Doctor of Ministry Major Applied Project   Concordia Seminary Scholarship

5-23-2008

Health in the Parish - Resolving Conflict in Today's Church

Paul E. Meyer
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MeyerPEM@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

Meyer, Paul E., "Health in the Parish - Resolving Conflict in Today's Church" (2008). *Doctor of Ministry Major Applied Project*. 158.
https://scholar.csl.edu/dmin/158

CONCORDIA SEMINARY

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

HEALTH IN THE PARISH - RESOLVING CONFLICT IN TODAY'S CHURCH

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT SUBMITTED TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY STUDIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

PAUL E. MEYER

April 23, 2008

HEALTH IN THE PARISH – RESOLVING

CONFLICT IN TODAY'S CHURCH

PAUL E. MEYER

APRIL 2008

Concordia Seminary
Saint Louis, Missouri

_____   *05/29/08*

Reverend Doctor Bruce Hartung, Advisor   Date

_____   *5/28/08*

Reverend Doctor David Peter, Reader   Date

_____   *5/28/08*

Reverend Doctor David Peter, Director   Date
Doctor of Ministry Program

This paper is dedicated to family: To my wife, Beverly, and our three sons, Zachary, Jacob and Nicholas who allow me to experience unconditional love; to the Mt. Olive family, especially Marca Scott and Elizabeth Williams for being such great encouragers and helpers in this process; and, to my father and mother, John and Elsa, who taught me what family was all about and now enjoy the family of God in person in heaven.

CONCORDIA SEMINARY

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Abstract

HEALTH IN THE PARISH – RESOLVING CONFLICT IN TODAY'S CHURCH

by Paul E. Meyer

Major Applied Project Advisor Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:
Professor Dr. Bruce Hartung
Department of Practical Theology

One of the major issues hindering a congregation from being what God calls it to be is poor conflict management. By nature, conflict arises in numerous areas of congregational life. Parishioners and staff are all integral parts of the body of Christ. As sin is part of all relationships it is also true that there is help and hope in the form of a relationship with Jesus. Family Systems Theory is an avenue whereby the power of Jesus can be experienced.

Unfortunately, in the opinion of the author, conflict in the parish is increasing, emanating from sin and not having God's will at the forefront. Conflict itself is only a part of the picture; equally important is the management of conflict.

This project collects information from the field through district presidents within the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). Results of the author's work with other consultants who assist congregations and church organizations that find themselves in conflict and information from congregations who have received help through consultations are presented. All of these avenues of information, along with the results of the related research project, will provide a comprehensive understanding of the conflicts and responses to those conflicts.

A written pamphlet will also be provided for congregations and other church organizations to use as they face conflicts. This pamphlet includes information on how to live a healthy life in relation to others, as well as a listing of resources available for assistance with conflict resolution.

The goal of the author is to be better informed as a parish pastor, to be equipped to assist in consulting with congregations in conflict and to provide growth for congregations needing resources for the healthy management of their conflicts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In many ways the people of today are similar to people of Jesus' day. In the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem,"[1] there is a reference to the "hopes and fears of all the years."[2] These same hopes and fears are still present even with the advent of the Savior.

There were conflicts in Jesus' day and before. There are conflicts today. There will be conflicts anew tomorrow. Within the context of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, people can approach the conflicts of the day with hope that a new course can be charted, a course that will enable the completion of the song, "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight."[3]

A healthy congregation can take on a variety of appearances. No two congregations look or act the same. This is not to say that there are not ways to determine whether or not a congregation is healthy, as health is defined in Scripture.

St. Paul talks about health in the Christian faith through a description of the body. In this instance it is the body of Christ. "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body."[4] The functioning of each part of the body is vital to its overall health. Each part supports the other and hence the entire structure, unless illness or sin is present.

---

[1] Lewis H. Redner, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," original text by Phillips Brook in *Lutheran Worship*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 60.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] 1 Cor. 12:12 (New International Version).

1

. . . so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.[5]

Even though the health of the congregation, the body, is directly tied to the health of the individual members, there are other determining factors which are larger than the individuals. The one that is most important is the fact that the head of the body is Christ Himself. "And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church."[6] With Christ as the head there can be health in the body of believers. The conflicts congregations face have to do with how well they, as parts of the body, respond to one another and to the head of the body, Christ.

