconsin June 21-30, 1950); (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 251.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>4</sup> *Lutheran Witness*, July 26, 1960, pp 12-13.

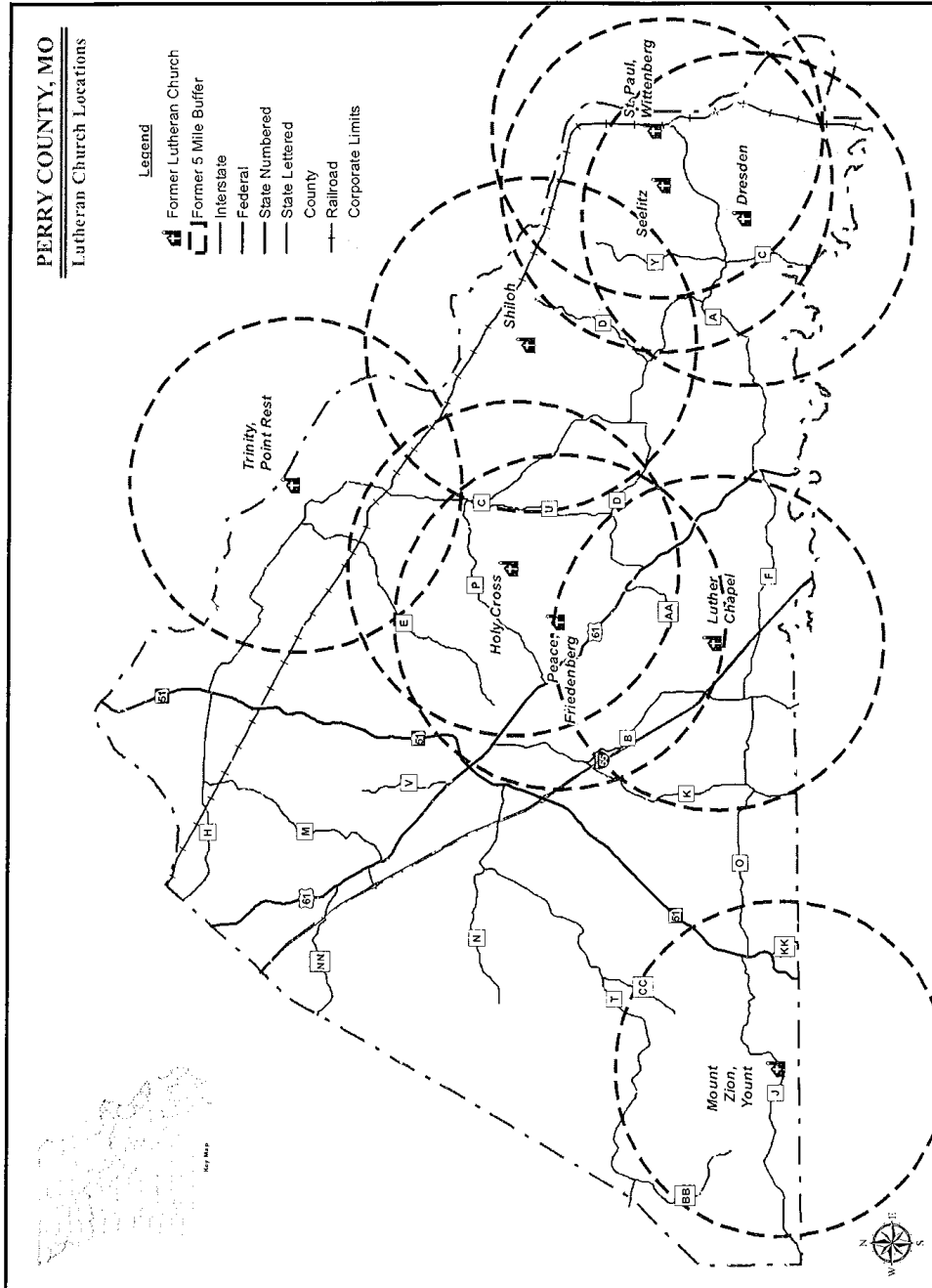
<sup>5</sup> Phone interview conducted September 11, 2013. According to him, some who were on target for a 1961 graduation were given two-year vicarages, so they would graduate in 1962, which should have been a “lean” year. Some of those who graduated in 1963 had been on an accelerated program, with accelerated vicarages, in order to help remedy what was projected to be another “lean” year.

<sup>6</sup> *Log Cabin to Luther Tower*, Carl S. Meyer. (St. Louis, MO; Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 305. Figures show the following graduating classes from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: 1961 – 153; 1962 – 75; While the average graduating class from 1957 through 1961 averaged 159, graduation figures in the following years would be: 1963 – 92; 1964 – 105.

pastor, guided Zion to consider approaching Grace about Calling a pastor to serve them in a partnership arrangement.

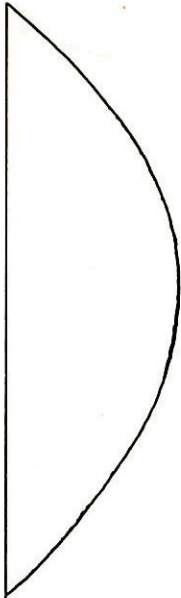


APPENDIX 5  
 PERRY COUNTY, MISSOURI – FORMER LUTHERAN CHURCH LOCATIONS





APPENDIX 6  
FIRST PUBLISHED GUIDELINES FROM  
THE GRACE-ZION JOINT LUTHERAN PARISH – 1967



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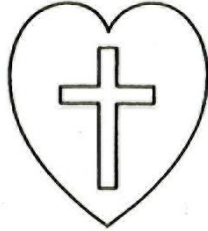
**GUIDELINES**

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**GRACE-ZION JOINT LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
Uniontown & Longtown, Missouri

## SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLS



The cross on the heart is the symbol of the free grace of God which cleanses and justifies the evil heart of man. (cf. Ephesians 1:6) Color: Heart, red; cross, gold.



The heavenly Zion, the final abode of the redeemed, is symbolized by the crown of glory, the palms of victory and the stars of heaven. (cf. Isaiah 4:2-3) Color: Outline, rays and stars, gold; background, blue; palms, green; crown, gold; jewels, red.

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

This booklet constitutes the official guidelines presented and adopted in a joint session of the voters of Grace congregation and Zion congregation held on March 21, 1967 at Uniontown, Missouri.

This document supersedes any and all resolutions previously adopted by its official voting body.

These Guidelines may not be perfect in their present form, but they do give direction and purpose. Objectives and conditions vary from time to time and will therefore demand changes in these guidelines. Changes that occur will be dated and appended and considered official.

The committee has devoted many months and hours of work in compiling data and information used in this document. It may be considered original as no model guidelines were available for study and consultation.

May God continue to bless the members of Grace and Zion congregations as together we work towards fulfilling the Mission of the Church of God in this world.

In the service of our Savior,

Rev. Erhard W. W. Wolf, Pastor

April 1, 1967

### The Committee

Grace: Oscar Kasten, Harold Luehrs, Norman Roth.

Zion: Paul Funke, Oscar Hacker, Marvin Reisenbichler. Pastor Wolf, Teachers (R. J. Herz), Curtis Becker and James Moll served as advisory personnel.

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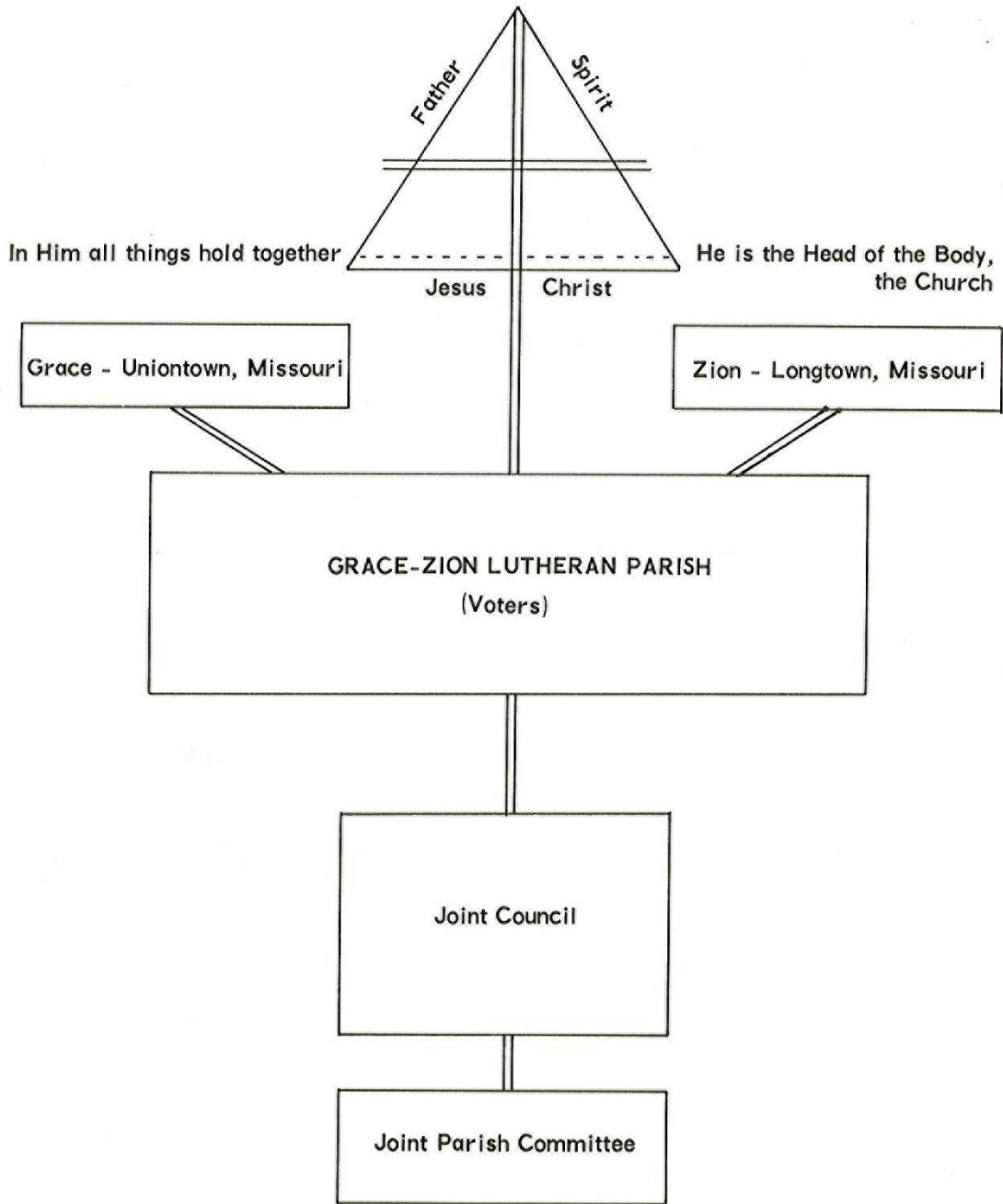
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## OFFICIALLY ADOPTED

Effective April 1, 1967

### INTRODUCTION

The Word of God requires that Christians conform to the Divine Word in doctrine and practice, and that all things be done decently and in order. Therefore, we, Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown, Missouri, and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown, Missouri, accept and subscribe to the following Guidelines; in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our combined efforts in specific areas of church and school (herein referred to as Joint Parish) shall be governed. Furthermore, the term Parish is understood to identify either or both the church and school.

### PARISH OBJECTIVES

We, the members of Grace Lutheran Church, Uniontown, Missouri, and Zion Lutheran Church, Longtown, Missouri, have formed this Joint Parish to:

1. Serve the members within the Joint Parish and spread the kingdom of God by the preaching of His Word, by the administration of the Sacraments, and by the religious instruction of youth and adults.
2. Call one pastor and thereby make available to another church or mission station a pastor.
3. Maintain a Lutheran elementary school, so our children can receive the benefits of a Christ centered education, to help them grow strong in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior.
4. Use the material resources of the members of the two congregations more efficiently.

### PARISH STRUCTURE

Each congregation shall retain its separate identity and function. The Confessional Standards and statements of qualifications of pastors and teachers, as recorded in the respective constitutions of both congregations, shall be binding in the Joint Parish.

Certain functions formerly performed by each congregation will now be done jointly. Therefore, each congregation delegates to the voting membership, attending a duly called Joint Voters' meeting, the following rights:

1. To call pastors and teachers.
2. To coordinate the work of the pastor and teachers so they can serve the membership of the Joint Parish to the best of their ability.

3. To develop certain policies whereby the objectives of the Joint Parish may be attained.
4. To set the salaries for pastors and teachers.
5. To set the budget.
6. To pro-rate to each congregation a proportionate monthly share of the budget, on a basis which has been approved by each congregation.

Any duties or responsibilities not delegated to the Joint Parish by these Guidelines and deemed necessary by the Joint Council may be brought to the attention of each congregation for proper action.

Should either congregation find it necessary to reject a recommendation of the Joint Council, it is encouraged to submit the problem to the Joint Council for further study and evaluation.

## PARISH ORGANIZATION

### 1. JOINT COUNCIL

#### A. Membership

The Joint Council shall consist of the board of elders and the board of education of each congregation. The pastor, principal, and the Joint Parish Committee shall be ex officio members of the council. The council may elect to meet without some or all of the ex officio members.

#### B. Duties

The Joint Council shall:

1. Guide and direct all Joint Parish activities.
2. Appoint a Joint Parish Committee to administer the affairs of the Joint Parish.
3. Organize annually, and choose a chairman from within its own membership.
4. Appoint annually one member to the Joint Parish Committee from the congregation which had the minority on the committee the previous year.
5. Review any and all action taken by the Joint Parish Committee and be prepared to make recommendations to the Joint Voters or to one or both of the congregations.
6. Set all dates of Joint Voters' meetings at the convenience of the majority of the voters.
7. Assess to each congregation a pro-rata share of the budget, based on a formula previously approved by each congregation.
8. Meet a minimum of four times annually, preferably before

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the congregational quarterly meetings. A special meeting of the Joint Council may be called by the Joint Parish Committee, the pastor, the principal, or the officers of either congregation.

9. Report all action taken at the Joint Council meetings to the Joint Voters' assembly.
10. Provide for the operation of the school by:
  - a. Approving operational policies and curriculum.
  - b. Hiring contract teachers.
  - c. Setting registration and/or tuition fees.

## 2. JOINT PARISH COMMITTEE

### A. Membership

The Joint Parish Committee shall be composed of three laymen. The pastor and principal shall be ex officio members. This committee shall be composed preferably of men who hold no congregational office.

The term of office shall be for a period of three years beginning January 1.

The committee shall annually organize itself and elect a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer.

### B. Officers

1. The chairman of the committee shall be held accountable for all responsibilities delegated to the committee.
2. The secretary shall record all business proceedings at the meetings of the Joint Parish Committee, Joint Council, and Joint Voters.
3. The treasurer is to receive all moneys. He is to pay all bills and salaries. He is to keep accurate books on all expenditures and receipts. He is to annually give a duplicated and detailed financial report to the Joint Voters concerning all transactions.

### C. Duties

The Joint Parish Committee shall:

1. Coordinate the work of the pastor and teachers so that each may serve to the best of his abilities and talents.
2. Take an interest in all phases of Church work, represent the Parish at all church and school related meetings (i. e., seminars, conferences) in order to become fully informed of the mission of the Church.
3. Meet monthly to review and authorize the treasurer to pay all salaries and expenses of the Joint Parish, as well as to



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consider other committee responsibilities.

4. Establish a financial record keeping system in accord with standard bookkeeping procedures.
5. Review salaries prior to the annual meeting.
6. Prepare an annual budget.
7. Review annually the financial formula.
8. Review annually these Guidelines.

The Joint Parish Committee may request a meeting with the Board of Education or the Board of Elders of each congregation.

The overall aim of the committee is to concern itself with the affairs of the Joint Parish, and to make any recommendation to the Joint Council or Joint Voters that it feels will be of benefit to the work of the Church and the Joint Parish.

#### MEETINGS

The annual voters' meeting of the Joint Parish shall be held during the month of June. The Joint Council shall set the date of this meeting and give proper notice. Special meetings may be called whenever necessary by the Joint Council. Either congregation may request a Joint Voters' meeting, through the Joint Council. The chairman or vice chairman of the congregation where the meeting is held shall preside at the Joint Voters' meeting. He shall attend the Joint Council meeting prior to the meeting at which he will preside. The place of meeting should preferably be alternated between congregations.

#### CALLING A PASTOR OR TEACHER

A special meeting of the Joint Voters may be called for the purpose of calling a pastor or teacher. It shall be the responsibility of the Joint Council to present to the Joint Voters well qualified pastoral or teacher candidates to fill the existing vacancy. Nominations with adequate qualifications may be made by any voting members present.

A candidate must receive a simple majority of the votes cast to be elected. He must then receive the unanimous approval of all voters present before a call may be issued.

The Chairman of the Elders of each congregation shall sign the call in behalf of the Joint Parish.

#### RESIDENCE

Presently the pastor and principal reside at Uniontown. This may be changed as conditions in the Joint Parish warrant it. Changes of residence shall be agreed upon by the Joint Council and the parties involved.

## TIME OF SERVICES

For present schedule see Appendix A.

Congregations are to alternate the times of services on a yearly basis. If a change in the scheduled times of services becomes necessary, it shall be done according to the following policies:

1. Allow a minimum of one and a half hours between the beginnings of services. More time may be allowed if deemed necessary.
2. Services should be set at times which are most convenient to the majority of the people. However, every effort should be made to set times which will make it possible for all members to attend, as well as to encourage attendance of non-members.
3. Changes in times of Sunday services should only be made in the beginning of the year, unless conditions are such that a change in mid-year is necessary. (An accurate annual schedule makes publicity possible).
4. Changes in schedule are to be presented to the Joint Council for recommendations and to each congregation for approval.
5. Emergency changes in schedule may be made by the Joint Council.

## FINANCIAL POLICIES

### A. Salaries

1. For present salaries and benefits paid see Appendix B.
2. In reviewing the salaries and benefits, the committee shall take into consideration the following: the cost of living index, academic achievements, years of experience in office and/or Joint Parish, the salaries paid in surrounding areas, and other valid factors.

### B. Parish Supplies

1. For present expenses see Appendix B.
2. The Parish budget is to include the cost of clerical help, guest speakers, conference expenses of all its professional workers, the school telephone, and all expendable administrative, clerical, and educational supplies.
3. In order to cover partial cost of educational supplies, each student may be assessed a registration fee. Tuition fees may be charged for non-members.

### C. Formula

1. For present formula see Appendix C.
2. In reviewing the formula, the committee shall consider the communicant membership and financial status of each congregation, the enrollment of the school, and other valid factors.

## AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations may form within the Joint Parish providing their activities include Bible study or topic discussion which promotes Christian growth and an overall knowledge of the Church and its mission. Christian fellowship is to be encouraged within each society.

Goals and objectives of any newly formed joint society shall be put in writing and filed with the Joint Council.

## COMMUNICATIONS

It is important for all organizations and societies to inform the members of each congregation of their activities, plans, and problems. The pastor, teachers, Joint Council, and Joint Parish Committee shall, also, endeavor to communicate with the members of each congregation and/or the Joint Parish, through reports at meetings, the church bulletin, Parish newsletter, and special announcements after church services.

## DISSOLUTION

In case of dissolution all non-expendable properties, owned by the Joint Parish, shall be disposed of by a just and equitable settlement.

## AMENDMENTS

The Joint Parish may adopt, alter, and amend these Guidelines to benefit the members of the Joint Parish or the officers and committees in their work. Any amendments to these Guidelines must be submitted in writing to the Joint Council; which shall, within a reasonable amount of time, prior to the Joint Voters' meeting, make available to all voters of the Joint Parish a copy of the amendment. If a simple majority of the Joint Voters present at a duly called meeting vote in favor of the amendment, it shall become effective.

Appendix A

TIME OF SERVICES

Morning Services:	Early—8:30 A.M.
	Late—10:00 A.M.
Sunday School and Bible Class:	Early—8:00 A.M.
	Late—9:30 A.M.
Advent: (Grace)	7:30 P.M.
Lent: (Joint)	7:30 P.M. (Alternate place each week.)
Maundy Thursday:	<del>6:00 P.M.</del> 7:30 P.M. <i>con with Early Service</i>
Good Friday:	8:30 A.M.
	7:30 P.M.
Ascension: (Joint)	7:30 P.M. (At church having early service.)
Christmas Eve:	5:30 P.M.
	<del>7:30 P.M.</del>
New Years Eve:	<del>6:00 P.M.</del> <i>Early Service</i> <del>6:30 P.M.</del> <del>7:30 P.M.</del>
	<i>NEW YEARS - 7:00</i> <i>EASTER - SUNRISE 6:30 &amp; 10:00</i>

Mission Festival shall be celebrated in the regular Sunday morning worship on the following dates: the 2nd Sunday in June and the 2nd Sunday in September.

The place or places of Confirmation shall be decided by the Pastor in consultation with those involved.

Appendix B

FINANCES

I. Salaries

- A. The Pastor receives a salary of \$5000 per year and \$600 per year car allowance.
- B. The Principal receives a salary of \$3800 per year and \$200 per year car allowance.
- C. The called Teacher receives a salary of \$3500 per year and \$100 per year car allowance.

II. Benefits

The Joint Parish provides for each worker the following benefits: a free home with all utilities paid (except personal long distance telephone calls), its full share towards Concordia Retirement Plan, and half the required percentage towards the Welfare Program. (The worker pays the remaining half of the percentage.)

III. Parish Supplies—Annual Expense

Guest Speakers .....	\$ 180
Conference Expenses .....	\$ 200
School Telephone .....	\$ 120
Administrative Supplies .....	\$ 200
Clerical Supplies .....	\$ 350
Educational Supplies .....	\$1200

Appendix C

FINANCIAL FORMULA

I. The following amounts are shared equally:

Pastor's: Salary  
Car Allowance  
Pension and Welfare  
All Utilities  
Administrative and Clerical Supplies  
  
Guest Speakers  
  
Clerical Help

II. All school related expenses are shared as follows:

~~One half of the total annual cost shall be divided according to the per cent of total communicant members in each congregation, and the remaining half of the cost shall be divided according to the per cent of total students enrolled in the school from each congregation. Per cents shall be based on available figures at the time the budget is prepared.~~

The amounts included under the school formula are as follows:

Principal's: Salary  
Car Allowance  
Pension and Welfare  
All Utilities  
Conference Expenses

Teacher's: Salary  
Car Allowance  
Pension and Welfare  
All Utilities  
Conference Expenses

School telephone; educational, administrative, and clerical supplies.

The school facilities, as well as all utilities, except telephone, are provided by Grace congregation.

III. (No rental charge for parsonage)

APPENDIX 7  
GRACE-ZION JOINT LUTHERAN PARISH GUIDELINES – 2014 EDITION

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VI. RESIDENCE

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JOINT PARISH GUIDELINES  
(Effective date JULY 23, 2014)

INTRODUCTION

*The Word of God requires that Christians conform to the Divine Word in doctrine and practice, and that all things be done decently and in order. Therefore, we, Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown, Missouri and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown, Missouri, (herein referred to as the Joint Parish) accept and subscribe to the following Guidelines; in accordance with which all spiritual and material affairs of our combined efforts shall be governed.*

I. PARISH OBJECTIVES

We, the members of Grace Lutheran Church, Uniontown, Missouri and Zion Lutheran Church, Longtown, Missouri have formed this Joint Parish to:

1. Serve the members within the Joint Parish and spread the kingdom of God by the preaching of His Word, by the administration of the Sacraments, and by the religious instruction of youth and adults.
2. Call one pastor and thereby make available to another church or mission station a pastor.
3. Use the material resources of the members of the two congregations more efficiently.

II. PARISH STRUCTURE

- A. *Each congregation shall retain its separate identity and function. The Confessional Standards and statements of qualifications of pastors, as recorded in the respective Constitutions of both congregations shall be binding in the Joint Parish.*
- B. *Certain functions formerly performed by each congregation will now be done jointly. Therefore, each congregation delegates to the voting membership, attending a duly called Joint Voters' meeting, the following rights:*
  1. *To call pastors.*
  2. *To coordinate the work of the pastor so he can serve the membership of the Joint Parish to the best of his ability.*
  3. *To develop certain policies whereby the objectives of the Joint Parish may be attained.*
  4. *To set the salary of the pastor.*
  5. *To set the budget on the calendar year.*
  6. *To pro-rate to each congregation a proportionate monthly share of the budget on a basis which has been approved by each congregation.*
- C. *Any duties or responsibilities not delegated to the Joint Parish by these Guidelines and deemed necessary by the Joint Council may be brought to the attention of each congregation for proper action.*
- D. *Should either congregation find it necessary to reject a recommendation of the Joint Council, it is encouraged to submit the problem to the Joint Council for further study and evaluation.*



### III. PARISH ORGANIZATION

#### 1. JOINT COUNCIL

- A. *Membership-the Joint Council, shall consist of the Boards of Elders, the chairman and the treasurer of each congregation, and the joint treasurer. The pastor shall be an Ex-officio member of the council.*
- B. *Duties-the Joint Council shall:*
  1. *Guide and direct all Joint Parish activities.*
  2. *Administer the affairs of the Joint Parish.*
  3. *Organize annually and choose a chairman, vice-chairman, and joint secretary from within its own membership.*
  4. *Elect a joint treasurer from either congregation for a term of three (3) years.*
  5. *Be prepared to make recommendations to the Joint Voters or to one or both of the congregations.*
  6. *Review the pastor's salary prior to the annual meeting.*
  7. *Prepare an annual budget to be approved at the annual meeting.*
  8. *Review annually these Guidelines*
  9. *Set all dates of Joint Voters' meetings at the convenience of the majority of the voters.*
  10. *Review annually the financial formula and assess to each congregation a pro-rata share of the budget, based on a formula previously approved by the congregation.*
  11. *Meet a minimum of once a year, preferably, before the Annual Joint Voters' meeting. A special meeting of the Joint Council may be called by the pastor or any member of the Joint Council.*
  12. *Report all action taken at the Joint Council meetings to the Joint Voters' assembly.*
  13. *The secretary shall record all business proceedings at the meetings of the Joint Council and Joint Voters.*
  14. *The treasurer is to receive all moneys. He/she is to pay all bills and salaries. He/she is to keep accurate books on all expenditures and receipts. He/she is to annually give a duplicated and detailed financial report to the Joint Voters concerning all transactions. The books shall be audited annually.*

### IV. MEETINGS

*The annual voters' meeting of the Joint Parish shall be held during the month of November or December. The Joint Council shall set the date of this meeting and give proper notice. Special meetings may be called whenever necessary by the Joint Council. Either congregation may request a Joint Voters' meeting, through the Joint Council. The chairman or vice-chairman of the Joint Council shall preside at the Joint Voters' meeting. The place of meeting should preferably be alternated between congregations.*

## V. CALLING A PASTOR

- A. *In the event of a Pastoral vacancy, the Joint Elders will notify the Circuit Visitor to set in motion the procedure for calling of a pastor. Nominations may be made by any voting member.*
- B. *It shall be the responsibility of the Joint Council to serve as the Call Committee and present to the Joint Voters well qualified pastoral candidates to fill the existing vacancy. These shall be submitted by the Call Committee to the District President along with a request for additional qualified candidates. The District President will screen these nominees as well as others whom he feels are appropriate to our needs.*
- C. *A special meeting of the Joint Voters shall be called for the purpose of calling a pastor.*
- D. *A candidate must receive a simple majority of the votes cast to be elected. He must then receive the unanimous approval of all voters present before a call may be issued.*
- E. *The Chairman of the Elders of each congregation shall sign the call on behalf of the Joint Parish.*

## VI. RESIDENCE

Presently the pastor resides in the parsonage at Uniontown. This may be changed as conditions in the Joint Parish warrant it. Changes of residence shall be agreed upon by the Joint Council and the parties involved.

## VII. TIME OF SERVICES

- A. For present schedule see Appendix A.
- B. Congregations are to alternate the times of services on a yearly basis. If a change in the scheduled times of services becomes necessary, it shall be done according to the following policies:
  1. *Allow a minimum of one and a half hours between the beginnings of services. More time may be allowed if deemed necessary.*
  2. *Services should be set at times which are most convenient to the majority of the people. However, every effort should be made to set times which will make it possible for all members to attend, as well as to encourage attendance of non-members.*
  3. Changes in times of Sunday services should only be made in the beginning of the year unless conditions are such that a change in midyear is necessary. (An accurate annual schedule makes publicity possible.)
  4. Changes in schedule are to be presented to the Joint Council for recommendations and to each congregation for approval.
  5. Emergency changes in schedule may be made by the Joint Council.

## VIII. FINANCIAL POLICIES

### A. Salaries

1. The Joint Parish provides for the Pastor the following benefits in addition to salary:

- a. Free housing with all utilities paid (except personal long distant calls).
- b. A full employer's share towards Concordia Benefit Plans.

2. In reviewing the salaries and benefits, the Joint Council shall take into consideration the following:

- a. *The cost of living index*
- b. *Academic achievements*
- c. *Years of experience in office and/or the Joint Parish*
- d. *The salaries paid in surrounding areas*
- e. *Other valid factors.*

### B. Joint Parish Supplies

*The Joint Parish budget is to include the following expenses related to the pastoral ministry:*

1. *Secretarial help*
2. *Guest speaker*
3. *Conference expenses*
4. *All expendable administrative, clerical and educational supplies and services.*

### C. Formula

5. *For present formula see Appendix B*
6. *In reviewing the formula, the Joint Council shall consider the communicant membership and financial status of each congregation, and other valid factors.*

## IX. AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

- A. Organizations may form within the Joint parish providing their activities include Bible study or topic discussion, which promotes Christian growth and an overall knowledge of the church and its mission. Christian fellowship is to be encouraged within each society.
- B. *Goals and objectives of any newly formed joint society shall be put in writing and filed with the Joint Council.*

## X. COMMUNICATIONS

It is important for all organizations and societies to inform the members of each congregation of their activities, plans, and problems. The pastor and the Joint Council shall also endeavor to communicate with the members of each congregation and/or the Joint Parish, through reports at meetings, the church bulletin, and special announcements after church services.

## XI. DISSOLUTION

In case of dissolution all non-expendable properties owned by the Joint Parish shall be disposed of by a just and equitable settlement.

## *XII. AMENDMENTS*

The Joint Parish may adopt, alter and amend these Guidelines to benefit the members of the Joint Parish or the officers and committees in their work. Any amendments to these Guidelines must be submitted in writing to the Joint Council, which shall, within a reasonable amount of time, prior to the Joint Voters' meeting, make available to all voters of the Joint Parish a copy of the amendment. If a simple majority of the Joint Voters present at a duly called meeting vote in favor of the amendment, it shall become effective.

## APPENDIX A

### TIME OF SERVICES

Morning Services	Early.....8:30 AM Late....10:00 AM
Sunday School and Bible Class	Early.....8:00 AM (Grace has 7:45 AM Sunday School) Late.....9:15 AM
Advent (all services at Grace)	7:00 PM
Lent ( Joint)	7:00 PM (Alternate place each week)
Maundy Thursday (Joint)	7:00 PM (At church having early service)
Good Friday	8:30 AM (At church having early service) 7:00 PM (At church having late service)
Easter	6:30 AM (At church having early service) 9:00 AM (At church having late service)
Ascension (Joint)	8:00 PM (At church having early service)
Christmas Eve	5:30 PM (At church having early service) 7:00 PM (At church having late service)
Christmas Day	8:30 AM 10:00 AM
New Year's Eve	6:30 PM (At church having early service)
New Year's Day	9:00 AM (At church having early service for new year)

Mission Festival shall be celebrated in the regular Sunday morning worship on the following dates or as best as can be arranged (speakers are not always available):

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in June

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in September

The place or places of Confirmation shall be decided by the Pastor in consultation with those involved.

## APPENDIX B

### FINANCIAL FORMULA

I. The following categories are to be shared proportionately according to communicant membership.

1. Pastor's salary
2. Pension and healthcare
3. Office Administration
4. Secretarial Services
5. Car allowance
6. Utilities
7. Continuing Education
8. Guest Speakers
9. Conference Expenses

II. Grace congregation is to be given credit for the annual rental value of the parsonage. This amount will be reviewed each year to keep the value current with market values. The amount needs to be agreed on by both congregations.

APPENDIX 8  
 STATISTICAL REPORT FIGURES FOR  
 GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF UNIONTOWN, 1948-1980

Figures for Grace Lutheran Church, Uniontown, Missouri

Year	Cong	Bpt#	Cmm#	C.Bpt	Jrcnf	Adults	Burials	Schl	ATT	Pg#
1948	G	352	265	6	6	0	2	36		138
1950	G	365	270	10	8	0	3	41		147
1953	G	339	247	7	6	0	4	54		149
1955	G	345	247	5	4	1	3	54		161
1958	G	342	247	5	5	0	1	54		161
1960	G	356	256	8	5	1	3	56		165
<u>1963</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>348</u>	<u>255</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>50</u>		<u>156</u>
1965	G	342	254	4	5	0	6	50		148
1968	G	318	250	1	9	0	2	44		105
1970	G	320	256	5	6	0	4	49	218	171
1973	G	312	257	3	8	2	3	37	196	174
1975	G	319	257	3	3	0	3	26	220	111
1978	G	303	254	5	4	0	4	20	191	115
1980	G	299	247	8	2	0	5	-	177	115

The year the Grace Zion Joint Parish was begun is underlined.

Columns are as follows:

- Baptized members = Bpt#
- Communicants = Cmm#
- Children Baptized = C.Bpt
- Junior Confirmands = Jrcnf
- Adult Confirmands = Adults
- Burials = Burials
- School enrollment = Schl
- Attendance = ATT

Pg# is the page in the Synodical Yearbook the statistics are found for that year.

From: Statistical Yearbook of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod for the Year \_\_\_\_\_.

St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. Publication date is always the year following the year for which the Statistics are given (e.g., 1948 Statistics are in the book for 1948, with a 1949 publication date).

APPENDIX 9  
 STATISTICAL REPORT FIGURES FOR  
 ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH OF LONGTOWN, 1948-1980

Figures Reported for Zion Lutheran Church, Longtown, Missouri

Year	Cong	Bpt#	Cmm#	C.Bpt	Jrcnf	Adults	Burials	Schl	ATT	Pg#
1948	Z	257	207	5	4	0	1	37		135
1950	Z	254	198	5	2	1	5	31		144
1953	Z	242	178	6	0	0	0	34		145
1955	Z	264	198	8	3	0	3	27		157
1958	Z	265	188	5	1	1	2	24		157
1960	Z	251	190	5	4	1	2	22		161
<u>1963</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>252</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>18</u>		<u>153</u>
1965	Z	247	195	4	4	2	3	15		144
1968	Z	213	179	2	9	0	5	12		102
1970	Z	212	182	1	1	0	2	9	132	178
1973	Z	202	175	3	2	0	1	14?	129	171
1975	Z	194	166	1	0	0	2	19?	119	108
1978	Z	171	139	4	1	0	5	10	103	112
1980	Z	162	136	1	1	0	3	21?	114	112

The year the Grace Zion Joint Parish was begun is underlined.

Columns are as follows:

- Baptized members = Bpt#
- Communicants = Cmm#
- Children Baptized = C.Bpt
- Junior Confirmands = Jrcnf
- Adult Confirmands = Adults
- Burials = Burials
- School enrollment = Schl
- Attendance = ATT

Pg# is the page in the Synodical Yearbook the statistics are found for that year.

? indicates uncertainty

From: Statistical Yearbook of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod for the Year \_\_\_\_.

St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. Publication date is always the year following the year for which the Statistics are given (e.g., 1948 Statistics are in the book for 1948, with a 1949 publication date).

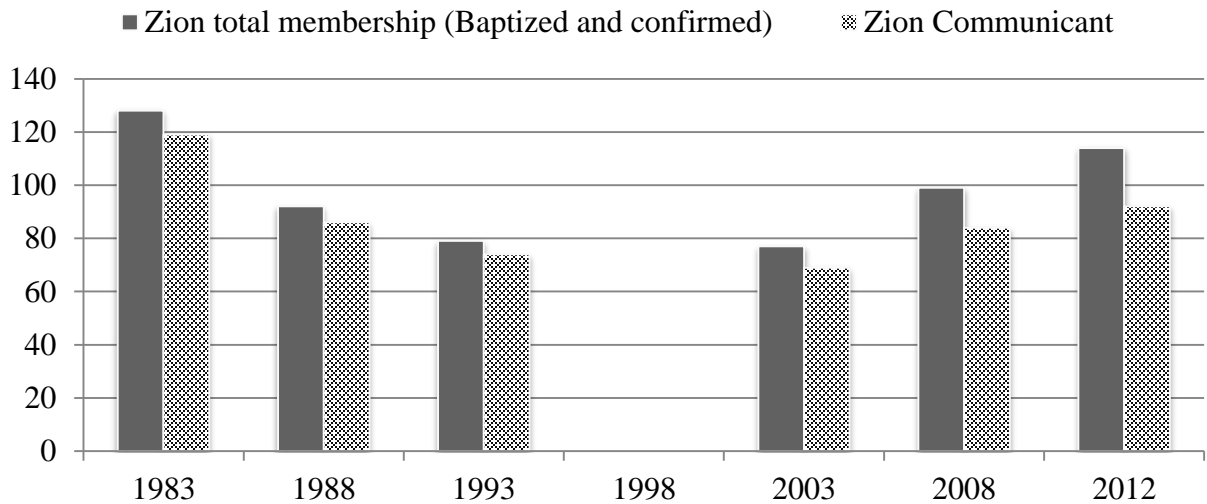


APPENDIX 10  
MEMBERSHIP FIGURES FOR GRACE AND ZION LUTHERAN CHURCHES,  
1983-2012

**Membership for Grace, Uniontown, 1983-2012**



**Membership for Zion, Longtown, 1983-2012**



Year	Grace Total Members	Grace Communicants	Zion Total Members	Zion Communicants
1983	279	224	128	119
1988	241	203	92	86
1993	239	189	70	74
1998	NA			
2003	239	188	77	69
2008	274	212	99	84
2012	273	221	114	92

(Source: Congregational Reports, where available)

APPENDIX 11  
 ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH – 2013 BUDGET

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH LONGTOWN			
PROPOSED BUDGET 2014			
EXPENSE	2013	ACTUAL 2013	PROPOSED 2014
JOINT PARISH	\$ 28,622.64	\$ 28,622.64	\$ 33,495.97
GAS	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,543.86	\$ 2,000.00
ELECTRIC	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,066.96	\$ 2,400.00
WATER	\$ 300.00	\$ 294.00	\$ 300.00
TELEPHONE	\$ 500.00	\$ 444.37	\$ 500.00
INSURANCE	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,056.00	\$ 6,500.00
REPAIRS	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,569.87	\$ 2,000.00
SUPPLIES	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,970.81	\$ 2,000.00
ORGANIST	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,480.00	\$ 2,500.00
MISSIONS	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
OUTREACH	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 1,391.70	\$ 1,400.00
SAXONY LHS-fees	\$ 1,130.00	\$ 1,920.00	\$ 2,000.00
TUITION-ILS/SLHS	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 8,194.47	\$ 8,500.00
LCMS-convention	\$ 161.00	\$ 161.00	\$ 180.00
Custodian	\$ -	\$ 680.00	\$ 3,000.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 60,513.64</b>	<b>\$ 59,895.68</b>	<b>\$ 69,275.97</b>
<b>NEEDED PER MONTH 2013</b>		\$ 5,042.80	
<b>AVG MONTHLY CONTRIBUTION</b>		\$ 4,308.18	
<b>NEEDED PER MONTH 2014</b>			\$ 5,773.00

APPENDIX 12  
GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH – 2013 BUDGET

Grace Lutheran Church

	2013 Budget	2013 Actual	2014 Budget
Joint Parish	70,284.48	70,284.48	68,043.60
Tuition	40,000.00	30,197.22	40,000.00
Utilities	8,500.00	7,720.12	8,500.00
Student Aid Fund	6,500.00	6,499.98	6,500.00
Insurance	5,500.00	5,578.85	6,000.00
Grass Cutting	3,100.00	3,240.00	3,500.00
Church Janitor	2,800.00	2,800.00	3,000.00
School Janitor	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,100.00
Landscaping	300.00	0.00	300.00
Lutheran Witness & Envelopes	2,000.00	1,944.53	2,000.00
Saxony Lutheran High School	2,300.00	2,210.00	2,300.00
Sunday School	900.00	449.09	900.00
Vacation Bible School	600.00	289.75	600.00
Organists / Keyboardists	2,300.00	2,040.00	2,300.00
Repairs & Maintenance	5,000.00	2,980.33	5,000.00
Convention Expense	385.00	378.00	385.00
Mercy Works - Local	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
175th Anniversary Expenses	0.00	0.00	500.00
Miscellaneous	1,600.00	1,602.91	1,600.00
<b>Total before Missions</b>	<b>154,069.48</b>	<b>139,215.26</b>	<b>153,528.60</b>
<b>Non-budget disbursements</b>	<b>0.00</b>		<b>0.00</b>
Missions	13,000.00	14,929.00	13,000.00
Miscellaneous Missions	1,500.00	0.00	1,500.00
Apple of His Eye	500.00	500.00	500.00
Lutheran Chapel of Hope	500.00	500.00	500.00
Armed Forces	300.00	300.00	300.00
Lutheran Television	300.00	300.00	300.00
Vacation Bible School offering	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sunday School Offerings - North Korea	0.00	114.05	0.00
Church Tour donations - Hope Seeds	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Missions</b>	<b>16,100.00</b>	<b>16,643.05</b>	<b>16,100.00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>170,169.48</b>	<b>155,858.31</b>	<b>169,628.60</b>

APPENDIX 13  
GRACE-ZION JOINT LUTHERAN PARISH 2013 BUDGET

	2013 Budget	2013 Actual	2014 Proposed
BEGINNING BALANCE		10605.79	10197.11
RECEIPTS:			
GRACE	70284.51	70284.48	68773.87
ZION	28622.65	28622.64	33783.64
INTEREST & MISC	0.00	1211.79	0.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	98907.16	100118.91	102557.51
DISBURSEMENTS:			
SALARY - PASTOR	52750.00	52750.08	53845.00
BENEFITS	28115.08	26746.01	28698.00
OFFICE ADMINISTRATION	3125.00	1755.74	1800.00
PUBLICATIONS/OUTREACH	1800.00	3557.73	3200.00
SECRETARY	3948.00	3421.60	3850.00
HOUSING EQUITY	1000.00	1000.00	1000.00
SPECIAL:COPIER, WEBSITE	0.00	0.00	0.00
CAR ALLOWANCE	4500.00	4266.09	4500.00
UTILITIES	4750.00	3907.18	4750.00
CONTINUING EDUCATION	2000.00	2000.00	2000.00
GUEST SPEAKERS	1500.00	907.50	1500.00
CONFERENCE EXPENSE	350.00	215.66	350.00
MISCELLANEOUS	100.00	0.00	100.00
TECHNOLOGY	0.00	0.00	375.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	103938.08	100527.59	105968.00
increase over 2013 budget-->			
ENDING BALANCE		10197.11	6786.62

APPENDIX 14  
SCRIPT TO PRECEDE THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PARTNER  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Script to precede the questionnaire: Many of you are aware that our Pastor has been designing a study that will help Grace and Zion congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership. As a member of either Grace or Zion, you are a part of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish partnership. The study, plainly stated is this:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

This questionnaire is a significant part of how we hope to gain clarity as to the vision the members of Grace and Zion have of themselves and of the partnership you share.

This is a data-gathering event which is a significant part of this inquiry. We invite all communicant members of Grace and Zion to participate, if you are willing. It should take approximately twenty minutes.

[Week 1, May 11 only:] If for some reason today is inconvenient for you to remain and take the questionnaire, we urge you to plan on taking it next week after worship.

[Week 2, May 18<sup>th</sup> only:] If you took the Questionnaire last week, we thank you, and excuse you at this time.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. We only seek your perspective.

We seek honest input on your perspective on questions related to your congregation as well as the partnership we share.

The questionnaires will be sent to the Missouri District Office, where a staff person has agreed to enter them into a computer database, so that we will be able to have a statistical analysis of the responses.

No attempt will be made to single out responses or respondents, and every effort to protect your anonymity will be taken. Questionnaires will be destroyed after the data has been entered and backed up.

The data will be analyzed by a designated committee and prepared for report back to the congregations later this summer in events called “Gospel Partner Awareness Workshops”.

The data will also be included as a part of Pastor’s Major Applied Project in the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The completed project, with the data, will be kept in hard-bound book form in the Concordia Seminary Library. Your participation is your consent to have your data be a part of that collection.

The ushers will now assist in handing out pencils and questionnaires, one per communicant member of Zion or Grace, and we will begin momentarily.

(Pause to allow this to occur...)

Some initial questions ask you to simply identify a few bits of information which will enable the Questionnaires to be more useful in identifying the composition of our congregations.

When all necessary Questionnaires have been handed out, the questions will be read, with a five-second pause for you to respond. There are no right or wrong answers; we only seek your honest input. Answers are to be darkened or marked with an “x”. If you wish to change your answer, please erase and indicate plainly which choice you intend to select. For many of the questions, there are five possible answers, depending upon how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement. Try to avoid choosing “undecided” too often.

We seek your honest input. Neither Pastor nor the Elders will see the originals, for they will be gathered by the Ushers and sealed into an envelope for mailing to the independent scorer.

(Elder to now read over the questions loudly and distinctly, with a five-second pause at the conclusion of each for members to make a selection and circle it.)

After the last question has been read, the Elder will read the following:

We do not wish to rush you, and you now have time to go back and re-visit any questions if you were not sure of your response the first time through. If for some reason you wish for your questionnaire to NOT be included among the completed ones for compilation and analysis, you may draw a large “X” over page one, and this will invalidate your questionnaire. Your data will be ignored and destroyed.

Please keep the pencil for your own use as a tiny token of our appreciation for your participation.

The Ushers will be collecting the completed Questionnaires and sealing them in an envelope for forwarding to an independent party for computer scoring. After they have been entered electronically, they will be shredded.

Again, thank you for taking the time to participate!

(Not to be read--)

The Researcher expects to be able to use the congregational rosters to check the names of those present and completing the questionnaire.

*There will be (were) two trained volunteers who will be taking the questionnaire to the homebound or nursing home resident members utilizing this script as well.*

*Note: The elders each had an opportunity to complete the questionnaire at their meeting the week prior, administered by the Researcher. This enabled them to be available for handing out questionnaires and pencils, as well as to be available if need for handing out replacement pencils if needed.*

APPENDIX 15  
NOTE FOR USHERS INFORMING THEM OF THEIR ROLE(S) IN THE  
ADMINISTRATION OF THE PARTNER QUESTIONNAIRE

USHERS! (Special note for May 11, 2014)

After worship today, communicant members have the opportunity to complete a specially-prepared questionnaire.

**At the conclusion of worship**, visitors and those wishing to NOT take the Questionnaire will be excused, and I will greet them. An elder will begin to read the introduction to the questionnaire.

YOUR help is needed, when the Elder gets to the right place in his introduction, to help hand out the Questionnaires and pencils to every communicant member who has remained.

I will give you the box with these things when I come to the back to greet.

Once these materials are handed out, YOU may take the questionnaire too. (Or plan to do so next week.)

YOUR help is required to gather the questionnaires, orient them all the same direction, and put them in the special postal envelope provided. Then you may give it to the elders, but they are not supposed to “touch” the questionnaires, and neither am I. This guards the integrity of the process.

APPENDIX 16 - PARTNER QUESTIONNAIRE

Organization: John Lutheran Parish Partner Questionnaire

**I am a member of (select one):**

Grace  Zion

**How far do I reside from my church?**

Less than 3 miles  
 3 to 5 miles  
 6 miles or more

**The church to which I belong is the closest Lutheran church to my home.**

Yes  
 No

**Please indicate your current age category**

Under 40  Forty or over

**Which selection best describes your spiritual journey and association with this congregation?**

Born here and have never left  
 Born here -- moved away -- and returned  
 Transferred here from another LCMS congregation  
 Came to the church by some other way (Adult Baptism, Adult Confirmation, Reaffirmation of Faith)

**How long have you been a member here?**

Twenty or more years  
 11-19 years  
 0-10 years



**Perceptions Regarding One's Own Congregation (00)**

(Which best describes your thinking?)

**OC-1. The best way to solve most decisions is to let a committee study it and make recommendations.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                                                                                       

**OC-2. The best way to reach most decisions lies in airing it out among us all and arriving at a consensus.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                                                                                       

**OC-3. Our congregation needs more fellowship/togetherness events.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                                                                                       

**OC-4. What happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                                                                                       

**OC-5. How likely am I to attend a special service (Advent, Lent, Ascension)... at my OWN congregation?**

Always      Very Likely      Unsure      Not Likely      Never  
                                                                                       

**OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                                                                                       

**OC-7. Which best describes my commitment to my congregation?**

Till death parts us      Strongly Committed      Committed      As long as things are going OK      Not Sure  
                                                                                       

**OC-8. This congregation is welcoming to new members, visitors, and strangers.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                                                                                       

**OC-9. How would you describe your congregation in the past ten years:**

Growing robustly      Slow growth      Steady      Declining      Rapidly Declining  
                                                                                       

**OC-10. I think the members of my congregation highly value our Joint Parish Partnership.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Awareness of the Partnership Agreement ((17)) by which the Partnership is formed

**PA-1. The Partnership exists so each congregation may retain its separate identity and function.**

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**PA-2. The service time annual switch -a feature of fairness- is important to maintain.**

Strongly Agree  Agree  Undecided  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

**PA-3. I have read the Joint Parish Guidelines in the last...**

3 years  5 years  Never

**PA-4. The Joint Parish Guidelines are supposed to be reviewed annually.**

True  False  Don't Know

**PA-5. The Joint Voters is the authoritative body by which a pastor is called.**

True  False  Don't Know

**PA-6. Only voting members from each congregation comprise the Joint Voters.**

True  False  Don't Know

**PA-7. The Joint Parish Guidelines allow for joint societies to be formed in our midst.**

True  False  Don't Know

**PA-8. As a member of Grace or Zion, I have no particular obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership.**

True  False  Don't Know

**PA-9. The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish treasury is funded equally by both congregations.**

True  False  Don't Know

**PA-10. Whose job is it, properly speaking, to prepare the annual Joint Parish budget?**

Elders  Treasurer  Joint Council  Other  Don't Know

**Pastoral Office (P.O.) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership**

**PO-1. It is important that there be a regular, Pastor-led Bible class in my congregation each year.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-2. Greet-time with Pastor after worship is crucial.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-3. One congregation seems to get favored treatment from the Pastor.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-4. It is important that the Pastor try to balance his time between the congregations.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-5. The congregation where Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-6. The community/ location where the Pastor resides matters a great deal.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-7. Outreach is pretty much the Pastor's job.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-8. Stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for our partnership.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-9. Even without pastoral stability, I would expect our congregation to continue.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree  
                       

**PO-10. It is important to have someone whom we can call "OUR" Pastor.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish**

**PP-1. Maintaining our separate identities is an important purpose of the Joint Parish**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-2. The Joint Parish Partnership should be seen like a marriage union: inseparable except by death.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-3. The Joint Parish Partnership should be viewed by the partners as purely a business partnership.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-4. From its beginning, the Grace-Zion Partnership seemed a most natural combination.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-5. I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-6. Our newsletter is an important communications tool.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-7. How likely am I to attend a Sunday or special service (Lent, etc.) at the other partner congregation?**

Very Likely      Likely      Not Sure      Unlikely      Highly Unlikely

**PP-8. The Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership is healthy.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-9. The Partnership has outlived its purpose and ought to be abolished in favor of some other arrangement.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

**PP-10. The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership.**

Strongly Agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Thank You for your participation!

APPENDIX 16  
TEXT OF THE PARTNER QUESTIONNAIRE

Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish: Partner Questionnaire

*Please Circle your responses*

I am a member of (select one):      Grace      Zion

I reside how far from my church?      Less than 3 miles      3 to 5 miles      6 miles or more

The church to which I belong is the closest Lutheran church to my home.      Yes      No

Circle your current age category.      Under 40.      Forty or over.

Which selection best describes your spiritual journey and association with this congregation?

- Born here and have never left
- Born here – moved away – and returned
- Transferred here from another LCMS congregation
- Came to the church by some other way—  
(Adult Baptism, Adult Confirmation, Reaffirmation of Faith)

How long have you been a member here?

- Twenty or more years
- 11-19 years
- 0-10 years

Perceptions Regarding One's Own Congregation (OC) (Which best describes your thinking?)