Jesus questioned whether a well person needed a physician[7] and was later referred to as the Physician who could heal himself.[8] Using this analogy to help heal, all levels of the church body should have resources and treatments recommended by the Physician, based on His words and will. These are the resources or treatments which will be explored in this paper.

Unresolved conflicts within the church body affect not only the laity and the church as a whole, but also have a very negative impact on the clergy trying to minister to this afflicted body. Dr. Peter Steinke opines that conflict in the congregation is the number one issue that affects a pastor's mental health.[9] It ranks above depression and marital problems. This is substantiated by the following:

---

[5] 1 Cor. 12:25 – 26 (NIV).
[6] Col.1:18 (NIV).
[7] Mark 2:17 (NIV).
[8] Luke 4:23 (NIV).
[9] Dr. Peter Steinke of Austin, Texas, consultant on congregational conflict, Director of Bridgebuilders Ministry and Healthy Congregations, Clergy member of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod hereafter referred to as LCMS, interview by author, 23 October 2005, Austin, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church.

It may be surprising to find that over 1500 pastors a month leave their pulpits, and 43% of pastors report a serious conflict with a church member each month. Conflict is a serious and growing problem in the church. Most of the people involved in conflict are not evil people. Most pastors are not tyrants. Most church boards are made up of people who truly do want to serve God with a pure heart.[10]

Dr. Bruce Hartung, formerly the Executive Director of the Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support for the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), reports that the health of an individual is dependent upon work structure. "A recent study found 80% of ministers saying the way they practice ministry negatively influences their family and one-third believe it is a hazard to their family."[11]

What is true for the clergy is also true for the congregational family. Carl S. Dudley states that "conflict is a synonym for congregation."[12] Conflict is common; instead of being kept under cover it should remain visible and out in the open.

In FACT – the most comprehensive study of the America's religious landscape – 75 percent of congregations reported some level of conflict in the last five years. Disagreements were reported in every aspect of the church life: from theological beliefs to the way money was raised and spent, from worship practices to mission priorities, from lay decision-making to pastoral leadership styles.[13]

There appears to be a lack of help and a lack of awareness of available help for individuals and congregations that experience stress, pain and anxiety in their ministry. It is essential that individuals and congregations be provided resources so

---

[10] Rich Laskowski, "Understanding Leadership & Church Relationships," Lazarus Ministries [Internet]; available from http://www.lazurusministries.com; accessed 3 October 2006.

[11] Bruce Hartung, "Minister to Minister," *Texas District Church Professional Newsletter* 30 (April-June 1994), 4-6.

[12] Carl S. Dudley, "Conflict: Synonym for Congregation," Faith Communities Today [Internet]; available from http://fact.hartsem.edu/research/fact2000/topical_article3.htm.

[13] Ibid.

that they may function in connection with God and with others in a healthy, God pleasing manner.

Purpose and Design of the Project

This project will serve to assess some of those resources and chart a healthy course in which the hopes of the congregations can be met. During the course of study, work and life in general, the author has witnessed and participated in many conflicts. Having seen both well-managed and poorly managed conflicts, the author has sought a method for managing conflict that addresses more than the symptoms of the conflict, but rather a conflict management technique that gets to the root of the conflict, enabling the parties to the conflict to grow past the conflict and identify and address the reasons the conflict arose in the first place.

In this project, the author starts his journey by exploring biblical examples of conflict in light of the law and the gospel. The author's research clearly reveals that conflict has existed since God created man and man fell from grace by committing the first sin. The author shows that conflict results from sinfulness, and also that God, through His loving nature, gave His son Jesus to break the bonds of sinfulness and offer true conflict resolution through prayer, Scripture, and forgiveness.

Following the discussion of biblical examples, the author then utilizes bibliographical research to define what constitutes a healthy church. In the healthy church, all focus should be placed on the mission of furthering the work of Jesus. The church is filled with humans, all sinful beings. The challenge of sin in the church is that the church focus is constantly being redirected from the work of Jesus to furthering the desires of man, resulting in conflict within the church body.

The author then uses his extensive experience in the LCMS to review conflict and the standard conflict management tools offered in the LCMS. The author discusses in detail the Peacemaker Ministries, the Ambassadors of Reconciliation, and the synod-trained circuit counselors, defining how those tools are used to manage church conflict. Using questionnaires, interviews and other research techniques, the author then gathers information from district presidents about the effectiveness of these conflict management tools and their utilization in the synod. The research indicates that more assistance in the way of conflict management is needed, as the standard tools do not fully address the root of the conflict but rather focus on the symptoms of the conflict, leaving the unhealthy conditions to continue to grow.

The author introduces and discusses in detail the concept of Systems Theory[14], with a specific focus on relationships and family systems. In Systems Theory, the typical linear cause and effect relationship is redefined, as everyone and everything participating in a system is related and has impact on the other, even if not in a direct linear relationship. This systems thinking can be applied to individuals as well as to congregations or other organizations, allowing participants to recognize that everything is interconnected and an action in one area may cause unintended activities in another area. Systems Theory requires the mapping of relationships, current and past, in order to establish what is in play in the current conflict or series of events.

Any system - even a system in conflict - has a tendency toward inertia, as the uncomfortable yet known condition is preferred over the unknown. The author discusses this homeostasis along with emotional triangles and secrets, as these contribute to the

---

[14] Peter L. Steinke, How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations As Emotional Systems (Herndon: An Alban Institute Publication, 1993).

inertia. In order to move the system from the point of conflict, a leader must emerge and differentiate from the pressures and anxieties of the system, breaking through the secrets and sinfulness that contributed to the conflict in the first place. Leadership, both in the church and in general, is discussed, and the leader's ability to manage his or her own anxiety is an important part of the successful conflict management technique enabled by systems thinking. The leader must be able to understand the system to expose the underlying cause of the conflict in a non-anxious way to help those involved heal and move forward.

Finally, the author conducts field research regarding the practical application of Systems Theory and the effectiveness of the Bridgebuilders Ministry, which is a conflict management resource available to LCMS and other church bodies. Bridgebuilders Ministry is discussed as it is a tool that embraces Systems Theory, focusing on a more detailed mapping of the relationships and events that led to the conflict in hopes of achieving long-term conflict management and resolution. The field research indicated that generally speaking, the Bridgebuilders conflict management technique was a positive experience that resulted in a positive conflict management experience for those who participated in the survey.

The author concludes that the use of systems thinking is a positive way to manage conflicts, resulting in the long-term creation of healthy relationships and conflict management practices. A *Conflict Management Guide* is also provided for the use of clergy, professional church workers and lay leaders to assist in locating resources. The author shares the important knowledge he gained from this project, and how the work on this project shaped his view of conflict and contributed to the tools available to him for

conflict management and the support of a healthy parish life – prayer, Scripture, System's Theory and action.

As a parish pastor, the author has lived some of the "hopes and fears" of the years. His agenda for this Major Applied Project is to receive strength for his ministry in serving his own congregation, as well as to share his findings with others so that they may find the resources they need to help heal their respective church body.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGY AND CONFLICT

The great outpouring of conflict into the faith life of congregations and the lives of individuals today is much the same as in biblical times. The inability of more people to control anxiety emanating from everyday conflicts seems to be rising. Unique personalities, diverse backgrounds and economic and social opportunities contribute to the potential for disagreement both then and now. The biblical basis of relationships is central to human existence. The Gospel is the answer to the sinfulness of conflict. The knowledge of the Gospel comes through God's Word. The message of Jesus Christ and the behavior of the believer are essential elements of overcoming conflicts in life.

God, the One Who Brings Reconciliation

According to Steinke, "In more recent history conflict has taken a nastier turn."[15] He believes that people in conflict today want to win at all costs and are in general mean-spirited.

Even with the more hardened position taken by those in conflict, there is no conflict that is impossible for God to solve: "I am the Lord, the God of all humankind. Is there anything too hard for me?" [16] Genesis, chapter 37[17] records the story of how God helped Joseph, the son of Jacob, resolve a very difficult conflict he had with his brothers. In the story, Joseph's brothers became jealous of

---

[15] Dr. Peter Steinke of Austin, Texas interview by author, 23 October 2005, Austin, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church.

[16] Jer. 32:27 (NIV).

[17] Gen. 37 (NIV).

him and sold him into slavery. Joseph remained a slave in Egypt for thirteen years,

until God delivered him out of prison and made him a great ruler. Given the same

circumstances, many people would have remained bitter, unforgiving and unwilling

to consider making peace after suffering as Joseph had, but not Joseph. Because of

God's grace, he was able to forgive his brothers, and give them food and shelter

when they came to him to seek help during a terrible famine.[18] Forgiveness is

central to human relationships if they are to be healthy.