OC-1. The best way to solve most decisions is to let a committee study it and make recommendations.      Strongly agree      Agree      Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

OC-2. The best way to solve most decisions lies in airing it out among us all and arriving at a consensus.      Strongly agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly disagree

OC-3. Our congregation needs more fellowship/togetherness events.      Strongly agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly disagree

OC-4. What happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life.      Strongly agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly disagree

OC-5. How likely am I to attend a special service (Advent, Lent, Ascension)...at my OWN congregation      Always      Very likely      Unsure      Not likely      Never

OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us.      Strongly agree      Agree      Uncertain      Disagree      Strongly disagree

OC-7. Which best describes my commitment to my congregation?  
Till death parts us / strongly committed / committed / as long as things are going OK / not sure

OC-8. This congregation is welcoming to new members, visitors, and strangers.  
Strongly agree    Agree    Uncertain    Disagree    Strongly disagree

OC-9. How would you describe your congregation in the past ten years:  
Growing robustly    slow growth    steady    decline    rapid decline

OC-10. I think the members of my congregation value highly our Joint Parish Partnership.  
Agree strongly    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Disagree strongly

Awareness of the Partnership Agreement (PA) by which the Partnership functions

PA-1. The Partnership exists so each congregation may retain its separate identity and function.

Agree Strongly    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

PA-2. The service time annual switch –a feature of fairness- is important to maintain.

Agree Strongly    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

PA-3. I have read the Joint Parish Guidelines in the last--

3 years    5 years    Never

PA-4. The Joint Parish Guidelines are supposed to be to be reviewed annually.

True    False    Don't know

PA-5. The Joint Voters is the authoritative body by which a pastor is Called.

True    False    Don't know

PA-6. Only Voting members from each congregation comprise the Joint Voters.

True    False    Don't know

PA-7. The Joint Parish Guidelines allow for joint societies to be formed in our midst.

True    False    Don't know

PA-8. As a member of G/Z, I have no particular obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership.

True    False    Don't know

PA-9. The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish treasury is funded equally by both congregations.

True    False    Don't know

PA-10. Whose job is it, properly speaking, to prepare the annual Joint Parish budget?

Elders    Treasurer    Joint Council    Other    Don't know

Pastoral Office (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

PO-1. It is important that there be a regular, Pastor-led Bible Class in my congregation each year.

Agree Strongly    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

- PO-2. Greet-time with Pastor after worship is crucial.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-3. One congregation seems to get favored treatment from the Pastor.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-4. It is important that the Pastor try to balance his time between the congregations.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-5. The congregation where Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-6. The community/location where the Pastor resides matters a great deal.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-7. Outreach is pretty much the Pastor's job.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-8. Stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for our partnership.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-9. Even without pastoral stability I would expect our congregation to continue.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree
- PO-10. It is important to have someone whom we can call "OUR" Pastor.  
 Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish

PP-1. Maintaining our separate identities is an important purpose of the Joint Parish.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-2. The Joint Parish Partnership should be seen more like a marriage union: inseparable except by death.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-3. The Joint Parish Partnership should be viewed by the partners as purely a business partnership.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-4. From its beginning, the Grace-Zion Partnership seemed a most natural combination.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-5. I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-6. Our newsletter is an important communication tool.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-7. How likely am I to attend a Sunday or special service (Lent, etc.) at the other partner congregation?  
Very Likely    Likely      Not sure      Unlikely      Highly Unlikely

PP-8. The Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership is healthy.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-9. The Partnership has outlived its purpose and ought to be abolished in favor of some other arrangement.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

PP-10. The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership.  
Agree Strongly      Agree    Undecided      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Thank you for your participation!



APPENDIX 17  
VERBAL ANNOUNCEMENT TO INVITE PARTICIPATION IN THE PARTNER  
QUESTIONNAIRE

*(A box containing books employed in the Literature Review -chapter three- had been brought to worship, with the books bound into three categories, which were then held up at the appropriate time for the announcement which follows. This was done in an appeal to help members understand the value of their participation in the research. The text of the announcement/presentation was as follows:)*

See these books? They are of three categories.  
One category is that of rural churches. Rural churches have characteristics that are unique unto themselves. We, too, are unique.

Another category is that of smaller churches. Smaller churches often have their own unique way of thinking & acting, although most literature about congregations is written from a large, city or suburban context, quite unrelated to our ministry setting.

Only a few books have been written which set out to understand the mindset and thinking of what is involved in pastoring multiple parishes, such as we are a part of.

And a vacuum exists as far as actual studies done to better understand multiple parish congregations.

Nothing in my seminary training was included with particular respect to rural churches, smaller churches, or multiple parishes. I have set out to study the characteristics, attitudes, and convictions of such churches, especially Grace and Zion. These books claim to speak for people like you. But that's not good enough! I believe you each have a voice and a perspective and ought to have an opportunity to make it known. That's what the questionnaire is about: learning what YOU know –through experience- about life and thinking in rural, smaller, multiple parishes. Please do not view it as an invasion of privacy, but rather, as an attempt to make sense of all the factors that converge in two rural, smaller congregations in partnership.

Do stay! Your time will be well-invested.

(If you stayed and took the questionnaire last week, we thank you and dismiss you after the hymn.)

APPENDIX 18  
VERBAL ANNOUNCEMENT TO INVITE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

Easter (April 20) and May 4—To be read as follows:

Lifelong members to recent transplants – each of you has a voice and a perspective and we would like to hear it! In addition to the Partnership Questionnaire that will be offered after worship May 11 and May 18, we will be hosting one 90 minute Focus Group from each congregation on May 19 for Grace and May 20 for Zion.

The Focus Groups will address more open-ended questions and /or observations than the Partner Questionnaire. Each Focus Group will be recorded and then transcribed for inclusion in the project report. However, to protect anonymity, participants will be identified by number, and no names will be used, and no listing of participants will be kept or published. Participants will need to sign a waiver that they understand and agree to these conditions as a part of the research about our congregations.

Rarely do congregations ever get an opportunity to obtain such a glimpse of themselves through a carefully designed, valid, and useful study.

To guard against Researcher bias in the selection of Focus Group participants, each of you will have a chance to fill out a bulletin insert (if you wish to participate), and a random selection process will be used to assemble the group, and you will be notified promptly. (Focus Group participants will be notified no later than May 11.)

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

The purpose of gaining increasing clarity as to the vision we have of ourselves and of the partnership we share is for the goal of being the best we can be. This can be a blessing to our ongoing partnership, as well as possibly to others. Please join me in helping that to happen!

Either place your completed form in the offering plate or hand it to Pastor as you exit. Thank you.

APPENDIX 19  
FOCUS GROUP APPLICATION

***Grace and Zion Joint Parish Partnership - Focus Group Application***

Many of you are aware that Pastor Paul has been designing a study that will help Grace and Zion congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share. Precisely worded, this is the purpose for the study:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

May has been designated as the data-gathering month for this study. Perhaps you are aware of the questionnaire being offered to all communicant members in attendance on either May 11 or May 18 after worship. This is one way data will be gathered.

In addition, Focus Groups will be conducted from each congregation with certain congregational elected leaders...as well as others, selected at random from a pool of willing participants.

The Zion Focus Group will meet on May 20 at 7 p.m. at the **Zion Hall**, and the Grace Focus Group will meet on May 19<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. at **Grace**.

The Focus Groups will have the opportunity to discuss certain open-ended questions with regard to our congregation, the partnership we share in the Grace-Zion Joint Parish, and the pastoring which takes place in this setting.

**Participants in the Focus Group(s) need to know that the proceedings of the Focus Groups will be recorded for transcribing into a print copy, to be included in the Appendix of the Project. Participants (comments) will only be identified by number, not by name.**

Upon arriving, participants will need to sign a waiver showing that they understand that--

Participation means they will be recorded, and the transcript (typed copy of the words) will be included in the study's Appendix as original data, or possibly quoted in the body of the project.

FG Participants will need to have taken the Partnership Questionnaire prior to the Focus Group meeting.

Depending upon the number of Focus Group applications we receive, we are prepared to select, through a random process, the composition of the group. (next page)

**If you are interested in being a part of the Focus Group for your congregation,** please sign your name to this form, along with the best contact number to notify you of your selection. All applicants will be contacted as to the status of their application.

Yes! I would like to be a part of a Focus Group to discuss...

I understand that I will need to sign a waiver in order to participate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Phone  
number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Circle congregation: Grace      Zion

APPENDIX 20  
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR DELIBERATION

## **Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish: Focus Group Questions**

### Perceptions Regarding One's **Own Congregation** (OC)

1. Which best describes our church -commuter church or a community church- and why?
2. What blessings does our congregation experience as a result of the Joint Parish Partnership? Where would our congregation be without this partnership?
3. What fears threaten our congregation?
4. What kind of Leadership in the local congregation is expected of its elected leaders?

### **Perceptions** regarding the **Partnership** (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish

5. What conduct or attitude(s) does the Joint Parish partnership require of me?
6. What might be indicators (signs) of an unhealthy partnership? If such indicators exist, what might be done to remedy it/them?
7. In what lie the strengths of the Joint Parish partnership? (What enables it to continue with strength?)

### Perceptions regarding **Pastoral Office** (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

8. What qualities, ministry duties, and activities are important to you for the Pastor of the Joint Parish?
9. A multi church Partnership like ours might require particular or special gifts of its pastor. What comes to mind?
10. What kind of Leadership in the congregation(s) is expected of the Pastor?

### **General**

11. What observations –or what learning- have you made as a result of either the questionnaire or the focus group discussion?

APPENDIX 21  
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION WAIVER FORM

## Grace-Zion Joint Parish Waiver for Focus Group Participation

The Focus Groups will convene to discuss some open-ended questions about their congregation, the partnership, pastoral concerns, etc.

The Focus Group will be recorded for transcribing, and the transcription will be included in the Appendix of the Project.

A participant's voice will be identified only by a number, not by your name. The Researcher (Pastor) will moderate. No listing of names of participants will be published or made public.

(To be read and signed)

I am aware that the proceedings of the Focus Group will be recorded and transcribed for inclusion in the Appendix, as well as possible reference in the body of the project itself.

I am also aware that no names will be used, and participants will only be identified by number, and that no listing of participants will be made public or published.

I hereby give my approval for comments I make to be included.

---

(Signature)

---

(Date)

---

(Printed)

APPENDIX 22  
NOTE TO FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

You are one of the Focus Group participants for your congregation.

Grace Focus Group will meet Monday, May 19, at 7 pm in the school basement. Please plan to arrive at 6:45 for a few preliminary items.

Zion Focus Group will meet Tuesday, May 20, at 7 pm in the Zion Hall. Please plan to arrive at 6:45 for a few preliminary items.

Attached will be the questions we will wrestle with at that time.

Thank you for your willingness to participate!

## APPENDIX 23

### FOCUS GROUP INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT TO BE READ BY MODERATOR

#### **Focus Group Statement – to be read by Moderator prior to the Focus Group Beginning**

Welcome! You are here because you care about your congregation. Thank you. As researcher, I will also be serving as moderator for this evening's meeting. My job is to keep us moving along, without commentary. Let me remind you of the purpose of this project we are involved in, and why we are here this evening:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

Please speak loudly for recording purposes. Please do not use your name, or the name of another group member. If you wish to refer to each other, please use the assigned number designation. The transcriptionist will be instructed to delete any names of individuals or families if they are mentioned, simply by putting [name] in brackets. Please also do not use information that gives you or another group member too much of a "thumbprint" (Office[s] held, previous congregation, action performed, etc.), enabling identification by the specifics included. May you disagree? It's entirely possible. But do so in a Christian manner. If you have a criticism to offer, please do so in a constructive manner.

We will go for 45 minutes, take a brief break to stand, stretch, use restrooms, and then continue.

We ask, in the spirit of Christian love, that you not identify those who were present, as they may wish to remain anonymous. Nor is it proper to mention names along with comments that you may recall from the meeting. It might be permissible to say something like this: "The view was expressed that...", but to go no further. If people wish to access the original data, they will have opportunity to do so, in the Appendix to the Project, in transcription form.

Please direct your responses toward the questions we seek to address.

Please do not dominate the discussion, but allow others the opportunity to speak.

Please do not cover your mouth as you speak. Lastly, please identify your voice by your assigned number when you begin speaking, to assist in accurate transcribing.

May you speak of these questions outside of this setting? Absolutely. One hope of this project is to stoke awareness and conversation about the partnership we share, and how we can optimize it for the sake of our Christian witness in our respective communities.

Again, thank you for your participation.

Let us begin with prayer:

**Gracious Lord, by Your rich mercy Grace and Zion congregations have shared a partnership for more than half a century! We seek to explore ways in which this partnership might be a blessing to each other and healthy as we look to the future. Toward that goal, we ask that you would "let the meditation of our hearts, and the**



**words of our mouths be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer! Amen.**

*Proceed with the questions, allowing everyone the opportunity to comment. The researcher, as moderator, has a job: to facilitate conversation, nothing else.*

A break was taken midway through the session, so that participants could stretch and visit the restroom if they wished.

(Prior to final question, # 11) Thank you to each and every one of you!☺ Our time for this group has nearly come to a close, and we want to offer each participant the opportunity for one final comment, whether it is something you wish to highlight, add to, or to bring up that hasn't come up thus far.

As the session drew to a close, the Moderator thanked the participants and read the following statement:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

Now it has been researched. Over the past two weekends, communicant members of our congregation were given a voice on a questionnaire regarding their perceptions on various aspects of our life and ministry together. You have added to that voice in a significant way by your willingness to be here, and we thank you. Each of you has a valid perspective from which you view your congregation. It is firmly believed that we all benefit when we become aware of those perspectives, whether or not we agree with them. Thank you for your willingness to speak on the record, and to participate in this data-gathering event. Please continue to pray that as our leadership team considers the data that has now been gathered, we might prioritize and present the data in ways that enable us to address, educate, and stimulate discussion for the mutual benefit of our congregation as well as the partnership we share.

Thank you, each of you, for taking the time and being willing to consider some of the issues that are a part of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish.

Let's close in prayer: **Gracious God, by Your rich mercy Grace and Zion congregations have served as places for Word and Sacrament ministry, bonded in this partnership, for over half a century. Grant Your blessing upon them in the days to come, and help that our small contribution to the dialogue will be a blessing to others. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

## **Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish: Focus Group Questions**

*The following is a transcription of the Focus Group convened of designated and selected Grace members on May 19, 2014.*

### Perceptions Regarding One's Own Congregation (OC)

**1. Which best describes our church – commuter church or a community church – and why?**

#7: Yeah, it's probably a little of both, commuter and community, because there are some people who live closely around here, yet others who are part of our membership here that travel quite a ways - I don't know what the distance is, probably not more than 10 to 15 miles.

#10: I would say community church. I feel that most people that belong here have a strong connection to family -generations and generations- so that's kind of why even the ones that commute, I was kind of agreed. Also we do have commuters, but I think most of them that come is because of some kind of family connection back along the way.

#6: I would also say community church. I feel like the joint parish is a community church body, family.

#8: I would also think community, too, because everybody knows each other and they are also welcoming to everybody, and it's a friendly atmosphere.

#4: I would consider it a community church. Everyone knows everyone else, and it's just everyone associates with it and works together.

#9: I feel like it's more of a commuter church for the reason we have no....a lot of activities we don't have. When we had a committee when we had a community church, I felt more like, it was years ago, when we had the picnic and we had the school was here....in my growing up, I could tell that there was a lot more activities going with Men's Club and different things....Walther League and that simple reason was that we had the school and we had a school board and it was more to me, it felt more like a community church then. Now, the only thing we have is the church supper and pork sausage supper and we kind of just come to church and then we're done for the week. That's my opinion.

#1: I think the definition of community would be different if we were to poll someone 50 or 75 years ago. I perceive maybe that the majority, maybe a large majority of members of the church, they have some either family connection or....probably family connection, and that kind of keeps it together. But...with people, I notice that people drive further distances, and I don't think a lot of people

would have considered that 50 years ago. You would have come to Uniontown because it's either within a close walk or an easy drive of where you live. I think I would say that it's probably more of a commuter church.

#5: I also think that there is both community and commuter, but there are quite a few members in our congregation that pass a different Lutheran church on their way to this church, so I would say too there are definitely components of a commuter church.

## **2. What blessings does our congregation experience as a result of the Joint Parish Partnership (and where would our congregation be without this partnership)?**

#10: I pondered on this question a long time, and I took the word "blessing" as something...I don't know...very important. I don't really see...I couldn't really come up with like a blessing for our church. I think that our church would still be here, 'cause my understanding, we weren't really in financial problems when we did the joint partnership, but I see it's good, I guess, that we help share the responsibilities now. I think we still would have been a congregation standing.

#6: I am looking at it, and again I'm not sure the situation whenever the joint parish was formed, but I am looking at it from a financial position that I think it's very beneficial for both congregations to have the joint parish from a financial aspect, of being able to share a lot of the same common expenses that are involved with any church. I think our congregation would still be here probably if we were just, you know, a congregation by ourselves, but I think it would be harder to meet the financial obligations of the church without the joint partnership.

#1: So I wonder if there were no partnerships, looking out across the landscape here, I can think of two or three other joint parish arrangements within a county or two radius, and that's probably missing some that I don't know about, I don't know if we would find the pastors to fill all those positions if the joint partnerships weren't in place.

#4: I feel the same way. I think the main reason why the joint parish was pretty well formed was on account of the problem of getting a pastor and it also helps with the financial situation, too, but that was my thinking in why it was really formed to begin with.

#10: I found it interesting because I didn't really realize that there was a joint parish...what you want to call it... rules or guidelines until we did the survey, so I had Grandma dig them out 'cause we didn't have any at our house and I found it interesting one of the parish objectives was call one pastor and thereby make available to another church or mission station a pastor, so I found that kind of interesting.

#5: I wonder if there wasn't a partnership made, like if a church had to disband, how many members or souls would be lost that wouldn't join a church close by?

#9: I feel like it's a blessing just to be able to experience the fellowship with another congregation. In my time of being with it, it was a blessing that I was able to be a part of different youths coming into this school and meeting them and it just was...I think it was a blessing also to be able to worship at another congregation at a different time.

#2: I would agree with #9 that it does give you opportunity if you don't want to go to an early service, with a joint parish, you can go to a later service, and that is something that a larger congregation would have, the opportunity to have two services, where there is no way a smaller congregation would be able to offer two services, so I think that helps in regards to some of the worship timing. Also, I don't know what the statistics would be but because the joint parish has been...I never knew what this was like without being a joint parish....but for the 51 years, I'm wondering how many people sitting in the church, when we look out on a Sunday morning, how many of those people just know this is the joint parish and don't even know. I mean, I know we still do have members that have been here when it actually was formed, but I think that they are just so used to this joint parish that for them that's just a new normal, or it's just normal for them. I had never experienced a joint parish until I became a member here, so .....

#9: I think it was a blessing for our congregation to be able to have a joint parish with the other congregation; one of the reasons is, at Grace, we probably could afford a pastor but by being able to help the other congregation by forming a joint, that way they can still have their church, 'cause as we all know, as the members get less, there comes a point where you might have to just close the church, and this a way, it is a blessing to our congregation, I feel like, that we could have a joint parish just to keep the other church going.

### **3. What fears threaten our congregation?**

#8: I, myself, see the special services, like Lenten services, Advent services, not well attended – I see that as not a very good thing. It seems like every year, it gets less and less, and I see this not only in our church but other churches.

#9: The fears that I have or that I think could threaten our congregation would just be loss of membership; you know, that's something I always think about a lot as our membership dwindles, hopefully we never have to experience that.

#7: I think a lot of that may be from the commuter part of it, why it's real easy to go somewhere else or not attend your home congregation; whether that's a blessing, I think probably we get as many visitors, too, as we do people leaving, visiting other congregations, so I don't know if that's a draw on that end or if that is a problem.

#4: I feel that a lot of the problems would be from the economy, the jobs – people have to go farther to find jobs. This was a farming community, and the family-owned

farm is a thing of the past, and...it's just before, probably 90% of the congregation were farmers, and now everybody has to find a different kind of occupation. I think that is one of the fears, of losing people.

#6: One of the fears, too, that I see that I've experienced is we are very blessed to have the pastor that we have and their family as a part of this church body. I think it's very important to have a pastor and family that fit well with the congregation and the people that make up the congregation. I think we've all seen situations where sometimes those ideas possibly of the pastor of a congregation maybe don't mesh with the ideals or thoughts of the people that make up the congregation, and so I think we have been very blessed in that respect here, but that is a fear that I have, you know, that if we would have to call a new pastor, that could be a concern sometime.

#10: I think a fear I have maybe that we have not had the last few years a strong youth group, to keep our youth connected. It seems like the only time our youth kind of do something is a fundraiser so they can go on the trip. You know, it's been several years since it's been a youth group that just did a lot of activities, did community service things, did just more for fun or had the whole congregation involved. I mean, I remember things that [my spouse] and I maybe attended that the youth group put on before even we had kids, you know.

#5: I think that is one of the fears, as a congregation ages, and we talked before about this being a sending congregation or a receiving congregation, I think at one point, and I think more of the youth are leaving because of jobs, and so, over time, the age of the church just gets older and older, so the loss of membership there is a fear.

#10: I guess when #4 talked about this used to be mainly a farming community, I know my husband sometimes gets a little frustrated. He would maybe like to do more activities at church, but we chose to farm and dairy farm, so sometimes, you know, mid week services – it's hard of us to get there, sometimes Bible classes are earlier, where it fits people that, you know, don't farm anymore so they don't have that commitment, which you know we choose to have, where I guess when he was younger, more things were centered around farming.

#7: I was kind of concerned, at the time possibly our school closed here, I was concerned over those issues that when the parents found places for their children to attend a parochial school, it was hard for our congregation here to draw in the children because they had other wants of these projects, and it is hard to get all the children going to different schools for programs here, and that was a concern of mine back then, and I don't know what the answer would be.

***[Moderator: #9 has just pointed out to me the second half of question #2 – “Where would our congregation be without this partnership?”]***

#9: Well, I would hope that I would be wrong, but as I said earlier, there is a possibility that if we didn't have the joint partnership, that maybe the other church

might not be in existence no more, but like I said, I hope I'm wrong on that. But that's one thing I could see maybe.

#1: I would just remark that in the last year we have seen Catholic parishes close. On any given Sunday, it had a pretty full parking lot, so I don't think it's purely financial; they closed because they can't find priests to staff them. So, I would agree with #9 in the sense that one or the other parishes here, Grace or Zion, might not exist, might not be both, if there was no partnership.

#9: The other fear...or I believe #1 addressed that, and I will go ahead and pass on that.

#2: A fear that maybe I have is that if our church would keep dwindling – it just seems steady right now, but if it would dwindle, I think people today are so much more willing to get in their car and drive a lot further than years ago. We talked about this, someone had brought that up earlier, that years ago, you came to Grace because it was the closest Lutheran church to your particular place where you lived, where now people will get in their car and drive past a nearby Lutheran church because they want to come to a certain church or maybe they will come once a month, but they are not committed to come four times a month, and once a month seems regular to them, which doesn't seem regular to me, but the fear that I would have is that, the whole thing about apathy, that people just don't care, and I think a lot of the more seasoned seniors in our midst, they are just so committed, and I think that they were raised and that is what they were raised with – you were just committed to your church. I don't know that I see that so much anymore today. I think that people just want different flavors, want different...just want to experience a lot of other things, so I think a fear that I would have would be people just wouldn't care and.....just apathy.

**4. What kind of Leadership in the local congregation is expected of its elected leaders? (paired with Question #10)**

#4: Well, I feel that the elected leaders, mainly they just try to work with the Pastor on what needs to be in the congregation as well as with the congregation itself. When they come to them with a question, they try to give them an answer, and if they can't, they have to talk amongst themselves or bring it up, and...I just feel that's what the leadership needs to be, is work with each other and with the whole congregation to get the job done.

#7: I think what's expected of them is just to do the job that they're elected for, to the best of their ability, and that's all with God's help, that's all we can ask for.

#8: One thought that I have is, what I think an elected officer should do and be, is a good example, in that he should be at church as often as he can, attend meetings, and

encourage young people especially to get involved in the church. Be a good liason between the pastor and the members, be very friendly, and outgoing.

#10: Maybe to always have their eyes and ears open, to kind of see if there's problems or concerns that they can bring forth or ...if they hear good, you know, pass on the goods and the positives.

#9: A comment with #10 is that to have their eyes and ears open, if they do hear something, address it promptly; I think that is part of the leadership of the elected leaders, to deal with problems right away.

#### Perceptions Regarding the **Partnership** (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish

### **5. What conduct or attitude(s) does the Joint Parish partnership require of me?**

#3: Since I'm very new here, I don't even know who is from one church, who's the other church, who's the president or, you know, who to come see at the church. It just so happened that you helped us when we first moved to the community, and then some members have taken on since then to keep a connection with me, but honestly, I don't even know what church the person is you go to or anything like that, and I've been going for about two and a half years, I guess, so I really can't comment really on the question that you're asking, when I don't even know what it's about.

#6: I think that the partnership requires that we be supportive and being flexible; you know, I think that in a joint parish/congregation, you have to be a little bit more flexible. As an example, with the early service/late service, I think that there is a give and take, and I can see that if you have individuals at either congregation that have strong opinions, one way or another, it can affect the entire structure of the partnership, and I think that it is just in everyone's best interest to be supportive.

#9: Probably what is expected of me and everyone else as a joint parish officer is to help #3 understand, and probably there's more than just #3 out here that really don't understand what the joint parish is, what the guidelines are, so I think that is part of my job and everyone in the churches to explain that so #3 does understand what all takes place with the joint parish.

#2: I agree with what #6 was saying earlier about being flexible. I think we have to be adaptable, we have to adapt. Obviously 51 years ago, there was a lot of adapting and changing when it actually became joint, but I think a really big thing is to share the pastor. I think that's not an easy thing to have to share; you know, we have the pastor at Grace, but he's also the pastor at Zion. I think that partnership is....the pastor is not gonna want to feel like he's being played like tug of war between the two churches, so I think we have to make sure that he is shepherding Grace, but that we also allow him to shepherd at Zion, so that's something that all of us have to just be really....we have to work at that all the time, so that both congregations feel like they have a pastor.

#1: That conduct or attitude, if I can pick up on just generally....several comments that have been said on it being supportive of it, and I guess, but to me that looks like I am showing up and, you know, even when it's not my home church, um, even when it's not, you know, the... so that's the biggest part of it, I vote with my feet and show up.

#5: As far as conduct, I am thinking back to when Grace was remodeling [November 2012] and Zion offered their church I think so that we could have church service there, and I think that type of conduct needs to be thought up ahead of time....that needs to be our first thought....if there is something going on, we need to offer instead of the other church possibly asking, we need to be offering when there is a need.

**6. What might be indicators (signs) of an unhealthy partnership? If such indicators exists, what might be done to remedy it/them?**

#1: Kind of pick up on #5's thought....when we had the situation where we were remodeling and we needed a different space, the other church offered and we didn't accept that [historian note: #1 is referring to an earlier occasion that #5, perhaps two decades prior], and that seems a little insulting. I can see where someone might take that kind of the other way....so, I'm not sure, I can't remember any other time in my being here that that's happened, but I'm guessing that sort of thing has been going on. That's a pretty good sign that there is something unhealthy going on in the relationship.