Conflict in Light of the Law and the Gospel

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, ordaining his model for moral, godly

behavior. Because of sinful nature of the human condition, God's directive was

impossible to obey. While the Law shows people their sinful condition, it cannot in and

of itself change that condition. The Law can change a person's behavior, but it does not

change a person's heart or save that person. Just because an activity is wrong does not

necessarily mean a person will stop doing it. This leads to conflict between what is right

and what is wrong within the person, between a person and others and between the

person and God Himself.

All individuals live with conflict. As stated above, that conflict is both within and

outside of the person, and with fellow human beings and God. The Law helps define

those conflicts, and yet defining them does not alleviate them. Defining the conflict

through the Law is the first step in having a right relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

The Law is always part of the message of salvation. The Law is spoken first to define

one's condition and position with God.

---

[18] Gen. 45:1-15 (NIV)

9

Knowing that humankind needed to be saved from its inability to adhere to the Law, God sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to save the world from sin and destruction. The Gospel, or the saving activity of God, is the second part of God's message. The Gospel is the story of Jesus paying for the sins of all on the cross and through the tomb from which He rose. Jesus has paid the price for sins and burdens. Jesus brought a way to restore the broken relationship with humankind, both in general and with individuals. These two parts of the message are essential to having a clear perspective of life.

Ted Kober described in his article in the *Lutheran Witness* concerning conflict within a specific congregation how the Law and Gospel work together: "Together they studied God's Word on peacemaking. God's Law confronted them with the sin they denied, and His Gospel comforted them with a hope born of a peace that passes all understanding. Each member was challenged to remove the log from his own eye."[19] A key ingredient in the process of resolving conflict is that of confessing one's sins to the other party. The Law exposes sin even though it "does not motivate us to repent, confess, or change our heart toward God"[20] or fellow human beings. Conversely, the Gospel reassures us of forgiveness through Christ and His death and resurrection if sin is confessed.

This is the plan that God used in reconciling us to Himself. He sent His only Son to reconnect us with Himself in a loving relationship. He did that even though humankind had nothing but sinfulness to bring to the relationship. Said another way, we were enemies of God. Our status as such was that of an adversary. Yet God sent His Son to be

---

[19] www.mtio.com/articles/bissar98.htm
[20] Ted Kober, "Confession & Forgiveness: Professing Faith as Ambassadors of Reconciliation" (Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, Missouri, 2002), p 43.

our Savior. Not because of goodness within us but because of His love for humankind.

That love took the form of Jesus Christ dying on the cross and coming back to life to

bring a reconnection, a reconciliation, a conflict-resolving status to humankind.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has

come!"[21]

Jesus' way of having brought reconciliation - that reuniting of God and mankind -

was through healthy God-based relationships. He called for the passing on of the love of

God in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I

have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my

disciples, if you love one another."[22]

<u>Conflict in the Old Testament</u>

Sinfulness has been the normal human condition since the Garden of Eden when

Adam and Eve disobeyed God and chose to follow the advice of the serpent (devil) and

partake of the fruit from The Tree of Knowledge of the Good and Evil. For this act they

were cast out of the Garden.[23] Thus, the first sin (disobedience shown to God) and

conflict (opposing ideas and actions) were recorded. Additional sin and conflict

followed. Cain killed Abel in a fit of jealousy and anger causing God to cast Cain from

his homeland.[24] David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah, her

husband.[25] David's household was left in upheaval and God took away David's own

---

[21] 2 Cor. 5:17 (NIV).
[22] John 13:34-35 (NIV).
[23] Gen. 3 (NIV).
[24] Gen. 4:8-16 (NIV).
[25] 2 Sam. 11:2-24 (NIV).

son.[26] From the beginning of humanity, through each generation, sin and conflict permeate lives and relationships. As was true in biblical times, it is still true today, with every sin comes conflict with God, with others or self and every conflict has its own unique consequence.