#6: I would just comment...back to one of the comments earlier of just all of us keeping our ears open basically and listening. If there are indicators from other members of the congregation that express thoughts that they are unhappy or that they would like to see things done differently, you know, that we address those questions or concerns and bring them up to the leaders of either congregation or the parish, if those are concerns that warrant such action, or you know, maybe it's just a matter of talking with them one on one and trying to give them a history – they may not know the history of the joint parish, and to just possibly educate them, if they are being negative.

#10: I think sometimes when we talk about a partnership, I think maybe sometimes people feel that we are one. I guess I am one to believe in, at my house, we still feel we are two separate, and when I was reading the guidelines, it said, you know, when we formed the joint partnership, we would still keep our individuality of each church, so sometimes I feel like when we, just say like the directory for pictures, I feel like when we do that, we should have our station [i.e., for photography] here at church, you know, they should have theirs up there. Some things we are still one, 'cause like when I joined here, I joined Grace; I don't feel I joined Grace-Zion, you know, as one partnership, and I know one time when we were talking about doing the communion, no two Sundays in a row, I think first, or a comment was made or I think we talked to



them also before we made a decision to see what they were doing. I think sometimes, you know, we are still our individual congregation, even though we're not that far apart, there is definitely historically different ideas, views from families, why they were established, why we were established, you know... still years ago....I mean, I know years ago travel was harder, that's why there were a lot of little churches close together, but still that community had their thoughts and ideas, this community had their thoughts and ideas. So sometimes....I'm not against the partnership financially and I think it's great we can have one pastor serve two, and you know have other pastors available, but I think we're still individual congregations, that sometimes we don't need to give that up for the sake of being friends with the other.

#4: I feel sometimes that there is feelings that since the pastor and his family live here that they feel there is special attention given to this congregation over theirs. I don't know whether it is or not, I mean, or whether they feel that way or not, I should say. I don't feel there is, but sometimes you get the feeling that they might think that's being done, but I don't feel that it is – but that's one thing that kind of crossed my mind.

#9: What I feel like is an indicator or a signs of an unhealthy partnership is when we have a joint voter's, the only ones that shows up is the joint council; I think that is very unhealthy, and what might be done to remedy it, I really don't know, if anyone would have an idea on how to remedy that, I would like to hear the answer, but I think if ....it's just very unhealthy when you can't have a joint voter's meeting and you can only just get the joint council there to conduct what two congregations are supposed to do for the rest of the year.

#2: This kind of goes along with that, maybe an unhealthy indicator might be when we have joint services, like for Lent, Advent, Ascension, and it's at a certain church, it seems like, my observation is, not always but it just seems like sometimes, if it's at Grace, we will get Grace members, we don't really get Zion. It is a joint service, but you don't possibly get that many Zion people to come down the road to Grace. When it's at Zion, you might get a few more people from Grace that will show up for that, but it's not...it doesn't really seem like it is joint....The Zion people come in, they sit down, they get up, and they leave. Again, it just might be an observation I made. It doesn't really seem like we're all one as a joint; we're just still kind of separate with that, and maybe that's not really too healthy. We should be....if we're going to have a joint service, we should just all be together, having jointness and not being like you can't go to that church because it's not my church.

#1: Kind of picking up on something here....I don't know...I'd guess we're 51 years away from the partnership, that's probably two going on three generations. I don't know how many people even know, maybe before two weeks ago when the first questionnaire was done, I don't know how many people even knew what the partnership really was. I don't think it's ever been kind of described publicly. It's sort of like....an assumption's been made, that you just kind of know what it is and how we're supposed to behave with it.... If we never talk about it as individual

congregations or as a joint partnership, how do the people know what it is supposed to be?

#10: Like, when do these guidelines come out? Is that something that is given out at the joint meeting, or...I mean, I've been married 30 years and we never had any at our house, so... I mean, these are old...I don't know what year these were. (#1 interjects "1963") This one was 2012, so I don't know if that one was given out at the joint council meeting....like, this one's 1983. (Moderator: They were more widely disseminated than that, but I don't recall the exact method of distribution.) This one's 1982. (Moderator: Clearly, that is something that ought to be looked into by the committee that examines the data, it would seem.) This one's 2012. I don't know if we made some ("adjustments") changes or...so really before we did this survey, I was kind of like, there was a couple of questions about that, and I was like "Oh, I never read those." Maybe sometime, I don't know, you know like he said, young people, they don't know the reason. Maybe sometime if we had a meeting and we could have some of the older people that were there give their ideas and say what happened, just a history a little bit so everyone is kind of caught up.

#9: Going back to my comment earlier is, on the joint parish meetings we have with just joint council being there, that's the other reason why I felt earlier was for question #1 why I think both churches are a commuter church is most people, in my opinion, seems like they're not really interested in what both congregations do. If they was, they would attend the voter's meeting and joint voter's meeting more than what would turn out than what we do have.

#6: I will comment on that, as well. I think it gets back to a comment that was made earlier: it's apathy. I think that people don't participate if they feel like everything is going okay, status quo, that they're not going to participate unless they're upset or disgruntled about a situation or something that's going on that they don't like, and then they will participate, but other than that, it's going okay, don't need to go, I think is the mindset.

**7. In what lie the strengths of the Joint Parish partnership? (What enables it to continue with strength?)**

("We are...this past week ago today, was the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the first joint meeting, by which a pastor was extended a Call. He didn't take that Call, but it would be truly our birth date, if we were calling something a birth date. So, for 51 years, we've been at this. What enables us to continue with strength?")

#5: I think one of the main strengths that we have right now is the pastor that we have that can manage both congregations and shepherd both congregations.

#9: I agree with #5, but I'll add also to have faithful officers, joint parish officers too, I guess if you want to say, keeping an eye on things and make sure everything is running smooth.

#6: I would agree with both of those comments and just add that I think another critical piece is having members of both congregations that are supportive of a joint parish, because I've seen and heard of situations where, you know, sometimes you have individuals from one congregation or the other -it really doesn't necessarily matter- that can really make a situation stressful for everyone involved. If they don't feel like things are going the way that, you know, they think they should.

#10: I think maybe, I don't know if it's really considered a strength, but I think that there still is a need for the joint congregation. I think probably financially, you know, anymore, we probably need to be together to share a pastor. I think the need is there probably to keep a joint.

#7: I agree with that completely, and I feel like the need for that will increase more and more as our congregations get older.

#10: Maybe not even just the financial, maybe just even the number of pastors that are available. I mean I know there for awhile it seemed like it took awhile for some churches to get a pastor; I don't know if the enrollment has been better or the rate of pastors coming out.

#### Perceptions Regarding **Pastoral Office** (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

### **8. What qualities, ministry duties, and activities are important to you for the Pastor of the Joint Parish?**

#2: I would say that qualities for the pastor of the joint parish, that the pastor should be a good shepherd that would love the people in the pew right where they are, to instruct them in the truth of God's word and to help the people where they're at to just keep growing in God's word and truthfulness of God's word.

#8: One thing that I expect from our pastor, and he has done so very well, is not to show any partisanship to either congregation.

#4: I feel that pastor's responsibilities are to listen to both congregations, to try to support both of them and to keep both congregations working together, and I feel it's being done as well as I think it could be done.

#6: Again, just all of the responsibilities that a pastor has to just one congregation and sharing those responsibilities with a joint parish or two congregations, you know, can be pretty demanding as far as time constraints, personal time versus time to both congregations, which can be a challenge sometimes, and I think our pastor does a very good job of being accommodating to either congregation or any individuals at whichever congregation that may have a need arises, that he does a good job of fulfilling those needs.

**9. A multi-church Partnership like ours might require particular or special gifts of its pastor. What comes to mind?**

#6: Special gifts, I think, personality I think is a big, tremendous asset for anyone, but having someone that is open-minded, understanding, sympathetic to situations and where people are at, to gain their trust, and whatever situation arises that they handle it, you know, in a respectful positive manner. I think those are individual traits but those are things that I think are especially important in a joint parish.

#5: I think in a dual parish where there are two small congregations as compared to a large church where there might be two or three pastors, where the duties are split, like in a small church the pastor has to be good with youth, has to be good with the elderly, has to be good making sick visits, where...I mean that's a lot of different hats, compared to a large church where typically one pastor may take all the sick calls and has a special gift for that... in a small church, you have to wear a lot of hats and be good with all of those groups of people.

#7: Probably to kind of round that off would be well organized and have things... organized.

#2: I think it's important that the pastor in a joint parish situation, or any pastor even if they're not in a joint parish situation, that they don't come into this serving the people with their agenda, but that they are there to serve the people or what the people's needs are, because there are going to be all different at different situations, and even in a joint parish the needs of one congregation might be heavier or more weighty at one time, there might just be more sick people, and might be more needs. I mean, when the tornado hit Grace [historian note: December 15, 1971], I wasn't here when that happened, but apparently that would have been really a time when community and the church and the pastor, there would have been a heavy need, when the steeple gets ripped off the church...so those are times when maybe a pastor feels more weighty in one situation, towards one congregation over another one, but I think, too, a pastor should just be, he should be there to serve the people and to shepherd them and to not come in with his agenda of what he thinks should be done to change ...not to change ... if the people want things to change, they should be doing it, that's what the joint voter's people should be doing, if they want change; that should not be the pastor's job to change things.

#7: To add a little bit more to what I said awhile ago as far as getting all your things in order, as far as visiting the sick, and visiting all the people with special needs, and making this all come together so all the other schedules that come up on an emergency basis, that they all get taken care of in an orderly manner, in which I can see we are blessed here with that.

**10. What kind of Leadership in the congregation(s) is expected of the Pastor?  
("Do you see this the same question as #4, or do you see a distinct difference?")**

#9: (Pass on that; I'll have to think about that.)

#1: I guess I kind of worry with placing too much leadership on pastor, not that we don't want a pastor that leads, but that we call a pastor to preach the Word and deliver the Sacraments. If we're expecting as congregations that the pastor is going to be a leader, then what does that mean about what we're expecting to lead both at the individual level as members of the congregation and at the level of elders and then joint elders.

#6: I think sometimes it might be easy to fall into the trap of expecting the pastor to do, to be responsible for too many things, that probably some of the other leadership in the congregation maybe should address, take care of, or whatever the situation may be, I think sometimes it's probably easy to just assume that the pastor is going to handle things that maybe aren't really his responsibility.

#9: Thinking about this, if I can word it properly, but the kind of leadership I expect out of our pastor is preaching the word of God, keeping it pertaining to the Bible, keeping His name pure and holy.

#10: Maybe also with his leadership, like what #2 had said before, you don't want a pastor to come in just with his agenda, but maybe a pastor, his leadership would be maybe to call on his officers, call on his elders for more help, or if he sees a need, instead of carrying it all on himself or making the decision, to be sure to pull in his officer team to help with the problem or concern.

#2: And I will just add again, I had talked earlier about being adaptable, but I think that the pastor needs to be flexible because every day there's going to be different needs, and 2014 is not the same kind of church that there were back 51 years ago even when the joint parish started; there are so many more needs of people today, and that's a lot to put on one human being and one pastor that gets called for two churches, but I think what #10 was saying, too, is that have a pastor have that teamwork and that support, that yes, he is the pastor of the two congregations, or joint parish, but that he can call on elders or trustees or call on anyone that can be there to support what he can delegate...probably should be a good delegator, that would be good, because then the work is shared, or the ministry is shared among the people instead of it just being all for the pastor.

#8: The comment that #6 made, about some people saying the pastor or thinks the pastor, how can I say this, uh, should do everything, and we as leaders of the church should assist our pastor and help him anyway we can to make the church a success, and I deeply think sometimes the pastor does too much, work too much, and I know I fall short of it.

(Moderator: "I have a little note before I do question #11, which is technically our last question, but we still have time, and as I pondered what we ought to do with what time that remains – we have one more question – we could blow all our time with that, and we might, I

don't know, but another possibility would be if we finished question #11, I've got copies of the questionnaire that was taken and perhaps you had a question or something about the questionnaire or maybe there was a section or a question that really got you thinking, that might be a direction for us to complete our time together. But first, I want to say this, though, so it's on the tape, thank you to each and every one of you. Our time for this group will at some point come to a close, although we have enough time to continue in the way I have mentioned, and we want to offer each participant the opportunity for one final comment on this last question here for tonight, the focus group questions, and if you want to make any kind of comment, roaming back through tonight's proceedings, you are welcome to do that as well. I guess I'll put our [numbered] sticks back into the cup for a random draw.")

**11. What observation – or what learning – have you made as a result of either the questionnaire or the focus group discussion?**

#7: Well, I can say that just from hearing all of you here tonight, I think there's more concern about our congregation and what happens to it than I was really aware of, so I'm glad to see all of the answers that everybody gave; that's appreciated by me as a member of this group.

#6: One of things that I take away from this and being involved in many different things, as far as organizations, different types of things, I think that the success of any organization, including the church or joint parish is the fact that people work together. You can agree to disagree, but as long as you're all willing to work together to achieve your common goals, you can be successful. You can thrive, and you can have a long-term partnership, relationship, whatever you wish to call it, but it really requires the cooperation of the people that are participants that are involved to make that successful, whatever that is, and I think that the fact that, you know, our two congregations have been together for 51 years, is a testament to the fact that we have worked together, and I think that we can be together for a long time to come as long as the participants that are involved are willing to work together; we may agree or have other ideas of ways of doing things or how to get there, but the fact is as long as we work together, we can be successful for a long time to come.

#5: I think something that I've learned from doing the questionnaire and this is that there is a lot of things that I didn't know about the joint parish. I grew up in a joint parish, I joined a church that was a joint parish, but I never really gave it a lot of thought. I guess in the back of my mind I always thought it was for financial reasons; I never even, I mean, I didn't give it another thought to think that it was because it would be hard to staff all of the small churches in our area with an individual pastor, and I think learning about, like what #10 said, not knowing, you know, not having the bylaws or not even thinking about it, that there is a lot of information that we either don't think about or that we just don't know, like why the joint parish was formed to begin with, unless you were a member from birth and were living and involved when the joint parish was formed.

#6: I'll make another comment....I think it could be interesting, given the fact of the questionnaires and the participants in the focus group, to see whenever our future joint

parish meetings do come up if there is an increase in attendance. I think this might be interesting.

#10: I think maybe doing the questionnaire and just thinking about the whole project that Pastor is doing, the older I get, the more I think I'd like to go back and see more history and would like to have been a little mouse when it all started, and to see the fears that the people had then or if it was something really calm or if it did cause problems, and maybe doing this questionnaire, it might be a thing where if we could get everyone together, it might be a thing where it would need to be revisited and there need to be more revisions in our joint parish guidelines. You know, maybe after 51 years, some things do need to be addressed and maybe changed. You know, maybe people have just got so comfortable with it, some people don't know the guidelines, you know, it could be something that needs to be tweaked or kind of touched up.

#6: One of the things that I think that I've derived from these discussions, and this is just an assumption on my part, and I'm making an assumption that the joint parish that we have has been around for 51 years is probably longer than some, I don't know that, or longer than all, I'm assuming that there are joint parishes that have been around longer than we have, but I'd be curious to know how long, what is the longest joint parish on record, just out of curiosity. (Moderator: The Moderator will see what we can do about finding you an answer some time.)

#9: What I'm hoping will come out of this, with the learning and with the questionnaires and the focus group, is down the road if other congregations in our area or another part of the United States needs to join or form a...[partnership], that what we are doing here and, when this gets where it needs to go, at a destination, that it will make it a lot easier for other congregations to share a pastor and have the joint parish guidelines like we've adopted, maybe it'll help. Hopefully it will help other congregations to form something like this in an easier manner than probably maybe than we did when we formed it. That's one of the things I'm hoping will come out of it.

# 1: I just observed that there is a lot, and I think #5 touched on this, that there's just a lot I don't know, or I thought I knew, and the more you know, the more you realize you don't know.

#9: According to #1 and several others here, that maybe it's, as an officer, something that we need to be working on a little bit harder, finding out, or making things available for the members of the joint churches. If there's a lot of things that people don't know, maybe we need to, instead of just sitting back and letting it go, maybe we need to have some type of a committee or something to where we can make some of these questions as #3 has there, we can make them available to them; hopefully maybe that is something that can come out of it.

#10: It would be interesting to know, too, at the time that they did if that was something that the Synod suggested they do, or if the congregation members came up with that on their own, if Zion said we need help, could we share, and things like that, how it all

started. And like #6 said, if there were some way longer than that or if we are one of the longest ones.

Moderator: Winding down... Any last thoughts on question #11? Actually question #11 can go on because what I'll do right now is....grab those questionnaires, and if you want to browse quickly through them, maybe we could each find one question from it that tweaked our thinking when we took it, whether it was yesterday or a week ago. I trust we wouldn't need to look at page 1; you know which church you're a member of, but again we have four different categories by which the questions were subdivided. Again, with the focus of us trying to discern, to gain increasing clarity as to the vision we have of ourselves as a congregation as well as clarity about the joint parish relationship and the partnership we share in it. So, what I might do is just go through our random draw sticks again and pick numbers, give you....I should have given you warning so that you would bring the question that you are most concerned about... I guess I could do it that way or, if you already have one and you'd like to bring it up...

#8: I have one, on the first page, our congregation needs more fellowship together (addressing question OC-3 on the first page). It says our congregations, which means both. I think that would be a very good way to start out, to get more involvement. Maybe even for a joint parish annual meeting, to have like a meal afterwards, or some kind of event, to get more people there.

#1: I have a comment to followup on #8's observation. I have belonged in the past to a congregation, where this congregation is a joint partnership, belonged to congregations that were one congregation, large enough to have multiple meeting times or multiple worship times. I would suggest that sometimes those congregations were just as much a joint partnership with each service time having its own unique feel, almost in culture, as much as we do in this partnership. One of the interesting things that one of these congregations did was on fifth Sundays, they would have one time, and they would have a potluck afterwards.

#6: I'll comment on OC-6, "Our congregation's best days are behind us". I think that that is a mindset or attitude. I think a lot of times, and is the glass half full, is it half empty, type of a question, and I think that it is all on how you want to look at life. I think if you want to be positive and supportive, you would say 'no' to that, and if you are down and depressed, you probably would agree with that question.

#10: I guess I agree with #6, that one kind of caught my attention I think when I was going through it, like "best days behind us," I was like whoah [!]...and then I guess the one, too, all the questions on the awareness of the partnership agreement, that's when I realized that there were a lot of things I didn't know.

#7: On OC-6, when I read that the first time, I felt a little bit offended, with all the blessings that we have had in all the years and all our ancestors that came before us and all they went through to get this done, I thought how in the world could anybody feel this way with the blessings that we got here. They did the hard work for us; we're just continuing it.



#4: I would like to bring up PA-10, whose job is it, properly speaking, to prepare the annual Joint Parish budget. That could be, I think, really two answers. The Treasurer prepares it, but it has to go through the Joint Council to okay it. I mean, that's my way of thinking on it anyway.

Moderator: Not wishing to throw too much into this the Moderator will simply address that by saying I bet a lot of people have no clue, so this is one of those [points] where education would be needed.

#2: I'm looking at the questionnaire, PO-1, is it important that there be a regular Pastor-led Bible class in my congregation each year, and because of our time, switched back and forth, early/late, that is not always something that we can have, a Pastor-led Bible class on a Sunday morning, but to have it on a different day of the week, kind of going along with what #8 said, it would be nice, I think, to have a joint Bible study mid-week, and maybe that could be like a family...I know that some churches, that might not be in our Synod or might not be Lutheran, but they have Wednesday night church. I'm not suggesting this, I'm just saying perhaps we could just do something where it is joint and it is more where the Pastor is involved with the families, and I know there's programs out there available to do things like that, so then we would be able to have a Pastor-led Bible study at my church every year whether he's early or late service or however that works, if we did it mid-week. And I don't know if anyone else here thinks it's important that Pastor has a Bible study every year in your church.

#9: I think whenever the results come back from this questionnaire, both churches will know what kind of work they've got cut out for them.

#10: Will we see the results from both churches, or will it all be combined into one, or will we know what Zion and what Grace, how will that...

Moderator: Clarifying the question with an answer; we should be able to see the answers for both, and thereby understand the perceptions of both, and it may be an eye opening thing for us to see things from the other congregation's perspective or for them to see them from our perspective. We'll just have to see how that goes, but yeah, that is definitely one of those things where we would like, or we hope if the data shows anything different, we would like to see that and say, "Well gee, how did that develop or why?"

#9: Getting back to my last comment, I think it would be, as when I made the comment about what kind of work we'll have ahead of us, it'll be something that we can make both congregations a lot stronger when we find out what the needs are of the people out there and address them as quick as possible.

#6: I'll add just a general comment, too. I would like to thank, and I think I'm thanking the correct person, but I think Pastor derived a lot of this discussion, anytime that we do anything, I think, that causes us to stretch or grow or get outside of our comfort zone, that's hard and I think that human nature is to resist that, but I think that from this, I think that there is going to be a lot of good discussions and hopefully the information that we gain will help

us better understand ourselves and our own situation, but I really hope that this information will benefit other congregations that may consider doing a joint parish that maybe don't have one now, and I hope that this information will be beneficial for many people for a long time to come. I'd also like to say thanks, Pastor, for your work.

Moderator: What I notice as I look over the questionnaire is that so many of the questions actually did come up tonight which was sort of the hope, that many of the things that are identified as particular questions did get drawn from you at different points and that's to your credit that you have been thinking about these things and giving them some deep consideration. Any concluding thoughts or comments? I guess we could simply go around the table if you'd like to and make a concluding comment, if you wish. Otherwise, you may pass. But I'm looking at the clock and we have about four minutes to go, so... To my left, #9, comment?

#9: Pass.

#8: I know Pastor put a lot of work into this, and I thank him for bringing this into light and maybe we can actually draw from this. I appreciate that.

#5: And I would agree with that.

#3: I also agree and am grateful that I got picked to be in the focus group.

#2: I guess I've learned from the questionnaire and also being on the focus group, participating in this, that the dual parish -the Joint Parish- is not for the weak of heart, either for the pastor – you have to have a very strong pastor, a pastor that has got perseverance, and I think that our pastor does, and also I think that just even the members sitting here tonight, our members of Grace and Zion, both churches, they have to persevere and have to want to keep their church going and that's a good thing for both congregations, and it's been a good thing to witness and to be part of, so I commend all of you and thank you all for being part of this.

#10: I think it's brought up a bunch of questions for me to ponder and things where I want to know more knowledge and maybe to be more involved and to kind of figure out the history of our congregation and things I can do to keep my family involved and maybe change mindset of things I've felt, and brought up a lot of questions.

#4: I feel it's been informative to me, and I think on down the line it's going to get very interesting, what happens after we get all the results back, and I feel that it will make our partnership stronger; I hope it will.

#1: I was thinking about #2's comment, and then #7 made a comment earlier, that those before us had tremendous foresight and vision into what they wanted to create and the work they put into that, and I guess that this is our opportunity to do the same.

#6: I'm going to pass.

#7: I think a lot of the reason this joint parish has had its problems, but I feel that the leadership from our pastor with this joint congregation and also his family's support, 'cause there's a lot of things that interfere, that come up and have to be moderations made, and I think we've been blessed to have our Pastor lead these congregations in the way that helps both congregations along as well as can be expected.

Moderator: At this point, the Moderator wishes to thank the participants and I'm going to read the following statement. The tape will probably run out on us but this is not all that crucial to be part of the text. Again, we began: "Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share." Well, now it has been researched; at least, it's begun. Over the past two weekends, communicant members of our congregations were given a voice on a questionnaire regarding their perceptions on various aspects of our life and ministry together. You have added to that voice in a significant way by your willingness to be here, and for that, we thank you. Each of you has a valid perspective from which you view your congregation. It is firmly believed that we all benefit when we become aware of those perspectives, whether or not we agree with them. Thank you for your willingness to speak on the record, and to participate in this data-gathering event. Please continue to pray that as our leadership team considers the data that has now been gathered, we might prioritize and present the data in ways that enable us to address, educate, and stimulate discussion and growth for the mutual benefit of our congregation, as well as the partnership we share. So thank you, each of you, for taking the time, for being willing to consider some of the issues that are part of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish. Let's close in prayer: Gracious God, by Your rich mercy, Grace and Zion congregations have served as places for Word and Sacrament ministry, bonded in this partnership in our Lord Jesus Christ for over half a century. Grant Your blessing upon us in the days to come and help that our small contribution to the dialogue will be a blessing to others. In Jesus' name we pray it. Amen.

(The remaining minutes with discussion and suggestions on how to do the repeat focus group were not transcribed.)

APPENDIX 25  
QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FROM FOCUS GROUP #2

**Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish: Focus Group Questions**

*The following is a transcription of the Focus Group convened of designated and selected Zion members on May 20, 2014.*

Perceptions Regarding One's Own Congregation (OC)

**1. Which best describes our church – commuter church or a community church – and why?**

#17: I think that we are both a community and commuter church. At one time, we were completely community, but now we're having more and more people come in from further away. I was thinking about the distance that people travel.

#16: I just want to reiterate and agree with her 100% that we are more of a commuter in everything that we do nowadays and not only in our personal lives but also in church and in years past, it may have been that it was just a community church but now from the distances that people are traveling, I think that we are a commuter church also.

#12: I still think that we still lean towards the community church; I mean, we still have quite a few in the community church, like before, but like I said, we are starting to get more and more that are traveling quite a distance to get here on a regular basis, so it's like.... I think we're still community, but we are slowly going toward the commuter part of it.

#13: I feel like the partnership that we have gives us the opportunity to be both, with the opportunity of the different times of services, that we can also commute to our sister church or remain at the church closer to home, and I find that very convenient myself, and I see that the church in Uniontown, a lot of members take advantage also in coming up to ours, and I think that's really great.

#19: I feel that a community church is working out well, and we have a lot of fellowship with Grace congregation down there, which I think is very valuable.

**2. What blessings does our congregation experience as a result of the Joint Parish Partnership (and where would our congregation be without this partnership)?**

#16: Well, I feel some of the blessings that our congregation experiences are that we're not just left on our own. We can have partnership with our other church, with our sister church. Actually, the second part of the question, where would our congregation be without this partnership, I feel that we probably wouldn't be a

congregation if it wouldn't be for this partnership, cause I am afraid that our congregation on its own wouldn't be able to support it ourselves or to have our own, or just support on our own merits – I think we need this partnership just for us to be able to exist. And I'm not saying that it wouldn't be possible for us to exist by ourselves, but I just don't, I myself do not think that it would even be possible. So, the blessings of this partnership are that we're able to have a congregation, is the way I feel.

#17: I value education of the children and I feel that if we had one pastor to support that we couldn't give the children financial aid to have our Christian education, so I value the partnership with Grace in that aspect. We don't have to have own our school. We can send the children to various Christian schools, and we get support from the congregation.

#13: One of the blessings that I feel like we also have is shared concerns and prayer and just through our worship that we're able to lift one another up. And I find that very important.

#17: I have something to add. We have, in addition to what she says, there are a lot of homebound in both congregations, and we have a person who will tape the services and make sure that these people have access to each church's service and don't feel so left out, and that is a blessing for our congregation. I also think that we would probably be like Friedenberg, absorbed into another church or like York Chapel up here, absorbed into another church. The building is there, but people have gone away.

#14: I agree with what #17 said about maybe having to go to a different church; if we wouldn't have one here, we would have to go to another community church, so we're glad to be here.

#12: One of the blessings I see is, you know, I was gone for awhile and then back, and one of things is that you go to some of the churches in urban areas...you go there and you really don't know anybody. I think one of the things for me was to come back and be involved in the church, and you know, it was people I grew up with and knew and, you know, you just really know these people, you know their families, kids, parents, and everything like that, and that was important to me and even like with the sister church in Uniontown, a lot of those people, too. So, to know the people, they know you; if you have a problem, you know that they have you in their thoughts and prayers.

### **3. What fears threaten our congregation?**

#12: I guess the biggest fear that comes to mind is: would the church and the congregation have to shut down? You know, to me it's a very important part of my life, and I've seen it, like we talked about before, all the little churches in and around the community, you don't realize how many have shut down until you start actually

sitting and thinking about it, like Friedenberg, York Chapel, I mean there's just little churches all over, so it's been going strong for 50-some years and it makes a difference. I know a lot of people I talk to and they're upset that their church shut down and a lot of them have probably been there, born into the church, baptized, raised there and, you know, the church just goes away. So, that would probably be my biggest fear, that the congregation would shut down.

#13: I think one of my concerns too is keeping the children involved and wanting to stay in our church. I'm kind of worried that we don't have a lot of children active in our church right now. We have a few and it's growing obviously today, but still, I would like to see more children.

#16: This is not only fears that threaten our congregation but the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as a whole... I have fears is that we are losing members to some of these upstart churches that make you feel good, and it really bothers me. People that are raised, that have been raised in the Lutheran faith all their lives and they're going to these other nondenominational churches or different churches just because they're telling them things they want to hear and doing things that are fun to do, it scares me that people have no more feelings for their faith than what they do to just go to these other churches because, you know, they're telling them the things they want to hear and not dealing with things that these people have been taught their whole lives – they'll be going to these churches and never professing a creed or never saying the Lord's Prayer, and maybe that is not required of you to get into heaven, but it bothers me that these people that have been raised their whole life professing the Lutheran faith, and then they decide that it's not for them anymore, and I mean it's not just our congregation, it's congregations in general, and that is one fear that really concerns me.

#13: I would have to agree with #16 on that wholly.

#17: On #16 and #13, I think that we have the children...how to do you continue educating the children in the church to maintain that faith, and that's a disturbance to me, a fear that I have, that we somehow miss out on educating them some way. There's such a communication, mass communication, that these kids are hit with every day, and you wonder if they get enough from what we do.

#12: I am going to...I don't know if it's part of the question or whatever, but, you know, I know in the past that I had gone to some of the nondenominational churches in a previous...another life (chuckles)...and I know that I think it ran its course, and when I went back into the Lutheran church, and especially when I came to this one, I told my wife, I said, "I don't know about you, but I'm joining the church and so (more chuckles)...that's it, no other churches for me." You know, like I said, I think a lot of them are the church of what's happening now, and you get a lot of these people out there and, maybe it's more emotional than it is anything else, you know, it's like...I just don't see it like this anymore...I just see so many people...they just don't...I think they're a little bit more liberal church, you know, and they're not

going to follow guidelines and it is like they just get in there and a lot of the people are...they give them a little bit more free reign to do what they want, and...I'm trying to be politically correct, but I just didn't agree with a lot of it and once I left, I knew that you would never get me back in there again. And, so you may have a lot of these people run the course, leave, going to go spread their wings, try to find out what they want to do in life by how they want to do it, some may stay, some may come back, but I think that's in a lot of things. That was my experience with the nondenominational churches.

#16: And I hope that that's the case. I hope these people realize where their true faith lies and that after they have gone out and experienced these other religions and done these things that they will end up coming back and realize where their true faith lies; I sure hope that that's the case.

#19: I never went to a different church except the Lutheran church back home here, but in the military, we had different chaplains, one Episcopalian, a Baptist chaplain, and then I went to chaplain service and I could weed out which was right and which was wrong, but then we had a Lutheran pastor come there, about every three months. I felt like I was at home, I didn't have to worry about things [i.e.-wayward teaching]. I was used to it and took communion without [access to] the Lutheran hymnal.

#18: And I do hope that we would with God's help and these congregations that we will have many more seminarians capable of being pastors and teachers and leaders.

#### **4. What kind of Leadership in the local congregation is expected of its elected leaders? (paired with Question #10)**

#19: I think leadership in the congregation is doing a good job with this; like they say, that there is always room for improvement here or there.

#15: Quite honestly, I think the leadership in the congregation or what's expected of our elected leaders is pretty much to maintain what we have here. What we have here is very good, but we have a lot we can do, we have a lot we should do, a lot we could do. We're more a reactionary type of leadership than the leadership that looks to what we could be doing; in other words, we react to situations. We deal with those situations very promptly and very nicely and those things, but I think we're falling short by simply maintaining, and not expecting more of our elected leaders than to simply maintain.

#14: I think one of things is to make sure the Gospel is proclaimed in its purity and truth.

#17: Agrees with #14 and that is the main purpose of the church. The leadership does that and seeks mission work which is something that should be considered because that is in our mission statement. I think that we fulfill a lot of the leadership needs that we have.

#16: I also think that the leaders of the congregation should set an example for the rest of the congregation also by the way they live and by the way they participate in the activities of the church and attending church services and making sure that the services are run in an appropriate fashion. I think that the church looks up to the church leaders, to be sure that they are also not being hypocrites themselves and leading the church in the proper way.

#17: Is it required for our leaders to also be Titus and Timothy literally? This is what #16 is referring to; we do have good leaders, and I look up to the leaders in this church so.

#13: I agree with #17 and #16.

#18: I agree also (with #13, #17, and #16).

Perceptions Regarding the **Partnership** (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish

##### **5. What conduct or attitude(s) does the Joint Parish Partnership require of me?**

#18: To do my part and appreciate the other congregation and their members, look up to them, work together.

#16: The Joint Parish Partnership is not just the members of the joint council. The Joint Parish Partnership is all voting members of both congregations and it requires all members to participate and to look out for the best interests of our partnership with each other. It's not just left up to a few individuals; it should be all the voters of both parishes, should participate in it. It's not just a select few.

#17: I have a question. The Joint Parish Partnership...is that just the voting members, or all members of the congregations, including the baby that was born today?

Moderator: The moderator says that you ask a very good question, but he is not to answer at this time. But this is a question that ought to be dealt with in a broader setting because I think every member of both congregations ought to wrestle with it. Being this far into the research, it sure seems as if each member of each congregation has a stake and a share in this.

#17: When I came back, I needed to get as much information about the Bible as quickly as I could, so I went to Bible classes down at Grace and I came to Bible classes here, and I felt very welcome by the people down at Grace, so... and not just the people who were voting members; it was anybody and everybody that was within the congregation. They were willing to help, if I needed whatever, so...



#12: I think a lot of times they say in any organization, 5% of the members do all the work or take care of everything. I feel like here, it's a lot higher percentage than that. I mean, we have a pretty good involvement from a lot of the church members. It could always be better, but I think if there's anything that needs to be done, usually you can find somebody or call someone and get the help or whatever you need. I don't know, like #17 said, but I just think that as far as welcoming people into the church, be it here, I feel like we do a pretty good job, and you know, I'm probably not the most outgoing person, but if I see somebody new come in, you know, you'll see a lot of people go up to them and introduce themselves and talk to them. But, that's the kind of conduct I would like to see people do, just welcoming more people into the church, new people that when they show up, just to visit or whatever like that. What I would also like to see, everybody to get involved with a lot more different aspects of it, from doing if we have the dinners to helping with different things in church, you know with the greeting in the morning or preparing the communion service, like that and so....I know that there's probably a few things that #12 could do to be a better one (chuckles)...

#17: #16 had a good idea. I just would like him to enlarge upon what he means by the council and participation in that.

#16: Well, what I was getting at, and we have one joint council meeting a year, our annual meeting, and usually the only people that are there are the joint council members. There are very few others that attend the meeting, and it would do my heart good to see more of the voting members of the congregations in attendance rather than just the select few of the council.

#17: I was not aware that I was invited to those. I thought that when it said joint council, that meant just joint council or joint voters. I've gone to a joint voters, but I've never been to a joint council because I thought I was excluded, so this is very interesting.

#16: There is a joint council that requires certain people to attend, but after the joint council meets is when we have the joint voter's meeting, and that's when everybody is invited, and that is when I would like to see more people in attendance for, our joint voter's meeting. I'm sorry if I misspoke on that but that is what I was getting at.

#12: Maybe just put in the bulletin that voters are...(chuckles) to be there.

(Moderator: Other thoughts? Does the Joint Parish Partnership require other conduct or attitudes particular to us?)

#17: I think that we all need to be forgiving of anything that we goof up on, or that they goof up on, or I goof up on. I think that we need to have that always in mind, that we're going to make errors with each other between the congregations, among the congregations, so forgiveness is always in order.

#19: I recall back about when [the] Joint Parish first started out, we had pretty good attendance and I was on the Joint Parish committee for a number of years and as I grew older, you know, you kind of get to a point where you don't get around too good, so you kind of miss those meetings.

**6. What might be indicators (signs) of an unhealthy partnership? If such indicators exist, what might be done to remedy it/them?**

#14: One of the signs might be that a member of Zion would think they would rather be at Zion church when there is a special service than to go to Uniontown/Grace instead. Some people don't like to change.

#13: I think favoritism of one church over the other would be an unhealthy situation, but I really don't see that.

#12: If there was openly fighting between or arguing between the two congregations, I would think that would be something probably where the pastor would have to step in to try to resolve the issue. I don't see that, like I said, I don't see that here at all. I've never seen it, but that would probably might be one of the signs.

Moderator: How discerning.....(chuckling)

#15: You're speaking of an unhealthy partnership. I mean, financially and in a business sense, we have a very good partnership. In a social partnership, we're lacking. And some of the indicators may be, or an indicator that I see, is lack of support from one congregation to another to support possibly, just for example, things like their dinners or social events. We lack in social unity with our friends at Grace. We miss a lot of opportunities to participate with them and for them to participate with us in social aspects. What can be, or what might be done to remedy it? I think we need to put a focus on more social activities, more group social activities that are not Grace-formed or Zion-formed, but Joint Parish-formed. Maybe that would help to take the stigma out of Zion members attending a Grace dinner or Grace members attending a Zion function. I don't know what it is. I am not a lifelong member, so I don't know how things have been for the last many years, but that's how I see it.

#17: There is always a comfort zone for everybody and it may be just... It was very uncomfortable for me the first time I ever went to a Bible study, early in the morning, and you know, you have to take the place of somebody else who's sitting back there, and they were always nice. I think more interaction with, as #15 was saying, more interaction with the groups. There are LWML, dart ball, and things like that, going to Bible study, their Bible study, our Bible study, is one way to break the ice sometimes, and to have those opportunities provided as a Joint Parish Bible study, and they were – I always understood them to be joint. #16 attended some of those, I can remember. They need to be ongoing, but I think that we all have a good attitude towards each other. We know what we have because we are Joint Parish; we might not be able to talk about this if we weren't Joint Parish.

#13: Do you think it's really an issue, though, between the churches? Is it not just maybe how busy everyone's lifestyle is as a factor to that?

#15: I don't really think that it's a busy factor really. The lines are pretty well drawn. I have attended things at Grace, expecting a number of Zion members to participate, and there is none, or possibly one other member. There just seems to be a bit of a social wall somewhere between here and Uniontown. I don't know what it is... You spoke of LWML. I think, to my knowledge, I think Zion congregation has one LWML member that is active. I don't know of anybody that participates in dart ball from Zion to Grace. I know that Grace has a lot of them. I don't think that there is any social things that tie the congregations together. I would love to see there be some, but to my knowledge at this time there isn't. Not that there couldn't be.

#17: I really think that's a busyness question. We have people with young children, they have people with young children. There's television, there's the internet. I don't know how you could get people to say, "this is the activity that would be great for you to participate in", because I might not think that activity is what would be a great activity to participate in. I guess we could ask people, "what do you think would be great for our Joint Parish group to participate in," but you are going to get some who are gun-ho for it and some that aren't. I don't know...

#16: I would like to agree with it being the busy part. I don't think there's any animosity between one congregation towards the other one. I think that we live in such a hectic life now that it's just hard to attend everything, and I just really don't feel that there is any hard feelings or "I'm not going to go to that congregation because I don't belong there." I just don't think that it is that way. Would it be better if they would participate with each other more? That would be wonderful, but I tend to agree more with the busyness part.

#13: Because I know that I've also, due to work schedule, I've attended Sunday morning at Grace, and I felt quite welcome, and I have friends that go there, and likewise they come to Zion.

**7. In what lie the strengths of the Joint Parish Partnership? (What enables it to continue with strength?)**

(Moderator: On last Monday, we celebrated – if there is a birthday – we celebrated it: a 51<sup>st</sup> birthday because that was the anniversary, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1963, of the first Joint Voter's Call meeting, in which a pastor was Called. So that, by any reckoning, has to be the first activity, first thing done as a Joint Parish, giving us 51 years. What is it that has enabled us to make it this far; what are our strengths?)

#15: As far as our strength goes, I think it kind of reverts a little bit back to one of our prior questions as to, I think it was question #2, where would your congregation be without this partnership, I think one of the strongest things that we have here is our existence. Without the Joint Parish partnership, I have very little doubt that we

wouldn't exist as a congregation. There's a lot of other things that we could do, that could become our strengths, but at this point, I really don't see a whole lot of other things other than our continuation of services.

#11: The questions says "what lies in the strengths of the Joint Parish." In my opinion, it would be the longevity of the existence to start with, the ability of different people coming together to solve problems.

#12: I would have to say it's the members, and I think whenever there's a problem or something, -needs of some type- I think not only the members but both churches pull together to do whatever it takes to resolve the issue or question.

#13: I give a lot of credit to our pastor. I mean, seriously, I think it's pretty amazing that the pastor handles the office so well to keep everything going with both churches.

#19: I feel that the pastor that we did call [to the] Joint Parish, they were basically workers to work with us and we[to] work with them. We had a couple of them that were just a short period of time, but we understood that. That was the main thing, why they left. And when you call a pastor, it made us feel good that they wanted to work with us.

#18: I agree 100%.

#17: Grace has a mission statement and Zion has a mission statement, that while they're stated differently, they both have the same ideas. They want to continue bringing people to a knowledge of God, and I think Pastor is helping with that in the services that are being conducted and in the outreach programs, like Vacation Bible School, and in the education. I harp on education, but the education we can give our children, both from the preschool all the way up to high school and beyond with Lutheran education, and without the partnership, I don't think we would be here to do this. And probably a lot of the families who have kids would be sending them to public school instead of Lutheran schools, and so I think it's valuable for their eternal home to know a little about Jesus.

#13: I agree with #17.

Perceptions Regarding **Pastoral Office** (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

#### **8. What qualities, ministry duties, and activities are important to you for the Pastor of the Joint Parish?**

(Moderator: This question falls under perceptions of pastoral office and pastoral presence in the partnership, which, if we would go back and read the Joint Parish guidelines, which there will be great desire for more of those to be made available, I'm sure, one of the purposes was that the two congregations come together so that they would thereby free up a pastor for service to the church elsewhere and making it

possibly more likely that there would be less vacancy situations between our parishes. So, this brings along question #8...)

#11: Qualities of the pastor of the Joint Parish.... #11 thinks it would be communication skills, problem-solving.

#13: One of the things very important to me that the pastor does is going into the nursing homes and to the shut-ins and offering communion. I think that is so very important that our members are not forgotten as they age.

#17: I think the pastor should adhere to the confessions that the church teaches, and that they would be very important to him, which they are. But I see some churches split, like one in Perryville, because of not keeping, not having the same beliefs on particular subjects, so I think it is very important that pastor makes sure the congregation knows what kind of confessions we are supposed to be living by.

Moderator: Qualities, ministry duties, and activities that are important to you for the pastor of the Joint Parish. Just a generic pastor at this point.

#12: A couple of them that have been important to me is when family members pass away, be it at the hospital or somewhere else, the pastor would show up to minister. That was always comforting and I always appreciated it. I'm sure, like we said, with both churches, he is a busy man but he always found the time to do it. And I'm sure a lot of the times, you know, he was always there for so many families, so that was important to me from our pastor.

#16: Not all pastors exhibit the same qualities. Some have strengths in certain areas, and you're not going to always get a perfect pastor; people have to realize that. Things that really make for good pastors, well, they should be good preachers, but is that really the important thing, a good quality to have in a pastor? Sure, if he's got good sermons and keeps you interested, that's an important thing, but it's not something that people should base their attendance at church on, "well, pastor's going to keep me too long today; we've got communion, and he's going to have a long sermon, so it's probably going to be...it might go over an hour today, so I don't know that I will attend church today." That, to me, if people are basing their attendance on church on certain things like that, it's ridiculous. If you can't give the Lord more than an hour a week out of your busy schedule, you have got problems. I think one of the good qualities of a pastor is to be an outgoing pastor, to want to be a people-pastor. Yet, not all of them are like that. That is a trait that certain people have it and certain pastors don't, but to me, that is a very important trait that a pastor needs to have. Important activities for a pastor.... Being involved, leading Bible studies. You can have the lay members – there are some very knowledgeable lay members that can lead Bible class, but still, no one can lead a Bible class like a pastor can. He has had the synodical training; he knows a lot of things that just the typical lay person won't know. That is one thing that is important to me, an activity that is important to me. Ministry duties.... Like I said, if the pastor is a great preacher, that's wonderful, but

people should not put their whole church attendance and put too much stock in your pastor being a great preacher, I don't think. Not saying that ours isn't one...that's not what I'm saying at all (chuckles)... I'm just saying that there are certain people that put way too much stock in that belief.

#17: I like a long sermon, but that's just me and I realize that, but last Sunday, pastor was talking about maturity and the Christian life, and I think that's what #16 is talking about too – you have a congregation of how ever many people, and all of those people are different in their maturity, and you have to take that into account. Some of them are more anxious to hit the door than others are. How do you get a Christian to become more mature? It's something that Pastor works on, we pray for – it takes work.

#14: #16 just took the words out of my mouth while ago about a people-person. I like people-persons. I think I'm a people-person, so I like that.

#16: There's also one part.... The pastor of the Joint Parish also has to be a pretty good mediator also. Since he is in charge of two congregations, he has to be able to discern what is not going to benefit one congregation more than the other. He's got to be one that kind of, is pretty level-headed, and he has to see what is...is this really going to be benefitting to both congregations, or will this put a rift between the congregations... so he has to be well discerning in knowing what is appropriate for the joint council, so not every pastor could be a good pastor of a Joint Parish. He has to be a very discerning individual and I guess that's about all I have on that.

#19: I'll agree with #16 on what he said about a pastor being a good communicator.

**9. A multi-church Partnership like ours might require particular or special gifts of its pastor. What comes to mind?**

#13: Well, I agree with what #16 just said about being a great mediator. That's extremely important, but I also feel like the pastor has to be able to juggle a lot of hours between the two churches and the activities that are going on individually with the churches, and just being able to multi-task. And I'm sure that you have to put a lot of long hours into that, for the well-being of each church.

#18: I realize that the pastor is also a human being, has a family, has many duties in his home life, and giving so much time to the church... What a Christian, but what a blessing that ours does that. (#13 – "I agree.")

#16: I think some of the comments made on #8 pretty well fall in line with question #9. It seems like the two questions kind of run together so a lot of the comments that I had made on question #8 probably fall in line with question #9, about what gifts a pastor should have. He should be a people-person, and he should also be a good mediator, a good communicator, to keep the communication between the partnership

strong and you've just got to be a very outgoing person to be able to juggle both congregations.

#### **10. What kind of Leadership in the congregation(s) is expected of the Pastor?**

#13: Well I think we expect our pastor to be knowledgeable of the Word and the ability to lead, and counsel, and teach.

Moderator: This question again is one that balanced back off of #4 as we talked about the leadership of the elected leaders of the congregation as well as leadership from the pastor, so if it causes you to reflect back, that's ok.

#16: The Pastor should, along with the leaders of the congregation, be certain that our worship is conducted in the appropriate manner. It should be followed under the Lutheran way and teachings. It should be following our Lutheran Service Book and Pastor should be someone that both congregations look up to. He should be held in high regard. He is the shepherd of our flock and we should hold him in the utmost respect that is deserving of his position. And likewise, in the same way, the Pastor needs to show - to lead by example and to live a life like that, and that to me is the kind of leadership that should be expected of our pastor.

#17: If there ever is a problem, I would hope that we are mature enough that we realize there is a problem and we can forgive, and that should be expected of the congregation and of the pastor.

Moderator: I have a little note. I have to read this before we come to the final question then. First of all, thank you to each and every one of you. Our time for this group, at least for these questions, has nearly come to a close, and we want to offer each participant the opportunity for one final comment, whether it's something that you wish to highlight, add to, or bring up that hasn't come up this far. So... question #11 picks up on that. What observations – or what learning – have you made as a result of either the questionnaire or the focus group discussion? Now, I need to say this for the tape and for the transcriptionist, that because we will have some remaining time, we will go on to discussion about the questionnaire, but as you recall from the occasion of which you took it, this question applies – what observations or what learning have you made as a result of either the questionnaire or this focus group discussion?

#### **11. What observation – or what learning – have you made as a result of either the questionnaire or the focus group discussion?**

#12: Probably what I've learned is that I probably need to read the Joint Parish agreement. I know as far as the questionnaire, that there were a lot of questions on there that I had no knowledge of, you know, what the answer was. I know that I think I've only seen it one time and that was at the last voter's meeting when the Pastor pulled it out and said, "Has anyone ever read this?" (chuckles) And I was kind of confused a little bit then when I read the questionnaire and read the questions and,

you know, how many referrals you had to the agreement, and I realized that I probably need to get a copy of that and read it one of these days. But...in my defense, I never had any access to it. (more laughter)

#17: I think that I need to be more intentional with what I do within the church. I know intentional is a big word to use now, but if I want something to happen, then I need to be aware of what I'm doing and make it happen, like going to church down at Grace. I agree to some extent with #15, but it's busyness, and I do work nights, but I can make the effort, so I think if I were about to fall asleep.... (chuckles).... Forgiveness from it. But, no, I think that I need to be more intentional in what I do, and I think this showed me I need to.

#16: Observations that I have of this is I guess I probably don't know, as #12 said, do not know the Joint Parish guidelines like the back of my hand, and maybe I do need to brush up on them just a little bit more. But it also makes you think of the Joint Parish also. I know that there are times when things go on at the other congregation, at Grace, and it sure is a lot easier to say, "well, I think we'll just stay home tonight and we won't attend down there," or make up the excuse you want. Maybe we need to be a little more diligent in our partnership with them, but it also, I mean I agree with #15 when he said that we don't participate, or you can go to functions and there won't be many of them at ours or us at their functions. But the world is a lot busier place than what it used to be 51 years ago when this Joint Parish was formed, and I can't say in the 51 years that things have turned for the better. Fifty-one years ago, church meant a lot more to people than what it does now. And, that is not good, but we are in a much more mobile world, and it's so much easier to attend things that go on outside of our immediate area. It's not giving us an excuse not to attend functions of the other congregation, but in the same regard, since we are in such a more mobile world, it is easier for us to attend functions that are further away than just down the road. And there again, I feel like we're probably not putting our priorities in the proper perspective that we are putting church on the back burner, not so much that it is the other congregation, just that we are not putting church up there on the #1 priority, and that is because our world is more busy, and I hate to be to say it, but yeah, I probably am one of those also that does not put church in the high regard where it belongs. And I would say that this questionnaire has probably made me realize that, that church is taking a back burner at times rather than being #1 in my life.

#17: You know, #16 said that church may not have such a priority, but there are a lot of hurting people. I meet them out in the world, and the joint congregation has mission statements, and we need to know how to reach these people. That doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to come to our church because I've never asked the person necessarily to come to our church, but to see where they are in their lives, what their beliefs are. But, there are hurting people, and I think we need to reach out to them, and this is another intentional thing that we need to be thinking of.



#12: I am going to have to expand on #17 a bit, it used to be that, talking about going out and inviting people to church or talking to them and see if they want to come to church, or whatever like that, it used to be... this didn't say much at Longtown... But you knew everybody that lived in every house going down the road, back and forth, and as little as a town that Longtown is, I probably don't know half the people anymore. And, I don't make an attempt to go introduce myself. You know, I don't attempt to introduce myself, or even invite them to go to church or do anything. And that is just a little town like this. You know, it used to be that we knew everybody, and now, you have people move in and out, and we probably don't make an attempt to talk to them and invite them to church, whatever; I don't know if they're going to a different church or not, but that's something that I was thinking about – that I really don't know half of the people anymore.

#19: I'll agree with #12. I know that when I moved up here where we live now, I knew all of our neighbors, and I could tell you what church they went to, what religion they belonged to, but [that's] different now. Some move in, then move out real quick too.

Moderator: Well, we have a little bit of time left. If you'll pull out those questionnaires... This is definitely going to be more random at this point because I did not make a plan for us to have as much time for the questionnaire as we have. I don't think page 1 really requires much of us, although it will be interesting to see how our congregation stacks up with some of these little factors that subdivide and identify us. This is just for our discussion purposes, and I turn to the OC section, perceptions regarding one's own congregation. If you'd like to scan down, are there any questions or your response to the question you'd like to address at this time, we can just kind of throw it open and I don't have to draw numbers.

#17: I think #4 is especially applicable, "what happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life."

Moderator: The moderator will interrupt and just ask, what do you think the ideal answer ought to be on that one? And it will be interesting to see if that is indeed what our people identify. Any questions on that page that peak your interest or should we turn the page?

#16: Question #6, "our congregation's best days are behind us." I certainly hope our congregation's best days aren't behind us, but... I just hope that the Lutheran Church's best days aren't behind us. If you look at what is happening to our Lutheran Church rosters every year, what's happening is kind of discerning, that we seem to be losing people out the back door a whole lot more than people are coming in the front door, and that I find very discouraging, and I just hope that not only our congregation, but our church's best days aren't behind us.