Nehemiah 5 is an example of conflict and its resolution in biblical times.[27] Jerusalem lay in ruins, the surrounding, protective wall destroyed, leaving the city vulnerable and weak. Nehemiah pleaded with the people to rebuild the wall. Then, the rich people began to exploit the poor and Nehemiah became angry. Rick Warren states, "Now, there is the right kind of anger and the wrong kind of anger. Leadership is knowing the difference."[28] Nehemiah was angry, not because of ego, but because of the injustice being done to others. Nehemiah had the right kind of anger. Nehemiah sought God before he spoke out, went privately to talk with the nobles and officials, addressing the matter with them in public, because they were known publicly and set an example of selfless leadership. The result, with God's direction, was that the wall was rebuilt in fifty-two days. This early example of conflict management is still applicable today.

How Gideon, the general over Israel's army, dealt with the men from Ephraim is an example of conflict management. While Gideon's army was in the middle of defeating the Midianites, the men of Ephraim approached with these angry words:

---

[26] 2 Sam. 12:13-19 (NIV).

[27] Nehemiah 5 (NIV).

[28] Rick Warren, "Resolving Conflict In Your Church," Rich Warren's Ministry ToolBox [Internet]; available from http://pastors.com/RWMT/?ID=40&artid=610&expand=1; accessed 12 September 2005.

"'Why have you treated us like this? Why didn't you call us when you went to fight Midian?' And they criticized him sharply."[29]

These men were upset with Gideon's battle strategy and how he chose to use them in the warfare. Gideon was right to be upset with them because they were being insubordinate to his leadership. As they were in the middle of the battle, it was not the proper time to deal with this matter. Addressing the problem at this point probably would have led to an argument, which may have diverted him or brought disunity to the ranks. These things could have also kept Gideon and his men from defeating the Midianites.

Rather than dealing with the problem head on, Gideon chose to temporarily overlook, or place to the side, the issue by trying to abate these men's anger. His plan worked.

> But he (Gideon) answered them, 'What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren't the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer? God gave Oreb and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?' At this, their resentment against him subsided.[30]

Gideon offered them a well-timed compliment for the good work they had done instead of correcting them. What he did here falls in line with the wisdom of Proverbs 15, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."[31]

Conflict management through avoidance can be either a healthy or unhealthy response to conflict. If a given issue is avoided altogether and is critical to the relationship involving two or more people, then the avoidance is harmful to the relationship. However, if the avoidance is temporary so as to allow for a positive

---

[29] Judg. 8:2-3 (NIV).
[30] Judg. 8:2-3 (NIV).
[31] Prov. 15:1 (NIV).

outcome then avoidance can be used short term. Ultimately, conflict must be addressed in order for it to be alleviated.

Jesus Faces Conflict

During Jesus' walk on earth, the New Testament describes his daily encounter with the sinfulness of human nature and the conflict it causes. Just as today, gossip and divisiveness were common. Peace and unity were frustrated by religious factions. Even the disciples struggled with the desire for personal gain.[32] Jesus did not ignore the sinfulness of the world. Rather, He encouraged his followers to flee from any thought or action that could cause separation from God.

Jesus was not afraid to be forthright and declare the truth even when standing in direct opposition to the learned rabbis of the time. Facing the scribes' remarks, an effort to challenge and undermine His authority, Jesus refused to take part in their theological debates. From this, an understanding of another important concept of conflict resolution in the church and among humankind today is realized: the message of the Gospel cannot be compromised. Joseph Byrd states:

> The nature of the gospel and the church is one which will be in conflict with other world views and moral standards. . . We must declare the nature of the church and allow members to be angry, leave, or repent. Such is the sort of ministry of Paul and Jesus. Has God called us to anything less?[33]

When Jesus taught his disciples how to resolve their disputes with each other, He advised them that private discussion was an important step to take. "If

---

[32] Luke 9:26 (NIV).

[33] Joseph Byrd, "Reflection on Parish Conflict: Occasions Without Compromise," *Journal of the American Academy of Ministry* (Fall 1994).

your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."[34]

The call of forgiveness and relationship restoration is taught throughout the Bible. For this reason a significant part of the New Testament presents and teaches ways to relate harmoniously with God and with each other. A combination of the words of Jesus along with the teachings of Paul make for practical steps in working through conflict and living in peace.

The Early Church

In Acts 2 the early church is described.

> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.[35]

As described in the Bible, the early church provides a model for the church today. Was the early church always joyful? Later in Acts, conflict pervaded the early church. The cheating and lying of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5[36], discord between the Grecian Jews and the Hebraic Jews in Acts 6[37], and the riot in Ephesus in Acts 19[38] are but a few examples of the early church in dispute.