#12: Do you think that is just the Lutheran church? Or most of the churches in general – it just seems that religion in general is just getting, for lack of a better term, a bad rap, from the media and a lot of people, and it's just like, you know, you constantly see the jokes and

insinuations in the media and stuff, and I don't know if there is any growth in the membership, like in the Catholic church, but I'm assuming it's going the same way.

#16: Yeah, I agree that it's not just our church. It's the mainstream religion churches that are probably losing it. And what I'm also hoping is that our churches aren't going to just say ok, go along with the world and what's acceptable is right and we're going to profess it just to keep from losing members – I hope that our congregations or our churches stick to what they believe and keep it doctrinally sound and not just change to go with the thinking of the way the world is thinking. Like, gay marriage is acceptable, and to be gay is quite the norm. I just hope that churches don't say, "OK, yeah, we'll agree with that as long as you don't leave our church, we'll go along with you." And I hope that we can still regard what's evil as evil and good as good, and not just go with what the world says is acceptable.

#13: I agree with #16 and #12. My fear is that a lot of the younger people and people our ages, too, are just being sucked into the super-church movement right now, and I guess fear of being politically correct encourages lifestyles that are not in order with the Word, and that's what I see happening.

#17: We are a Lutheran confessional church. That again depends on the pastor and the elders to keep an eye on what is going on in the different congregations. I know Perryville had a church split based on homosexuality, and it may very well happen here – you just never know what's around the corner.

#15: Kind of going on with this same question, and pulling it back to the previous one that we talked about – kind of pull these two together....some of these issues that you're talking about, other congregations – Catholic, Lutheran – we're all experiencing, all of the larger congregations and denominations, are experiencing a lot of the same thing. We're experiencing fallout to these different ways of life. That's where I'm going to back to this question, OC-4 here, "What happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life." There's two ways to look at that question. One is, is that it is extremely important, of supreme importance, what we do on Sunday morning, but if you hold only Sunday morning to be important to your Christian life, it is going to hard to keep people in the church. If after church is dismissed, and they walk out and live in the secular world from Sunday afternoon til next Sunday morning, if that's all of God that they get, it's going to be hard to get them back next Sunday. So we need to guard ourselves against accepting that attitude that Sunday is enough, Sunday is all we need, just be here on Sunday, have a good Lutheran service, and all is well. That's not enough. We need to feed ourselves Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday.... We need to be sure that our families are doing that, that they're encouraging their families to do that, and we won't have so much of a problem. Sunday is important, but it is not of supreme importance when you look at it in that regard.

Moderator: Other questions or observations from this sheet? Alright, we can turn the page to the partnership agreement....I'll tell you....skip that one. The moderator knows that remediation is necessary here. This is patently obvious. So there is no debate there. There is work to be done, and I know that when the elders get together and go over the results of the

questionnaires as well as the focus groups, that will be so obvious, it's kind of a "well, duh". So, let's skip that page and move on the pastoral office and pastoral presence one.

#17: PO-7. Pretty much what #15 says. If we had the answer to how we can become instant mature Christians, we would have the answer to filling our churches, but I don't see that as a pastor's job. I see that as the pastor, elders, and the congregations, as individuals, job. So I strongly disagree with that particular statement here, that we need to all become a little more sure of ourselves as a Christian and what it really means to us and to the people that are around us.

Moderator: The moderator would just want to throw out #2, what sort of response do you give #2. The moderator is curious, that's why we're asking.

#15: I strongly agree with that. I think it's two-way. From the pastor, you get to meet visitors, guests, people that just happen to be there, if there's any of those there in the service that particular day. I think it's a great time that people have an opportunity to speak with the pastor just a second, ask for a prayer for an issue, just the whole gamut of things, and it shows that the pastor is approachable. If all that the pastor does is officiate the service and goes out the back door, it's like he's untouchable, he's no one we can talk to. He talks to us, but we don't talk to him, so I think it's crucial that that is one opportunity that we all have to speak to Pastor.

#13: I agree with #15. I think it just puts the aspect in of the shepherd with his sheep, and I do think that's really important.

#11: I have to agree with other folks, for one thing, in the greet time with Pastor, PO-2, one on one with Pastor after church, and then you come down here, PO-7, the outreach, should fall more onto the whole congregation instead of just one person, and to follow up with that, PO-8 says "stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important", the longer the Pastor has been with the congregation, the more stable the congregations are.

Moderator: Moving on.... Final page, Perceptions regarding the Partnership in the Joint Lutheran Parish. Go for it. Pick any question that piques your interest or that got a rise out of you.

#12: On #1, "Maintaining our separate identities is an important purpose of the Joint Parish." I would have to say I strongly disagree on that one, just for the fact that it's like we're a team. We're two different team members, but we're still one team, working towards the purpose. I think it's highly important that, yeah, we have a separate identities but we're still one team.

#13: I might have to throw something in there, too, on that one. Maybe disagree just a little bit with #12. I do think that it's kind of important to have our separate identities in the aspect of people who were born and raised in each of these churches, that I think that they might strongly want to be rooted in their church.

#16: I would just like to know...I'm not a lifelong member here, and the question on PP-4, "From its beginning, the Grace-Zion Partnership seemed to a most natural combination." I would like to know from some of the people that have been here the whole time, is that true?

Moderator: Great question, #16.

#19: I feel like our relationship started off great back when it started. I never had any ill feelings or anything myself of any of the members of the Joint Parish, Grace.

#16: Was there any division, though? Was there some that felt "why are we doing this?" or was there some that felt like they had animosity towards the other congregation. Was there any of that there or not?

#19: There was a little bit, I think, a few people, but with me, I never felt that way myself. I thought that it was a great move.

#18: I think if this wouldn't have come about, we just would have not been friends anyway, so an event just happened, but they all come around, I think. I have never had trouble with them.

#12: I guess I have to refer this one back to #19. Was there a different church that they had thought about joining up with other than Grace? I was just curious.

Moderator: There will be a workshop held later on in the summer that will contain a portion of look, close-up, of the history of what brought us together, and what factors, literally like dominoes, one after another, kind of plopped together that made things into the Joint Parish Partnership, and I guess from that, the person can judge whether this question gets at that, so we will just leave that for now.

#19: I think one of the things that concerned me was we had a one-room schoolhouse here. I grew up with a three-room schoolhouse, something like that or better, and I did know a little bit about some of these one-room schoolhouses, that there was a little bit of a discipline problem with some of the children, you know, as far as the teacher couldn't keep track of all of them, but when the Joint Parish came along, I was for that, the Christian day school down at Uniontown, the Joint Parish they had, and it worked out wonderful, I thought. At least our daughters felt it was great.

Moderator: Any closing comments to draw to an end? We are at our time limit. I anticipate the [backup] tape is going to snap off any moment now, so, let me read this concluding statement: Again, thank you for your participation these evening. We began with this statement, "Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share." Well, now it has been researched. Over the past two weekends, communicant members of our congregations were given a voice on a questionnaire regarding their

perceptions on various aspects of our life and ministry together. You have added to that voice in a significant way by your willingness to be here, and so for that, I thank you. Each of you has a valid perspective from which you view your congregation. It is firmly believed that we all benefit when we become aware of these perspectives, whether or not we agree with them. Thank you for your willingness to speak on the record, and to participate in this data-gathering event. Please continue to pray that as our leadership team considers the data that has now been gathered, we might prioritize and present the data in ways that enable us to address, educate, and stimulate discussion and growth for the mutual benefit of our congregation, as well as the partnership we share. So again, I want to thank each of you, for taking the time, for being willing to consider some of the issues that are part of the Grace-Zion and the Joint Lutheran Parish we share.

Let's close in prayer: Gracious God, by Your rich mercy, Grace and Zion congregations have served as places for Word and Sacrament ministry, bonded in this partnership in our Lord Jesus Christ for over half a century. Grant Your blessing upon us in the days to come and help that our small contribution to the dialogue will be a blessing to others. In Jesus' name we pray it. Amen.

APPENDIX 26  
PRINTED BULLETIN COMMUNICATIONS FOR LEAD UP WEEKS AND ACTIVE  
WEEKS

(April 20, 27 and May 4, 11, 18, 25)

(Three weeks prior to the Questionnaire)

April 20 (Easter) – In just three weeks, Grace and Zion members will have a unique opportunity to participate in a questionnaire that will enable us to consider how to strengthen the partnership we share. The questionnaire will be offered after each worship service to all communicant members of either Grace or Zion, regardless of where you are attending that day. You will be instrumental in helping our congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share. The questionnaire will be offered on both May 11 and May 18 after worship, but may only be taken once per member.

Focus Group participants are being sought...

(Two weeks prior to the Questionnaire)

April 27 (Mission festival at Zion & Salem)

Reminder for members of Zion, Longtown and Grace, Uniontown: Two weeks from today, May 11 (as well as the following Sunday, May 18) you will have an opportunity to participate in the data-gathering phase of a study of our congregations and the partnership we share. A questionnaire will be offered after each worship service to all communicant members seeking your perspective in response to various statements or questions. You will be instrumental in helping our congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share.

Focus Group participants are being sought...

(One week prior to the Questionnaire)

May 4 - Next Sunday (May 11) and the following Sunday (May 18) the communicant members of Grace and Zion will have the opportunity to participate in a data-gathering event by completing a questionnaire which will ask for your opinion on various questions under four categories:

Perceptions Regarding One's **Own Congregation** (OC)

Awareness of the **Partnership Agreement** (PA) by which the Partnership functions  
**Pastoral Office** (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

**Perceptions** regarding the **Partnership** (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish

You will be instrumental in helping our congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share. The data to be gathered will be analyzed and presented in workshop form to members later this summer. This is part of Pastor's Major Applied Project toward the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Focus Group participants are being sought...

(The First week of the Questionnaire)

May 11 - Today is the first of two dates to administer the Partnership Questionnaire. We hope you are able to remain after worship today and take the questionnaire. If you are not able today, then we hope that you will take the opportunity next Sunday after worship to do so. We welcome your input as we seek to listen to the voice of the communicant members of Grace and Zion. You will be instrumental in helping our congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share.

Included in the printed worship format the first week after the closing hymn was printed this:

*Note: Upon completion of the closing hymn, after a few moments to allow those who wish to depart, an elder of the congregation will read some introductory words about the congregational Partnership Questionnaire which will then be offered to all communicant (confirmed) members of both Grace and Zion. The Questionnaire will also be offered again next week after worship. Expect it to take around twenty minutes.*

Included in the bulletin the first week after the closing hymn was printed this:

*Note: Upon completion of the closing hymn, after a few moments to allow those who wish to depart, an elder of the congregation will read some introductory words about the congregational Partnership Questionnaire which will then be offered to all communicant (confirmed) members of both Grace and Zion. The Questionnaire will also be offered again next week after worship. Expect it to take around twenty minutes.*

(The Second Week of the Questionnaire)

May 18 - Today is the second of two dates for the Partnership questionnaire. If you participated last week by taking the Questionnaire, we thank you! If you did not, then we hope that you will take the opportunity after worship today to do so. We welcome your input as we seek to listen to the voice of the communicant members of Grace and Zion. The focus groups for Grace and Zion meet Monday and Tuesday, respectively. You will be instrumental in helping our congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share.

Included in the worship sheet the second week after the closing hymn was this:

*Note: Upon completion of the closing hymn, the congregational Partnership Questionnaire will be administered for the second and final time. An elder of the congregation will read some introductory words about the Questionnaire which will then be passed out and offered to all communicant (confirmed) members of both Grace and Zion. (Members of either congregation may take it in either location.) Those who took the Questionnaire last week after worship may depart. Expect the Questionnaire to take less than fifteen minutes.*

(The week following the Questionnaire and the Focus Groups)

May 25 - The data-gathering is closed, the questionnaires have been sent off, the focus groups have met, and now the Elders and the researcher await the opportunity to begin analyzing the data from both the questionnaires and the focus group proceedings. A big THANK YOU to all who aided with their participation. You will be instrumental in helping our congregations learn more about ourselves and the partnership we share...with the goal of strengthening our partnership and ministry into the future!

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

Well, now it **is** being researched... we look forward to seeing what the data tells us.

Thanks for participating!

Mark your calendars for July 27 and August 3 for a Gospel Partner Awareness Workshop



APPENDIX 27  
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER COMMUNICATIONS

March Newsletter—

**From Pastor Paul: Whatever happened to the MAP (Major Applied Project)?**

As a part of the program in the Doctor of Ministry Studies at the Seminary, each student is required to conduct and complete a Major Applied Project (affectionately known as the MAP) in his place of ministry.

Since nothing has appeared publicly about this lately, you may be wondering. The project continues to move forward, as preparatory chapters are in the final stages. These detail the history of Zion and Grace leading up to the formation of the Joint Parish, as well as reading a number of books on topics related to rural, smaller-church ministry, as well as what material is available for multiple parishes, and the pastoring thereof. (It was necessary to type up—a bit like a book report- a condensed version of each reading as well for inclusion in the finished project.

Official approval to proceed with the Project (which has “the strengthening of our union” as its goal) came through late in February.

Now we are in the stages of completing the theological background, basically a defense of how it is one pastor can be called to serve two separate congregations. Not much about this exists, but it is important to get it right.

There will be emails back and forth with my Advisor, Dr. Bruce Hartung (a Professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis), regarding the questions for the questionnaire to be developed to obtain input about the Joint Parish from the members. And with this comes some very detailed writing on how exactly such information is to be gathered, “crunched”, and reported back to the people. It is some of the most detailed and precision-demanding writing I ever recall having to do. But I am convinced that for our sakes it should be done so that we can be functioning at the highest level together, for the good of our members, for the good of the community, and for the good of those whom the Lord seeks to reach through us.

I will try to keep you posted as things progress, for we will certainly need YOUR input!

Meanwhile, prayers for perseverance are welcome anytime! Thanks!

April Newsletter --

**M.A.P. progress and what's ahead...**

May will be the data-gathering month for our study of the Grace-Zion Joint Parish. Look for a questionnaire for all members to give input to follow a briefer worship service on May 11 and 18<sup>th</sup> (we are aiming for two Sundays so as to not miss anyone, but each member is asked to only do this ONCE☺). There will also be several Focus Groups to be convened, dates and selection process to be announced.

## May Newsletter Article

The Word of God, in Proverbs, urges us to “know well your flocks”. (Proverbs 27:23) We are advised, by none other than God, to keep abreast of developments around us. It is what a responsible steward does.

For nearly four years, it has been on my heart and mind to conduct a study that might help us see who we are as two congregations, what we think about ourselves, as well as what we know and how we think about the partnership we share. Finally, with the proper approvals and under the guidance of advisor, Dr. Bruce Hartung, professor at Concordia Seminary, such a study has been designed and is being conducted among us. May will be our data-gathering month. Two kinds of data-gathering will take place; first, all communicant members will have the opportunity to complete a questionnaire that looks at four aspects of our life together. The four categories are--

Perceptions Regarding One’s **Own Congregation** (OC)

Awareness of the **Partnership Agreement** (PA) by which the Partnership functions **Pastoral Office** (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

**Perceptions** regarding the **Partnership** (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish

In conjunction with this, two Focus Groups, one from each congregation, will be convened to discuss some open-ended questions and/or statements about some of the above. Focus Group participants will be randomly selected from those who have submitted applications found in the bulletin the weeks of April 20 and May 4.

What will be done with this data? Pastor and the elders of each congregation will “digest” the data to consider and to prioritize what to share in two “Gospel Partner Awareness Workshops” (Dates set: July 27 and August 3). These workshops will give us all a chance to see ourselves as the data-gathering allows us, as well as to consider some additional factors about our congregations and the partnership we share.

This study is being conducted as the Major Applied Project for Pastor Paul’s studies in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Concordia Seminary. The actual inquiry (“Problem”) is stated like this:

*Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown (MO) and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves, and of the partnership they share.*

After twenty-four years as your pastor, it would be too easy to generalize or to assume I know what you think and feel about various aspects of our life together. That would be rather arrogant, but I bet I would also be surprised at how incorrect I was. That is why YOUR help is needed!

I have, with your financial assistance, and by your gracious permission, been able to take classes the past seven years in the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. One of the (major!) requirements is some kind of project which enhances the

ministry in which a candidate serves. It is called a “Major Applied Project” (affectionately: “MAP”), and must be undertaken under the guidance of a faculty advisor (Dr. Hartung), and meet certain vigorous standards for validity, reliability, and usefulness.

June Newsletter:

### **The Questionnaire, Focus Groups and the MAP...**

The data has been gathered and sent off for tabulation, and the team of elders and Pastor will be meeting to analyze and to determine how best to share data (as much as is practical) in a “Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop” to be held July 27 and Aug. 3.

What can you expect at this workshop?

A brief overview of the history by which Zion and Grace came to be partners in the Joint Lutheran Parish. A look at ourselves in years past leading up to the present. Who are we? What kind of growth or lack thereof) have we experienced over the years? What trends have been at work among our congregations –and are they the same trends in each congregation-over the past two generations? In other words, a glimpse at the state of our partnership, and the congregations of which it is comprised.

We will certainly want to spend some time taking a glimpse at what the two kinds of data gathered reveals. (Data was gathered both from Focus Groups as well as by the Questionnaire. THANK YOU to all who participated!) Time to discuss some of the data and what it means for us. An opportunity to consider possibilities for mission activity. A new way to see our partnership. More.

Might there be attitudes among us that need to be challenged to become more Christ-like for the work Christ intends to do through us? Might there be activities that we should engage in that are suggested by either the data or the Scriptures?

We are congregations of the “Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod”. Without waxing long on why “Missouri” is part of our name (hint: it is NOT because we are IN or FROM Missouri!), the “Synod” part of our name comes from a Greek word meaning “to walk or journey together”. We are congregations journeying, walking together in a rather unique partnership. It is my sincere hope that we grow in treasuring that partnership, cultivating it, and “exploiting” it (in a good sense) for the sake of the Gospel partnership we share.

July Newsletter:

### **The Questionnaire, Focus Groups and the MAP...**

The data has come back in separate installments, and is in the process of digestion by a team consisting of Chairmen, Elders, Treasurers, and Pastor (the entire Joint Council). They are meeting to analyze and to determine how best to share relevant data (as much as is practical) in a “Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop” to be held July 27 and Aug. 3.

Each scheduled workshop will take place after an 8:30 am service. For Grace, (July 27) this is a normal time. In order for Pastor to present the workshop, a substitute (Seminarian Joel Heckmann) will lead worship at the normal 10 am time. For the August 3 Zion workshop, service will be early at 8:30, with the workshop to follow in the Hall. (Grace service will also take place at 8:30 as normal, with a substitute conducting worship in my place.

What can you expect at this workshop?

A brief overview of the history by which Zion and Grace came to be partners in the Joint Lutheran Parish. A look at ourselves in years past leading up to the present. Who are we? What kind of growth (or lack thereof) have we experienced over the years? What trends have been at work among our congregations –and are they the same trends in each congregation- over the past two generations? In other words, a glimpse at the state of our partnership, as well as the congregations of which it is comprised.

We will certainly want to spend some time taking a glimpse at what the gathered data reveals. (Data was gathered both from Focus Groups as well as by the Questionnaire. THANK YOU to all who participated!) Time to discuss some of the data and what it means for us. An opportunity to consider possibilities for mission activity. A new way to see our partnership. And more. Mark your calendars & plan to attend!

August Newsletter:

### **Gospel Partners Awareness Workshops**

On July 27 a workshop was held at Grace and then August 3 at Zion to share the data that was gained from the Partner Questionnaire which was taken by 114 members in the month of May.

Beginning with a brief overview of the history by which Zion and Grace came to be partners in the Joint Lutheran Parish, we then learned various facts about those who completed the questionnaire. If you wanted to attend the workshop but missed both occasions, contact Pastor to see if there might be a further opportunity to share some of the same material at some future date.

September Newsletter:

***“Be sure you know the condition of your flocks...”***

*Proverbs 27:23*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

At the risk of misquoting God’s Word, we can note that God’s book of wisdom, Proverbs, urges us to be very self-aware of ourselves, our possessions (and quite possibly our surroundings). This awareness is a part of the care and responsibility God has placed upon us, and may take various forms.

I see the passage as applying to (your and) my personal stewardship of all that God has entrusted into our care. Ignorance is not going to help us be good caretakers of God’s provisions! Proper knowledge will be beneficial, however.

On two successive Sundays in May a “Partner Questionnaire” was offered to communicant members of Grace and Zion after an abbreviated worship service. It took less than fifteen minutes to complete. With a range of questions, the Partner Questionnaire gave us a glimpse of how those members who participated feel and think about various aspects of our congregations as well as the partnership we share.

A total of 114 members from both congregations (81 from Grace and 33 from Zion) chose to participate. Two Focus Groups (one from each congregation) were also convened to discuss certain aspects of our congregations and the partnership we share in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish. After taking some time to “digest” the data, SOME of it was shared with those who attended the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop on July 27 and August 3 after worship. A combined total of sixty members from both congregations attended these.

While the Partner Questionnaires and Focus Group meetings produced a mountain of data, a number of things immediately catch our attention. At the risk of oversimplification, here are a few things that were learned from those who participated in the study: Each congregation has a core group of very committed members.

+A significant number (76) believe our congregation(s) need more fellowship/togetherness events.

+Pastor and the Elders know that it is necessary to teach and educate our members often about the basics of our partnership (now fifty-one years old!).

+There is an indication of a hunger for Pastor-led Bible Study in each congregation yearly.

+Stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is considered pretty important.

+There is a desire for the congregations to partner together on more matters of ministry.

+There is a fair degree of optimism with regards to both our congregations and the partnership we share.

...and more...

While I am fully aware there is a danger of generalizing when not everybody participated in the Partner Questionnaires, some responses were numerous enough to speak loudly for themselves!

You might ask, “So, why do such a study? Why spend all the time, care, and energy on it? A couple of reasons. As far as we can tell, no such study has been undertaken (and certainly not in our church body), so very little is known about these matters. If what we learn can be applied to help us to be more faithful, witnessing people of God, wouldn’t that alone be worth it?! If it helps our members to see with new light and clarity so as to more highly appreciate the blessing we have in our congregations and in the partnership we share, it is well worth it! And if it helps me, your pastor, to be better positioned to serve and lead you as we grow in Christ together, it surely is worth it!

***“Be sure you know the condition of your flocks...”***

Thank you for helping me toward this goal!

In Christ our Life,  
Pastor Paul



9. OC-3. Our congregation needs more fellowship/togetherness events. (114)
- | Strongly agree | Agree   | Uncertain | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 17             | 59      | 26        | 12       | 0                 |
| (14.9%)        | (51.7%) | (22.8%)   | (10.5%)  | (0%)              |
10. OC-4. What happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life. (114)
- | Strongly agree | Agree   | Uncertain | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 54             | 54      | 4         | 2        | 0                 |
| (47.4%)        | (47.4%) | (3.5%)    | (1.7%)   | (0%)              |
11. OC-5. How likely am I to attend a special service (Advent, Lent, Ascension)...at my OWN congregation? (114)
- | Always  | Very likely | Unsure | Not likely | Never |
|---------|-------------|--------|------------|-------|
| 28      | 65          | 9      | 12         | 0     |
| (24.6%) | (57%)       | (7.9%) | (10.5%)    | (0%)  |
12. OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us. (114)
- | Strongly agree | Agree  | Uncertain | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|--------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 2              | 6      | 32        | 60       | 14                |
| (1.7%)         | (5.3%) | (28.2%)   | (52.6%)  | (12.3%)           |
13. OC-7. Which best describes my commitment to my congregation? (114)  
Till death parts us / strongly committed / committed / as long as things are going OK / not sure
- |         |       |         |        |        |
|---------|-------|---------|--------|--------|
| 47      | 36    | 27      | 2      | 2      |
| (41.2%) | (31%) | (23.7%) | (1.8%) | (1.8%) |
14. OC-8. This congregation is welcoming to new members, visitors, and strangers. (114)
- | Strongly agree | Agree   | Uncertain | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 24             | 71      | 12        | 6        | 1                 |
| (21.1%)        | (62.3%) | (10.5%)   | (5.3%)   | (0.9%)            |
15. OC-9. How would you describe your congregation in the past ten years: (114)
- | Growing robustly | slow growth | steady  | decline | rapid decline |
|------------------|-------------|---------|---------|---------------|
| 1                | 44          | 53      | 14      | 2             |
| (0.9%)           | (38.6%)     | (46.4%) | (12.3%) | (1.8%)        |
16. OC-10. I think the members of my congregation value highly our Joint Parish Partnership. (114)
- | Agree strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| 9              | 60      | 31        | 11       | 3                 |
| (7.9%)         | (52.6%) | (27.2%)   | (9.6%)   | (2.6%)            |



Awareness of the Partnership Agreement (PA) by which the Partnership functions

17. PA-1. The Partnership exists so each congregation may retain its separate identity and function. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16	77	17	4	0
(14%)	(67.5%)	(14.9%)	(3.5%)	(0%)

18. PA-2. The service time annual switch –a feature of fairness- is important to maintain. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
34	55	19	3	3
(29.8%)	(48.2%)	(16.7%)	(2.6%)	(2.6%)

19. PA-3. I have read the Joint Parish Guidelines in the last-- (114)

3 years	5 years	Never
12	24	78
(10.5%)	(21.1%)	(68.4%)

20. PA-4. The Joint Parish Guidelines are supposed to be to be reviewed annually. (114)

True	False	Don't know
40	2	72
(35.1%)	(1.8%)	(63.2%)

21. PA-5. The Joint Voters is the authoritative body by which a pastor is Called. (114)

True	False	Don't know
79	4	31
(69.3%)	(3.5%)	(27.2%)

22. PA-6. Only Voting members from each congregation comprise the Joint Voters. (112)

True	False	Don't know
85	5	22
(75.9%)	(4.5%)	(19.6)

23. PA-7. The Joint Parish Guidelines allow for joint societies to be formed in our midst. (114)

True	False	Don't know
51	4	59
(44.5%)	(3.5%)	(51.8%)

24. PA-8. As a member of G/Z, I have no particular obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership. (114)

True	False	Don't know
19	69	26
(16.7%)	(60.5%)	(22.8%)

25. PA-9. The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish treasury is funded equally by both congregations. (114)

True	False	Don't know
21	53	40
(18.4%)	(46.5%)	(35.1%)

26. PA-10. Whose job is it, properly speaking, to prepare the annual Joint Parish budget? (114)

Elders	Treasurer	Joint Council	Other	Don't know
1	18	48	0	47
(0.9%)	(15.8%)	(42.1%)	(0%)	(41.2%)

Pastoral Office (PO) and Pastoral Presence in the Partnership

27. PO-1. It is important that there be a regular, Pastor-led Bible Class in my congregation each year. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18	61	26	9	0
(15.8%)	(53.5%)	(22.8%)	(7.9%)	(0%)

28. PO-2. Greet-time with Pastor after worship is crucial. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
35	66	5	8	0
(30.7%)	(57.9%)	(4.4%)	(7%)	(0%)

29. PO-3. One congregation seems to get favored treatment from the Pastor. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3	8	19	57	27
(2.6%)	(70%)	(16.7%)	(50%)	(23.7%)

30. PO-4. It is important that the Pastor try to balance his time between the congregations. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
23	81	4	6	0
(20.1%)	(71%)	(3.5%)	(5.2%)	(0%)

31. PO-5. The congregation where Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
0	25	16	58	15
(0%)	(21.9%)	(14%)	(50.9%)	(13.2%)

32. PO-6. The community/location where the Pastor resides matters a great deal. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	25	30	48	6
(4.4%)	(21.9%)	(26.3%)	(42.1%)	(5.3%)

33. PO-7. Outreach is pretty much the Pastor's job. (114)
- |                |         |           |          |                   |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 0              | 27      | 25        | 57       | 5                 |
| (0%)           | (23.7%) | (21.9%)   | (50%)    | (4.4%)            |
34. PO-8. Stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for our partnership. (114)
- |                |        |           |          |                   |
|----------------|--------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree  | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 22             | 79     | 13        | 0        | 0                 |
| (19.3%)        | (69.3) | (11.4%)   | (0%)     | (0%)              |
35. PO-9. Even without pastoral stability I would expect our congregation to continue. (113)
- |                |         |           |          |                   |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 11             | 62      | 18        | 19       | 3                 |
| (9.6%)         | (54.4%) | (15.8%)   | (16.7)   | (2.6%)            |
36. PO-10. It is important to have someone whom we can call "OUR" Pastor. (114)
- |                |         |           |          |                   |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 53             | 50      | 7         | 4        | 0                 |
| (46.5%)        | (43.9%) | (6.1%)    | (3.5%)   | (0%)              |

Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP) in the Joint Lutheran Parish

37. PP-1. Maintaining our separate identities is an important purpose of the Joint Parish. (114)
- |                |         |           |          |                   |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 13             | 69      | 13        | 19       | 0                 |
| (11.4%)        | (60.5%) | (11.4%)   | (16.7%)  | (0%)              |
38. PP-2. The Joint Parish Partnership should be seen more like a marriage union: inseparable except by death. (114)
- |                |         |           |          |                   |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 8              | 51      | 26        | 25       | 4                 |
| (7%)           | (44.7%) | (22.8%)   | (21.9%)  | (3.5%)            |
39. PP-3. The Joint Parish Partnership should be viewed by the partners as purely a business partnership. (114)
- |                |         |           |          |                   |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 3              | 25      | 18        | 62       | 6                 |
| (2.6%)         | (21.9%) | (15.8%)   | (54.4%)  | (5.3%)            |
40. PP-4. From its beginning, the Grace-Zion Partnership seemed a most natural combination. (114)
- |                |         |           |          |                   |
|----------------|---------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Agree Strongly | Agree   | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 6              | 64      | 38        | 3        | 3                 |
| (5.3%)         | (56.1%) | (33%)     | (2.6%)   | (2.6%)            |

41. PP-5. I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10	56	36	10	2
(8.8%)	(49.1%)	(31.6%)	(8.8%)	(1.8%)

42. PP-6. Our newsletter is an important communication tool. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
31	69	11	2	1
(27.2%)	(60.5%)	(9.6%)	(1.8%)	(0.8%)

43. PP-7. How likely am I to attend a Sunday or special service (Lent, etc.) at the other partner congregation? (114)

Very Likely	Likely	Not sure	Unlikely	Highly Unlikely
31	54	9	14	6
(27.2%)	(47.4%)	(7.9%)	(12.3%)	(5.3%)

44. PP-8. The Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership is healthy. (112)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	69	23	8	1
(9.8%)	(61.6%)	(20.5%)	(7.1%)	(0.8%)

45. PP-9. The Partnership has outlived its purpose and ought to be abolished in favor of some other arrangement. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2	1	21	54	36
(1.8%)	(0.8%)	(18.4%)	(47.4%)	(31.6%)

46. PP-10. The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership. (114)

Agree Strongly	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
0	8	25	66	15
(0%)	(7.1%)	(21.9%)	(57.9%)	(13.2%)

APPENDIX 29  
KEY RAW DATA BREAKDOWNS OF SELECTED PARTNER QUESTIONNAIRE  
RESPONSES<sup>1</sup>

9. OC-3. Our congregation needs more fellowship/togetherness events.  
(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Zion	6	16	5	6	0
Grace	11	43	21	6	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>

12. OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us.  
(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Zion	1	0	2	28	2
Grace	1	6	30	32	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>14</b>

12. OC-6. Our congregation's best days are behind us.  
(Breakdown: by **grouped by number of years as a member.**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
0-10	0	0	5	17	4
11-19	0	0	9	14	2
20+	2	6	18	29	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>14</b>

16. OC-10. I think the members of my congregation highly value our Joint Parish Partnership.  
(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Zion	2	17	9	5	0
Grace	7	43	22	6	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>

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<sup>1</sup> These breakdowns were provided upon request by the staff person from the Missouri District LCMS office upon request.

31. PO-5. The congregation where the Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage.

(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Zion	0	7	3	19	4
Grace	0	18	13	39	11
TOTAL	0	25	16	58	15

35. PO-9. Even without pastoral stability, I would expect our congregation to continue.

(Breakdown: by **grouped by number of years as member.**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
0-10	2	15	5	3	1
11-19	2	11	5	6	1
20+L	8	36	8	10	1
TOTAL	11 <sup>1</sup>	62	18	19	3

37. PP-1. Maintaining our separate identities is an important purpose of the Joint Parish.

(Breakdown: by **grouped by number of years as a member.**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
0-10	1	16	4	5	0
11-19	1	15	4	5	0
20+	11	38	5	9	0
TOTAL	13	69	13	19	0

41. PP-5. I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry.

(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Zion	3	12	15	3	0
Grace	7	44	21	7	2
TOTAL	10	56	36	10	2

46. PP-10. The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership.

(Breakdown: by **congregation**)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Zion	0	2	3	25	3
Grace	0	6	22	41	12
TOTAL	0	8	25	66	15

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<sup>1</sup> The figure "11" was reported to the Researcher, however human error must be to blame, as 12 fits.

APPENDIX 30  
DEVOTION FOR GOSPEL PARTNERS AWARENESS WORKSHOP

(Welcome the attendees.)

Scripture reading - Philippians 2:1-4

I propose that the Grace-Zion Joint Parish partnership is a symbiotic relationship. You say you don't know what a symbiotic relationship is? But God has worked them into nature all around us.

This past spring we planted a few more trees, something we try to do with regularity. In order to insure the best growth, we purchased a product called "myke", which is short for mycorrhiza (plural is -ae). Myke is a fungus that grows in the soil, and God has amazingly designed his fungus to assist certain tree root systems in the uptake of nutrients; so we applied myke to the tree roots prior to planting. Simply put, the myke helps them to be healthier trees. And the healthier the tree roots, then the healthier the soil fungus –or myke- will be. (I have a textbook from college with greatly enlarged photographs of mycorrhizae in the roots of fossilized trees!)<sup>1</sup> Such a mutually-beneficial relationship of two different living things in nature is termed a symbiosis, defined in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as "1: the living together in more or less intimate association or close union of two dissimilar organisms [or] 2: the intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship; esp: MUTUALISM [as well as] 3: a cooperative relationship (as between two persons or groups)." <sup>2</sup> In a wonderfully complex manner, God has arranged symbiotic partnerships all around us in His creation.

Grace and Zion, Zion and Grace, living congregations of Lutheran Christians are in a partnership. Over half a century now, it has been. We may not have recognized it as a symbiosis, but it is. The life and existence of each congregation has enabled the other congregation to have a life. Too often, we may have thought of it as a parasitic relationship, where one life form draws the life out of the other, at the expense of the other. But we were wrong if we thought of it that way. For God has given us each other as partners in the Gospel ministry of witnessing to Christ and nourishing His people on Word and Sacrament in our two respective communities. No one else can do that job.

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<sup>1</sup> Harold C. Bold. "Morphology of Plants", Third Edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 226.

<sup>2</sup> "Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary", Tenth Edition (Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, Inc., 2002), 1190.

And if we cease to exist, there may simply be a hole in the community: a Gospel-sized hole, to the detriment of human souls for eternity! No one wants that, do they?! No, it's best if we recognize that God has put us here in this time and in these places for His purposes! And He will bless...if we pursue His purposes!

Roots and mycorrhizae; mycorrhizae and roots: a good and blessed partnership!

Zion and Grace, Grace and Zion: a good and blessed partnership!

God has not let His Word return void without gathering here a people in these places who love Him and fear His name!

People of God, we are privileged to be baptized into Christ! We know the rich blessed of the forgiveness of sins earned for us by Christ, through His cross and His victoriously-vacated tomb! Ours in the privilege to join together regularly around Word and Sacrament. Ours is the privilege to receive the Savior's gifts often. Ours is the privilege to encourage one another and build one another up with our presence and our fellowship. And ours is the privilege to share Christ and to showcase the difference He makes in our lives to those who know Him not.

*Please join with me as we sing hymn # 698, "May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill"*

After the hymn, the following prayer is to be prayed:

*Lord God, You truly are gracious, and have extended Your rich mercy to us and to the people of Zion and Grace congregations. By Your mercy You have sustained us through a partnership of over fifty years! Thank You for the opportunity we now have to gain a special glimpse of the vision we have of ourselves and the partnership we share, all for the purpose of bettering it. In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

Materials to have on hand for devotion:

Bible (marker in Philippians 2)

This devotion (consider bring the box of "myke")

Guitar chords for LSB # 698

Guitar, music stand

Copies of hymn # 698



APPENDIX 31  
POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR  
GOSPEL PARTNERS AWARENESS WORKSHOP

# Partners in the Gospel

The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish Partnership

## Partners in the Gospel

- *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves and of the partnership they share.*

## The Partnership Comes Together...

- Two simultaneous Pastoral vacancies
- Returned Calls
- Shortage of Seminary graduates
- 1963

## Why this study?

- There exists a lack of materials addressing multiple parish ministry settings.
- In order to learn about such, the search leads to—
  - Rural Ministry settings
  - Small congregational settings
- Pastoral continuity and stability are part of the picture.

## The Partner Questionnaire

- Was completed by 114 members (from both Churches). (1)
- Grace: 81 (71%)                  Zion: 33 (29%)
  
- Total Communicant members (as of Dec. 31, 2013):
- Grace – 231 (71.7%)                  Zion – 91 (28.3%)

## The Partner Questionnaire

- How far do they reside from Church? (2)
  - 54%          Less than three miles (61)
  - 14%          Three to five miles (16)
  - 33%          Six miles or more (37)

## The Partner Questionnaire

- The Church to which I belong is the closest Lutheran church to my home— (3)
  - Yes 71% (81)
  - No 29% (33)

## The Partner Questionnaire

- Age category of those who took the instrument— (4)
  - Under 40 (27%) (31)
  - 40 or over (73%) (83)

## The Partner Questionnaire

- Spiritual Journey & Association with this\* congregation (5)
  - Born here & never left - 32% (36)
  - Born here –moved away- and returned – 13% (15)
  - Transferred here from another LCMS Congregation – 39% (44)
  - Came another way (Adult Baptism/Confirmation) – 16% (18)

## The Partner Questionnaire

- Length of membership- (6)
  - Twenty or more years – 55% (63)
  - 11-19 years – 22% (25)
  - Ten years or less - 23% (26)

## About the Questionnaire...

- The Partner Questionnaire was arranged around four categories of questions, ten in each:
  - Perceptions regarding one's **Own Congregation (OC)**
  - Awareness of the **Partnership Agreement (PA)** by which the Partnership functions.
  - **Pastoral Office (PO)** and pastoral presence in the Partnership.
  - **Perceptions** regarding the **Partnership (PP)** in the Joint Lutheran Parish.

### Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-1)

- Decision-making (7)
  - A significant number of us say the best way to make decisions is to let a committee study it and make recommendations.
  - 95 Agree (13 Strongly)
  - 10 Disagreed (0 Strongly)
  - 9 Undecided

## Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-2)

- Decision-making (8)
  - A significant number agree that the best way to reach decisions lies in airing it out among us all and arriving at a consensus.
  - 96 Agree (19 Strongly)
  - 8 Disagree (1 Strongly)
  - 10 Uncertain

## Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-3)

- Our congregation needs more fellowship / togetherness events. (9)
  - 76 Agree (17 Strongly)
  - 12 Disagree (0 Strongly)
  - 26 Uncertain

## Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-4)

- What happens on Sunday morning is of supreme importance to congregational life. *(10)*
  - 108 Agree (54 Strongly)
  - 2 Disagree
  - 4 Uncertain

## Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-5)

- How likely am I to attend a special service (Advent, Lent, Ascension)... at my OWN congregation? *(11)*
  - 28 – Always
  - 65 – Very Likely
  - 9 - Unsure
  - 12 - Not Likely
  - 0 - Never



Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-6)

- Our congregation's best days are behind us. (12)
  - 8 Agree (2 Strongly)
  - 32 Uncertain
  - 74 Disagree (14 Strongly)
  - *Do you see optimism here?*

Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-7)

- Which best describes my commitment to my congregation? (13)
  - 47 – Till death parts us.
  - 36 – Strongly committed.
  - 27 – Committed.
  - 2 – As long as things are going OK.
  - 2 – Not sure.

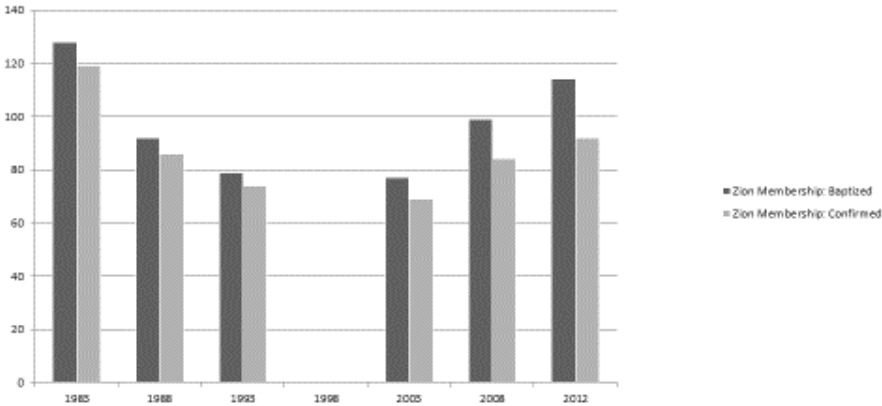
### Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-8)

- This congregation is welcoming to new members, visitors, and strangers. (14)
  - 95 Agree (24 Strongly)
  - 7 Disagree (One Strongly)
  - 12 Uncertain

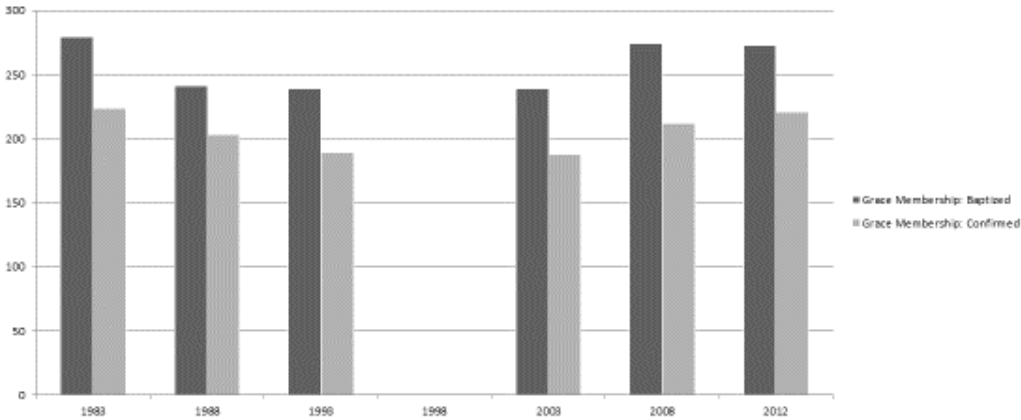
### Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-9)

- How would you describe your congregation in the past ten years? (15)
  - 1- Growing robustly
  - 44 – Slow Growth
  - 53 – Steady
  - 14 – Declining
  - 2 – Rapidly Declining

# Zion Membership over 30 years



# Grace Membership over 30 years



## Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC-10)

- I think the members of my congregation highly value our Joint Parish Partnership. (16)
  - 69 Agree (9 Strongly)
  - 14 Disagree (3 Strongly)
  - 31 Undecided

## Perceptions re: One's Own Congregation (OC)

- Questions for discussion:
  - 1 – What kind of fellowship event(s) would appeal to you?
  - 2 – How important is it that food be involved?
  - 3. What does commitment to one's own congregation look like?

## The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- Joint Parish Guidelines
  - Only 12 admitted to having read them in the past three years
  - Seventy-eight admitted they never have read them (19)
  - We have a learning gap / curve to overcome!!

## The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The partnership exists so that each congregation can “retain its separate identity and function”. (17)
- The Annual Service Time Switch – a feature of fairness- **is** important to maintain. (18)  
*(89 respondents were in agreement.)*

## The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The Joint Parish Guidelines are to be reviewed annually – by the Joint Council (20)
- The Joint Voters (comprised only of Voting members from both congregations) is the authoritative body by which a Pastor is Called. (21,22)

## The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The Joint Parish Guidelines DO allow for joint societies or auxiliary organizations to be formed in our midst, in keeping with specified purposes. (23)
- *Does each member have an obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership? (24)*
  - 19 said “No”;
  - 69 said “Yes”;
  - 26 Did not know. What do you think?

## The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- The Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish Treasury is funded by a proportional amount for every communicant member. (25)
- It is the responsibility of the Joint Council to prepare a budget annually. (26)

## The Partnership Agreement (PA)

- Questions for discussion:
  - 1 - Does each member have an obligation to the Joint Parish Partnership? If so, what kind of an obligation?*
  - 2 – As a member, how am I obligated?*

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-1)

- It is important that there be regular, Pastor-led Bible class in my congregation each year. (27)
  - 79 Agree (18 Strongly)
  - 9 Disagree (0 Strongly)
  - 26 Undecided

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-2)

- Greet-time with Pastor after worship is crucial. (28)
  - 101 Agree (35 Strongly)
  - 8 Disagree (0 strongly)
  - 5 Undecided



### The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-3)

- One congregation seems to get favored treatment from Pastor. (29)
  - 11 Agree (3 Strongly)
  - 84 Disagree (27 Strongly)
  - 19 Undecided

### The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-4)

- It is important that the Pastor try to balance his time between the congregations. (30)
  - 104 Agree (23 Strongly)
  - 6 Disagree (0 strongly)
  - 4 Undecided

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-5)

- The congregation where Pastor's family attends has a significant advantage. (31)
  - 25 Agree (0 Strongly)
  - 73 Disagree (15 Strongly)
  - 16 Undecided

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-6)

- The community/location where Pastor resides matters a great deal. (32)
  - 30 Agree (5 Strongly)
  - 54 Disagree (6 Strongly)
  - 30 Undecided

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-7)

- Outreach is pretty much the Pastor's job. (33)
  - 27 Agree (0 Strongly)
  - 57 Disagree (5 Strongly)
  - 25 Undecided

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-8)

- Stability and continuity in the Pastoral Office is important for our partnership. (34)
  - 101 Agree (22 Strongly)
  - 0 Disagree (!)
  - 13 Undecided

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-9)

- Even without pastoral stability, I would expect our congregation to continue (35)
  - 73 Agree (11 Strongly)
  - 22 Disagree (3 Strongly)
  - 18 Undecided
    - (1 did not answer question)

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO-10)

- It is important to have someone whom we can call “OUR” Pastor. (36)
  - 103 Agree (53 Strongly)
  - 4 Disagree (0 Strongly)
  - 7 Undecided

## The Pastoral Office (and the Joint Parish) (PO)

- Questions for discussion:
  - 1 – What Bible study topics or themes appeal to you?
  - 2 – When would it / they best be held?
  - 3 - How important is the stability and continuity of a Pastor's service to the Joint Parish?

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-1)

- Maintaining our separate identities (as congregations) is an important purpose of the Joint Parish. (37)
  - 82 Agree (13 Strongly)
  - 19 Disagreed (0 strongly)
  - 13 Undecided

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-2)

- The Joint Parish Partnership should be seen like a marriage union: inseparable except by death. (38)
  - 59 Agree (8 Strongly)
  - 29 Disagree (4 Strongly)
  - 26 Undecided
    - *(Note: 78 had never read the J-P Guidelines)*

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-3)

- The Joint Parish Partnership should be viewed by the partners as purely a business partnership. (39)
  - 28 Agree (3 Strongly)
  - 68 Disagreed (6 Strongly)
  - 18 Undecided

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-4)

- From its beginning, the Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership seemed a most natural combination. (40)
  - 70 Agree (6 Strongly)
  - 6 Disagreed (3 Strongly)
  - 38 Undecided
    - (Note: 51 have been members less than 20 years) (6)

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-5)

- I wish the congregations would partner together on more matters of ministry. (41)
  - 66 Agree (10 Strongly)
  - 12 Disagreed (2 Strongly)
  - 36 Undecided

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-6)

- Our newsletter is an important communication tool. (42)
  - 100 Agree (31 Strongly)
  - 3 Disagree (1 Strongly)
  - 11 Undecided

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-7)

- How likely am I to attend a Sunday or special service (Lent, etc.) at the other partner congregation? (43)
  - 85 Likely (31 Very Likely)
  - 20 Unlikely (6 Highly Unlikely)
  - 9 Not sure



## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-8)

- The Grace-Zion Joint Parish Partnership is healthy. (44)
  - 80 Agree (11 Strongly)
  - 9 Disagreed (1 Strongly)
  - 23 were Undecided
    - (2 did not answer question)
  - *What makes for a healthy partnership?*

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-9)

- The Partnership has outlived its purpose and ought to be abolished in favor of some other arrangement. (45)
  - 3 Agree (2 Strongly)
  - 90 Disagree (36 Strongly)
  - 21 were Undecided

## Perceptions regarding the Partnership (PP-10)

- The larger congregation seems to benefit the most from the partnership. (46)
  - 8 Agree (0 Strongly)
  - 81 Disagree (15 Strongly)
  - 25 were Undecided

## The Study's Purpose...

- *Since it has not been researched how the members of Grace Lutheran Church of Uniontown and Zion Lutheran Church of Longtown (MO) understand and value their partnership in the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish, this project seeks to gain increasing clarity as to the vision Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches have of themselves and of the partnership they share.*
- Well...now it has been researched!

## The Study's Purpose...

- Now, through actual research, it is more possible to discern how the members of Grace and Zion Lutheran Churches understand and value their partnership.
- What we have learned –and continue to learn (as we reexamine the data)- will help us as we journey into the future...as...Partners in the Gospel.

## How did St. Paul value his Gospel Partners?

- "...I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:4-6 NIV

## Thank You!

- Thank you for your participation in this project to help us better understand ourselves, the partnership we share, and how we value it.
- No longer is leadership subject to guesswork, subject to private opinions or one's select circle of friends...
- Before you depart, we ask your favor to answer just a few questions about this process.

APPENDIX 32  
QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION AT GOSPEL PARTNERS  
AWARENESS WORKSHOP

Questions for discussion:

1. What kind of fellowship event(s) would appeal to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How important is it that food be involved?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What does commitment to one's own congregation look like?

Questions for discussion:

4. What Bible study topics or themes appeal to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. When would it / they best be held?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How important is the stability and continuity of a Pastor's service to the Joint Parish?

APPENDIX 33  
EVALUATION FORM FOR GOSPEL PARTNERS AWARENESS WORKSHOP

For Completion at the Conclusion of the Gospel Partners Awareness Workshop

Help us to see how useful this experience has been so far.

Please **Circle** your response

Did you complete a Partnership Questionnaire when it was offered in May?    Yes    No

My congregation:                      Grace                      Zion

1. I have grown in my awareness that it is important to the well-being of the Grace-Zion Joint Lutheran Parish that both our congregations be healthy and thriving.

Yes                      No

2. I am relieved that pastor or other powers are not pushing a merger of congregations.

Yes                      No

3. I have been challenged to grow in my prayers and concern for the well-being of each of our congregations.

Yes                      No

4. I see more clearly the importance of my own faithful attendance and support of my congregation and how it affects other people.

Yes                      No

5. I am more likely to attend a Joint Voters Meeting. Yes

No

6. I am more likely to attend a Jointly held service, regardless of location.    Yes    No

7. Pastoral Stability is desirable for the Partnership.    Yes

No

8. Our Partnership is a bond that is worth appreciating and working to preserve.

Yes                      No

9. I have a better appreciation of my brothers and sisters in Christ from our partner congregation.

Yes                      No

10. The most useful thing I learned was \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 34

AN ORDER FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MULTIPLE PARISH PARTNERSHIP

This is the Annotated version; a clean copy is found in Appendix 35.<sup>1</sup>  
*See LSB notes 5-8, Lutheran Service Book Agenda, page 353 top.*

*Hymn suggestions--*

*“Christ Is Our Cornerstone”, Lutheran Service Book, # 912*

*“The Church’s One Foundation”, Lutheran Service Book, # 644*

*“Built on the Rock”, Lutheran Service Book, # 645*

(Congregational responses in **bold print**.)

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. [*Matthew 28:19b*]

**Amen.**

Giving thanks to God for His rich blessings, the members of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (and \_\_\_\_\_) have resolved together to establish *a Joint Parish partnership, to become partners in Word and Sacrament ministry who share a pastor. By this action each congregation signals its desire to retain its individual autonomy while acknowledging the need to fill the Office of the Holy Ministry which exists in each congregation sharing in this partnership.*<sup>2</sup>

*One or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture may be read.*

Acts 2:42-47 / Ephesians 2:19-22 / Hebrews 10:19-25 / I Peter 2:4-9

*Psalm 133*<sup>3</sup>

*The presiding minister addresses those gathered.*

Beloved in the Lord, in order that you may publicly declare the faith of these congregations and the unity you share in this partnership, I ask: Do you *-as congregations*<sup>4</sup>- confess the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God? If so, then answer: **We do.**

**We do.**

---

<sup>1</sup> This Order was established by way of some revisions to the “Merging of Congregations” found in *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 353-4.

<sup>2</sup> Italicized words replace: “the new congregation of (name of merging congregation & location). Since it is God who gathers and establishes His Church through the Gospel and the Sacraments, let us hear the Word of God concerning the Church.”

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 133, which addresses the beauty of unity, is offered as a suggested reading.

<sup>4</sup> Replaces: “as a congregation.”

Do you confess the three Ecumenical Creeds, namely the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian, and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church? If so, then answer: We do.