---

[34] Matt. 18:15 (NIV).
[35] Acts 2:44-47 (NIV).
[36] Acts 5:1-11 (NIV).
[37] Acts 6:8-10 (NIV).
[38] Acts 19:23-41 (NIV).

The Epistles continue to convey that the early church had its conflicts. Conflicts arose for different reasons. In 1 Corinthians, Paul beseeched the church members to "agree with one another" and "be perfectly united in thought and mind" to avoid conflict and dissention.[39] In Philippians 4, Paul asks Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their differences and include the faithful to help in resolving this matter quickly because they are all trying to live in Christ and desire the church to prosper.[40]

The Lord planned the church perfectly but man is imperfect. Kenneth Newberger brings this paradox into perspective.

> Becoming reconciled with God, however, does not change our underlying human nature. The well-known phrase, "sinners saved by grace," recognized the fact that we are still sinners. Very few imagine that a person's new commitment to God, eradicates self-centered, conflict producing thoughts and behavior. (The difference is that the Lord now enables us to live a life more pleasing to Him, but it will not be sin-free this side of heaven.[41]

This concurs with Romans, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."[42] Therefore, disputes and conflicts in the church are to be expected as they arise from sin. Christ often told those who had their sinfulness exposed to leave their life of sin. In John 8:11 Jesus says: "Go now and leave your life of sin." In a very real sense it was impossible for the person not to sin and yet it also presented the person with a goal.

Christ and the Church

---

[39] 1 Cor. I:10 (NIV).

[40] Phil. 4:2-3 (NIV).

[41] Kenneth C. Newberger, "Theological Foundations for Resolving Church Conflict," [Internet]; available from http://mediate.com/pfriendly.cfm?id=589.accessed 30 December 2004.

[42] Romans 3:23 (NIV).

In John 15, Christ provides a clear picture, through the analogy of the vine and branches,[43] of the good results produced for those choosing to be connected with him. Just as the vine is living, lacking perfection and unable to survive without nourishment, the church is alive with basic needs for which Christ has provided his Word and Sacraments. God's people are cut and pruned to grow in faith, to serve and witness just as the branches of the vine are cut and pruned to bear more fruit. Without Christ they fade and fall away from life itself.

The church has a head and the head is not a clergy member, a professional church worker or a layperson. The head of the church is Jesus Christ and his people make up the body. The irreplaceable relationship each person has with the other parts of the body and with Jesus Christ joins the church body for work in the Kingdom.

Paul in his writings to the church at Ephesus addresses working and living in harmony rather than in conflict.

> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."[44]

The connection, the union which is called for by the Lord, is a wonderful description of the human body. Jesus desires this unity among the members of his church, his body. In the natural body, every organ, every limb, every part has its place; the members are joined together, the parts all adapted to each other and are

---

[43] John 15:1-4 (NIV).
[44] Eph. 4:15-16 (NIV).

17

held together by a common bond. Just as in the human body, every congregational

member can be connected, utilizing their individual gifts for the good of all.

> I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of
> you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you
> and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."[45]

By the powerful working of each part, of every member, whether laity or pastor,

each functioning in his area of calling, the general well being, the body or church,

will grow and increase in its calling to make disciples.

Describing the function of the body as one entity with many parts, Paul

speaks to the church at Corinth:

> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its
> parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all
> baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free
> – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made
> up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a
> hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be
> part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do
> not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the
> body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be?
> If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in
> fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he
> wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As
> it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I
> don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' [46]

Paul's portrait of the body of Christ – dependent upon one another, lifting up one

another, all the while looking at the head, Jesus Christ as the source of all power -

is a reminder that the church and the body grow and thrive through connection with

thick green branches and to the deep roots of the vine.

---

[45] 1 Cor. 1:10 (NIV).
[46] 1 Cor. 12:12-21 (NIV).

Summary

Conflict has been present from the time sin entered the world as described in Scripture. The Law was given to define and address the condition of humankind. The Law states that humans have fallen short of what God has called them to be as His children. Scripture is replete with descriptions of the brokenness of the relationship of God and His creation, humankind. The Old Testament church as well as the New Testament church of Jesus' day are both riddled with the sinfulness of unresolved conflict. Within the context of the fallen nature of humankind comes the message of Jesus Christ, the Gospel. Although Jesus came to be the answer for conflict, that answer has not always been heeded.

The examination of the church will continue in the next chapter. Conflict did not cease with the advent of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Following a description of present day conflict will be methods for addressing conflicts of humankind and also the church.

CHAPTER 3

CONTINUED CONFLICT IN THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH (AND AVENUES TO HEALTH)

From the fall of humankind into the world of sinfulness to the natural condition of humankind since humans find themselves in conflict with God and with each other. Conflict will not go away by itself. The description in the previous chapter of the Law and Gospel is a beginning. History shows the foundation: humanity has gone against God and God has acted in love toward humankind in sending Jesus to be the Savior. In this chapter, the author shows how that sin continues and what the present situation looks like from a Biblical perspective.

Sin entered the world through the actions of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:18) and has been perpetuated by and through the sinful nature of all who have followed. The second part of the preceding Romans passage gives a way to receive and share the righteousness of Jesus. Righteous living is illusive because of the sinful human nature. Even as the condition of humankind has remained constant - that state of being sinful - there has also been the reality of change.

Change has been constant throughout the Church's history. With change comes conflict and with conflict the need for resolution. The challenge with change - accepting the healthy and rejecting the unhealthy, or discerning the sick from the fit, and then charting a unified, godly course of action - has been part of that constant history. Regardless of the century, when people are involved, egos, personalities and diverse

opinions are prevalent. Christ understood these issues and recognized that the healthy

church would keep Him as their center, ". . . I am the way and the truth and the life."[47]

In an attempt to better understand what constitutes a healthy congregation,

Leadership Journal asked a group of pastors their opinions with the following responses:

> Church health is a matter of focus: a focus on Christ, not the church. Our
> focus determines whether we have a survival mentality or a service mentality.
> If the primary emphasis is on maintaining the building, or on getting more
> people or money, it's a clue that our focus is on survival. A willingness to
> serve is the greatest indicator of a Christ-ward focus. It's a sign that faith is
> strong and the people are open to the workings of the Spirit.
>
> It shows up as a ready, easy smile. It's a willingness to reach out and greet
> somebody whom you don't know well or whom you've never seen before.
> Part of my responsibility as a leader is to have and serve out of that joy.[48]

Church Image: What is the focus?

A healthy congregation understands their purpose, vision and identity. Carl

Dudley describes five "congregational self-images." (Table 1)

These images, states Dudley, "cut across lines of denomination, theology, social

status and community location, size and resources."[49] The five image types were formed

after Dudley and Johnson interviewed members of numerous diverse congregations to

ascertain common themes and group those into five congregational self-image types.

---

[47] John 14:6 (NIV).

[48] Tracy Keenan, Ralph W. Neighbor, Jr., Steve Sjogren, Erwin McManus, Lee
Eclov, "What Does A Healthy Church Look Like? (Part 1)," Leadership Journal
[Internet]; available from http://www.ctlibrary.com/le/1997/summer/71334a.html;
accessed 12 March 2006.

[49] Carl S. Dudley and Sally A. Johnson, *Energizing the Congregation: Images That
Shape Your Church's Ministry* (Westminister: John Knox Press, 1993) 13.

Five Congregational Self-Images

Table One

Self Image Type	Description	Negative Image
The Pillar	Anchored in its community, it feels a distinct responsibility for it. Its building often reflects a pillar self-image. Membership includes pillars of the community, good citizens individually and corporately. Uses its resources to strengthen the whole community.	Can turn into a fortress, preoccupied with its own concerns. Can withdraw, seeing itself as a haven of purity against the world's unrighteousness.
The Pilgrim	Attaches itself not to a place but a people and their culture. Takes care of its own wherever they are and may move with them. As its neighborhood changes, it may be able to receive new strangers and pilgrims, such as a Swedish church that reaches out to Mexicans.	May become prejudiced, in-grown, bound by its cultural identity, unable to reach out beyond "our own."
The Survivor	Often speaks of the storms it has weathered. Attracts people who take pride in their survival. Lives on the verge of being overwhelmed by emergencies. Doesn't expect to conquer its conflicts, but refuses to give in – determined but not domineering, relentless but not aggressive. Hangs on because "we've made it through worse than this."	Can become self-absorbed with its conflicts. May become paralyzed, unable to make even small decisions, having lost its will to live.
The Prophet	A crusader, conflicts the world. Focuses on expressions of individual or corporate evil, locally and nationally. Often has a high profile and impact on the community, setting the standard for other congregations. Independent in style, supported by people who share its commitments. Like the survivor, it has a sense of crisis and expects a high-energy response.	May become arrogant, overly critical, enamored with confrontation. Vulnerable to sudden shifts in its leaders' interests.
The Servant	Helps people in need with a quiet faithfulness. Pillars feel responsible for the whole community and pilgrims for groups; servants see individuals and reach out to them in supportive ways. Servant churches are sustained by servant people – those who visit the sick, take meals to the bereaved, and provide food and clothing for needy neighbors.	Has trouble getting organized. Can breed dependency. So focused on individuals it can fail to see broader issues and becomes irrelevant.