**We do.**

Do you promise to support the Office of the Holy Ministry *which God has established in your midst*,<sup>1</sup> in order that the Word of God may be preached and the Sacraments administered according to His institution, and to be gathered regularly on the Lord's Day to hear that Word and receive the Holy Sacraments? If so, then answer: We do so promise, with the help of God.

**We do so promise, with the help of God.**

Do you promise to support the work of *your*<sup>2</sup> congregation in making disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching according to our Lord's mandate? If so, then answer: We do so promise, with the help of God.

**We do so promise, with the help of God.**

*Do you promise to support this partnership with your gifts so that the work of each congregation may go forward in each location? ? If so, then answer: We do so promise, with the help of God.*

***We do so promise, with the help of God.***<sup>3</sup>

In accordance with your solemn promises, *this partnership* (name: \_\_\_\_\_)<sup>4</sup> is established in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Let Your continual mercy cleanse and defend Your Church, O Lord, and because she cannot continue in safety without Your help, protect and govern her always by Your goodness. *Pour Your blessing upon each of these congregations, that they might be faithful witnesses where You have placed them;*<sup>5</sup> for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

---

<sup>1</sup> The italicized words replace nothing but are merely an insertion.

<sup>2</sup> Replaces "this." Lest this seem rather possessive, what follows was inserted.

<sup>3</sup> The italicized is all an insertion, and replaces nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Replaces "name of congregation."

<sup>5</sup> All of the italicized is an insertion.



“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

*“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”<sup>1</sup>*

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”

**Amen.**

*[1 Corinthians 15:58 & 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17]*

(The service continues with the Hymn of Invocation.)

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:58 is an insertion.

APPENDIX 35

AN ORDER FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MULTIPLE PARISH PARTNERSHIP

*See LSB notes 5-8, Lutheran Service Book Agenda, page 353 top.*

*Hymn suggestions--*

*“Christ Is Our Cornerstone”, Lutheran Service Book, # 912*

*“The Church’s One Foundation”, Lutheran Service Book, # 644*

*“Built on the Rock”, Lutheran Service Book, # 645*

(Congregational responses in **bold print**.)

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. [*Matthew 28:19b*]

**Amen.**

Giving thanks to God for His rich blessings, the members of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (and \_\_\_\_\_) have resolved together to establish a Joint Parish partnership, to become partners in Word and Sacrament ministry who share a pastor. By this action each congregation signals its desire to retain its individual autonomy while acknowledging the need to fill the Office of the Holy Ministry which exists in each congregation sharing in this partnership.

*One or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture may be read.*

Acts 2:42-47 / Ephesians 2:19-22 / Hebrews 10:19-25 / I Peter 2:4-9

Psalm 133

*The presiding minister addresses those gathered.*

Beloved in the Lord, in order that you may publicly declare the faith of these congregations and the unity you share in this partnership, I ask: Do you -as congregations- confess the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God? If so, then answer: We do.

**We do.**

Do you confess the three Ecumenical Creeds, namely the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church? If so, then answer: We do.

**We do.**

Do you promise to support the Office of the Holy Ministry which God has established in your midst, in order that the Word of God may be preached and the Sacraments administered according to His institution, and to be gathered regularly on the Lord's Day to hear that Word and receive the Holy Sacraments? If so, then answer: We do so promise, with the help of God.

**We do so promise, with the help of God.**

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**We do so promise, with the help of God.**

Do you promise to support this partnership with your gifts so that the work of each congregation may go forward in each location? If so, then answer: We do so promise, with the help of God.

**We do so promise, with the help of God.**

In accordance with your solemn promises, this partnership (name: \_\_\_\_\_) is established in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Let Your continual mercy cleanse and defend Your Church, O Lord, and because she cannot continue in safety without Your help, protect and govern her always by Your goodness. Pour Your blessing upon each of these congregations, that they might be faithful witnesses where You have placed them; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”

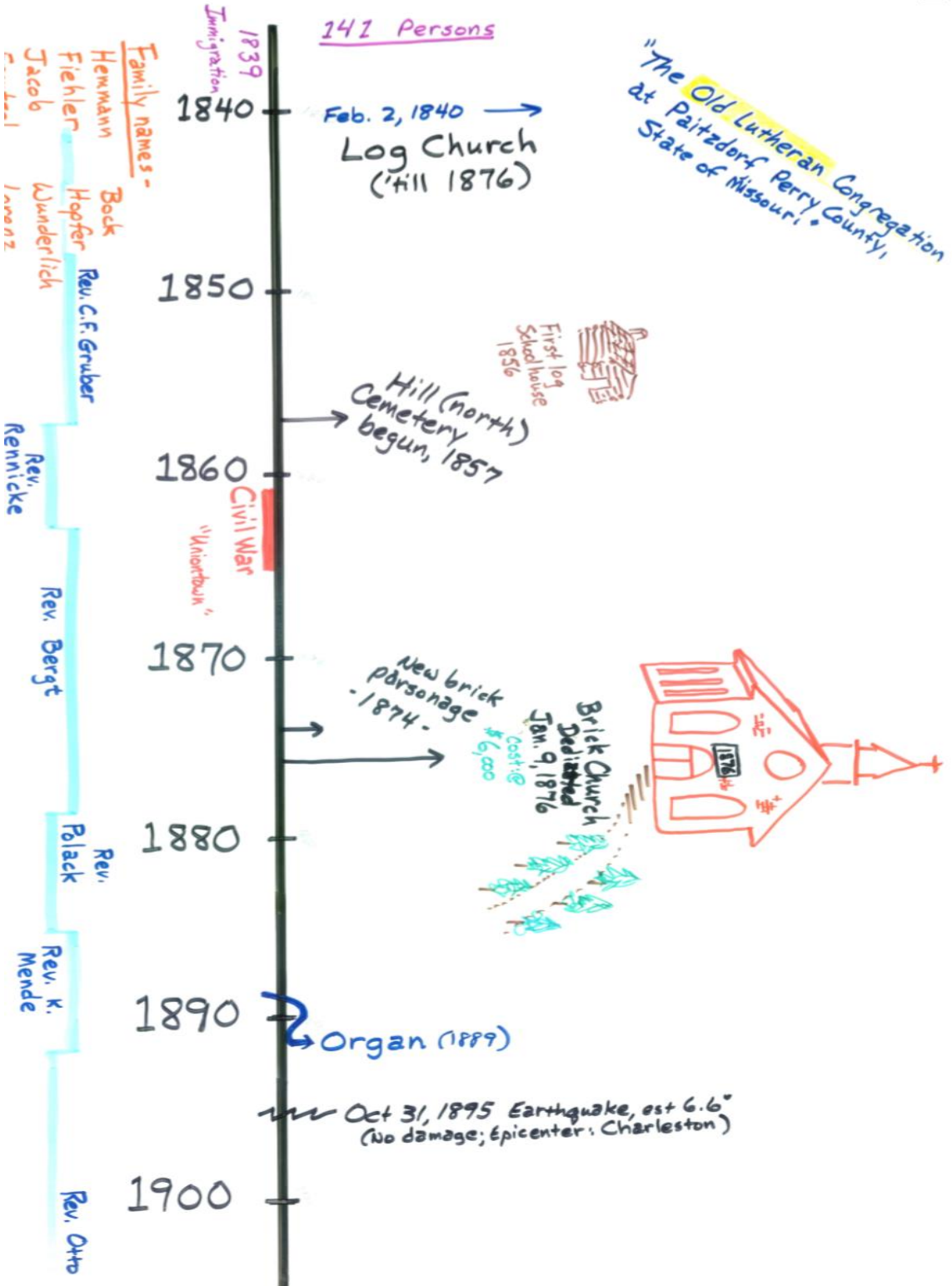
**Amen.**

*[1 Corinthians 15:58 & 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17]*

*The service continues with the Hymn of Invocation.<sup>1</sup>*

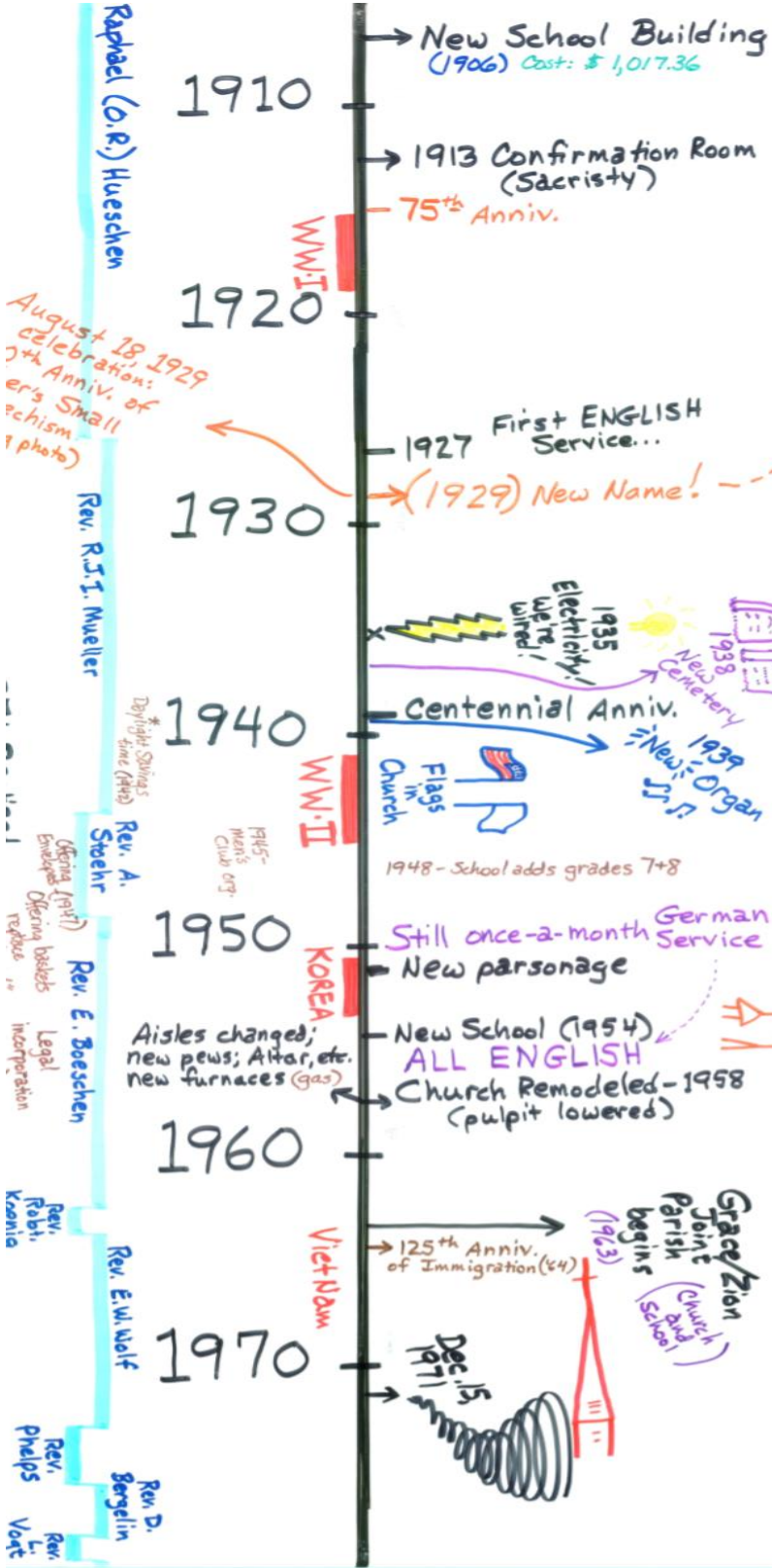
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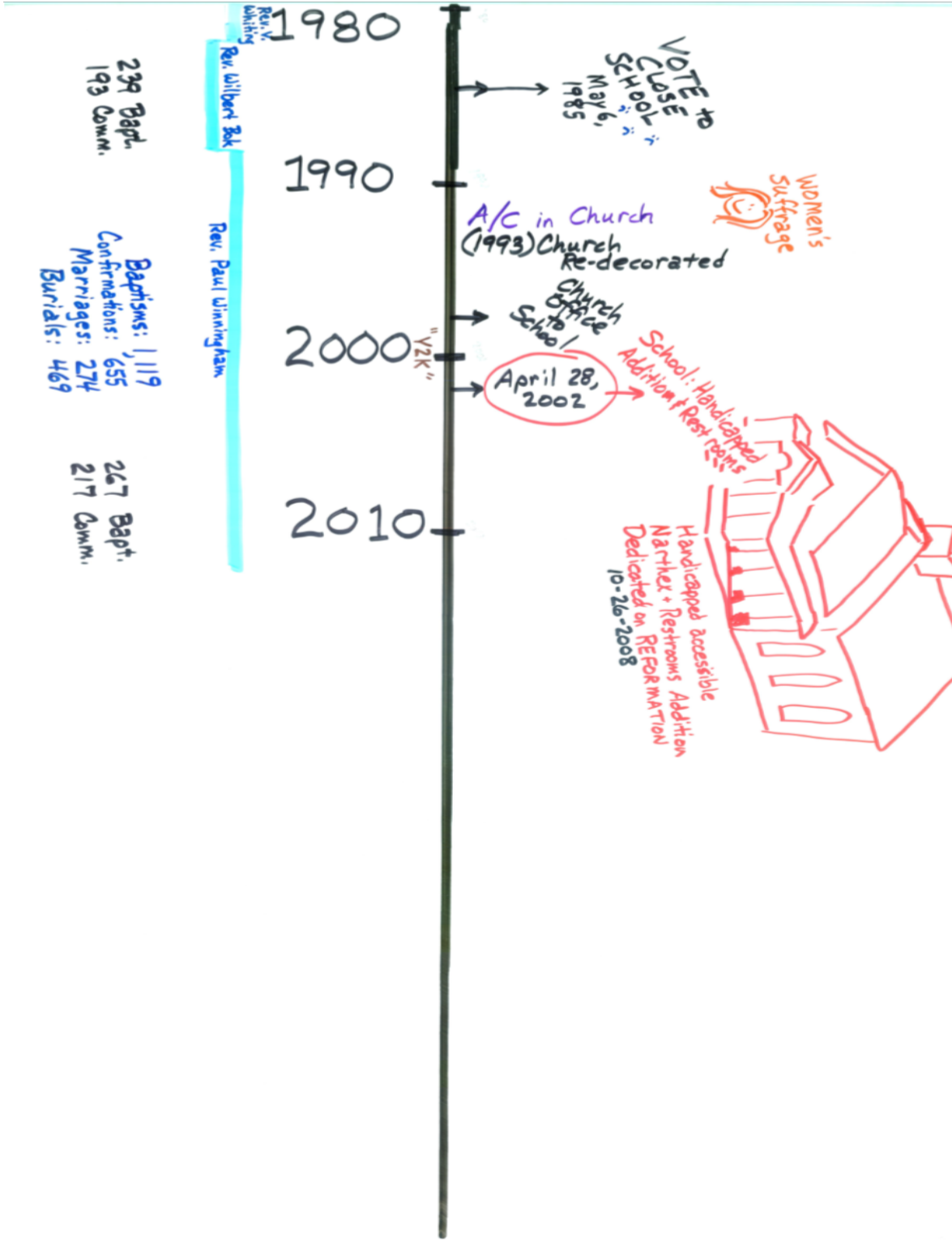
<sup>1</sup> This service is an adaptation by the researcher of “Merging of Congregations,” *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 353-354.

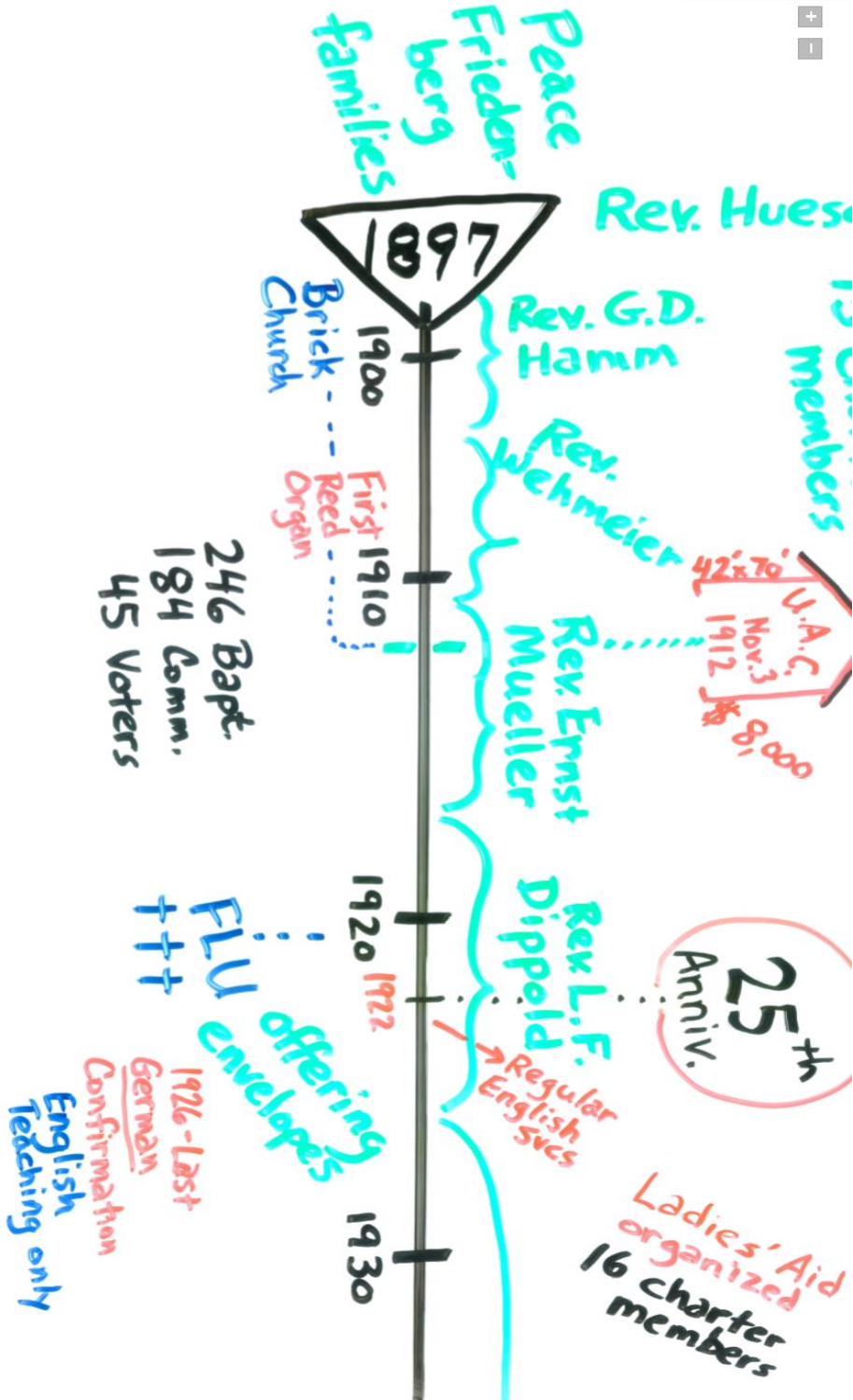


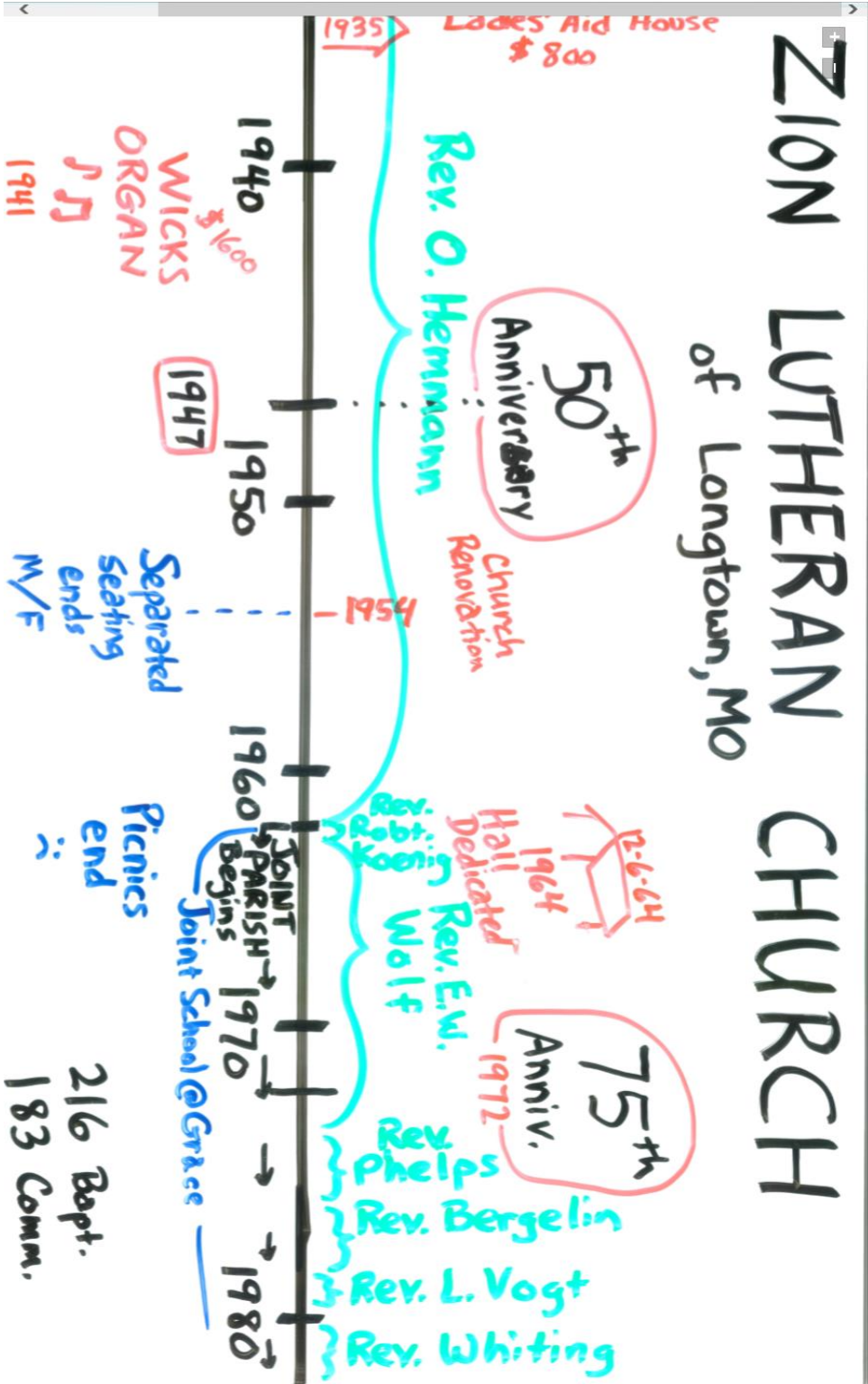
# Grace Lutheran Church

Uniontown, MO

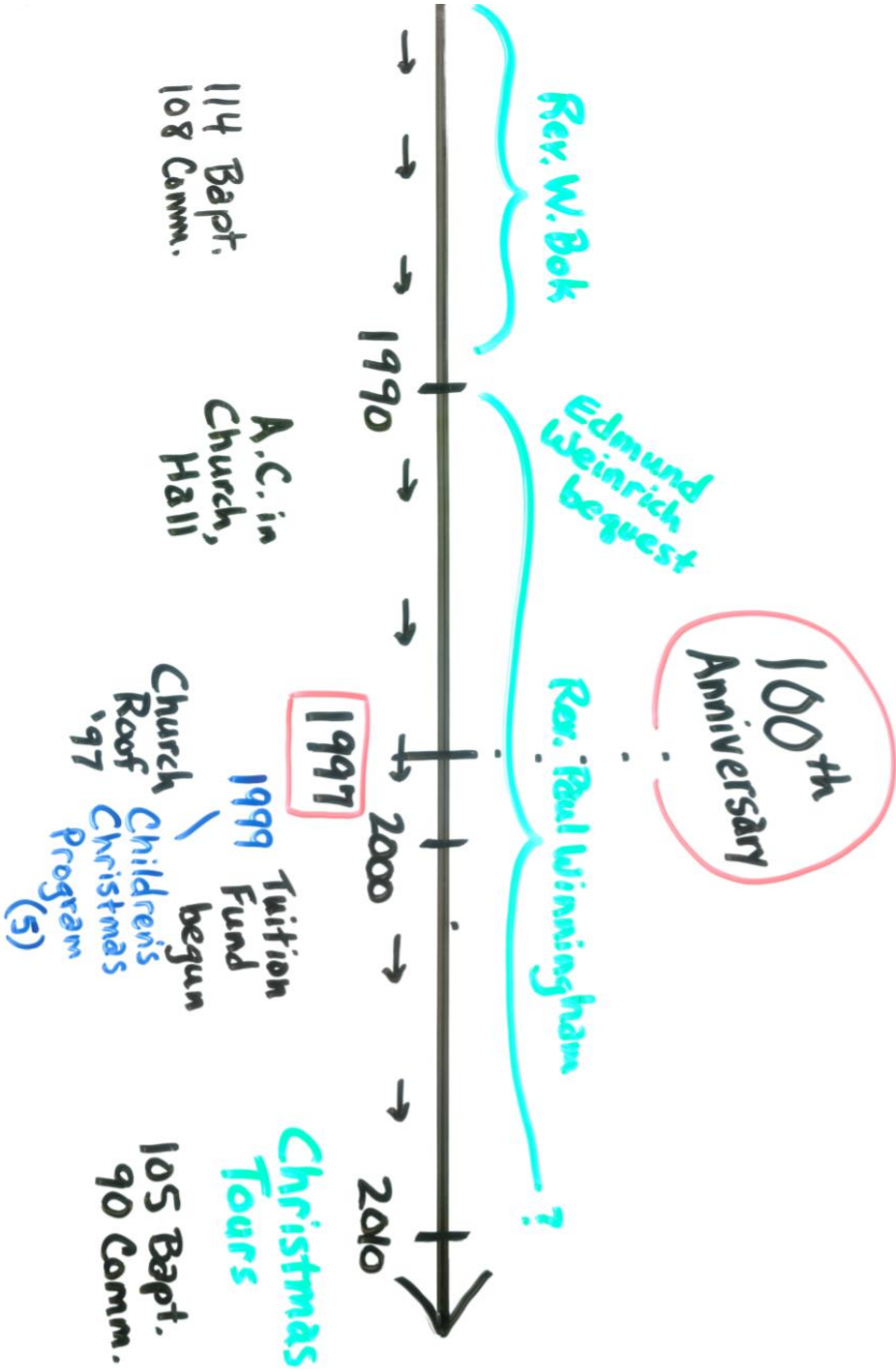












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