Source: Carl S. Dudley and Sally A. Johnson, *Energizing the Congregation: Images That Shape Your Church's Ministry* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1993), 13.

According to Dudley, understanding the image of one's church is key to defining and affirming the ministry of the church and providing a clear vision for the future. Identity is a catalyst for growth, strength and cooperation. The church that understands who it is exhibits a greater ability to embrace new programs, to dispose with dead or dying ministries, to utilize the gifts of its members and to foster a sense of unity and love for one another.

All congregations fit into one or more of these categories. The self-image that a congregation has will often determine the health and hence the amount of conflict it has. With a strong vision and mission the focus is more united and outwardly focused.

The Church with a Positive Image

In this and subsequent paragraphs the author will give examples of how a church that understands and acts upon its identity remains healthy. Ted Johnston believes that the church should focus and foster five habits which include:

1. Grace – Enjoying what God has done;

2. Worship – Exalting God and his Word;

3. Community – Gathering the people of God in groups;

4. Mission – Emphasizing why we are here; and

5. Integrity – Encouraging 'oneness.'[50]

These habits instilled in the leadership and membership of a church focus both within and without, providing ongoing nurturing and edification for the active church

---

[50] Ted Johnston, "Five Habits of a Healthy Congregation," Grace Community Fellowship [Internet] available from http://churches.wcg.org/akron-oh/articles/tj092000.html; accessed 2 March 2005.

member and the tools to reach out to others. The fluidity these habits provide to ministry helps ensure an acceptable balance between the conflict of inward and outward focus.

Grace

A congregation that embraces the undeniable truth that "it is not about us – it is all about God" is much more likely to spend less time on self-centered ventures and more time proclaiming the Gospel message to those inside and outside its church walls.

In the author's view, this is an area where congregations can be challenged. In the midst of conflict, congregations sometimes lose sight of the large picture of God's grace and forgiveness, instead focusing on the smaller part of the conflicts. Even as there can be pain in ministry, God can give joy in the midst of conflict, allowing congregations to weather the storm and receive God's grace in a new beginning. When God's grace is then celebrated, others can then see and experience the love of Jesus.

Worship

Attending worship - where God's Word is taught, the Sacraments are offered regularly, and people gather in praise and adoration of the Lord - is vital to the health of the church. As people completely offer themselves to Christ they have a desire to meet with other believers in corporate worship. It is a confirmation that all are on a journey of faith together, and that by worshipping together, there is an increased understanding of God's love. The realization that all are equal in the sight of God allows people to enter into ministry with others genuinely for the sake of God's kingdom and to put away personal agendas.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul writes that the parts of the body help

each other in the growing under the Head (Christ).[51] This growth promotes not only love for Christ but love for others. Worshipping God together allows God's love in action to be seen and felt, and strengthens the commitment to share God's love with all people. As people experience love and joy in worship, they want to share the joy that Jesus brings to life. This is the time that most of the congregation comes together to celebrate. It is a time to connect and a time to be sent out to connect with the world by serving others. Worship is the opportunity to be filled and to be prepared for the rest of the week.

Community

Johnston describes two distinct groups that help provide community in a healthy congregation. They are "celebration groups (enlisting a large group of people where the focus is worship and where community is built) and small groups (enlisting three to seven people where the focus is discipleship and on mutual accountability)."[52] They focus on the church's ability to meet both the corporate and individual needs of the congregation, visitors and surrounding community. Worship on Sunday morning, Lenten and Advent services are examples of Celebration groups. Small group communities meet in homes, in fellowship rooms within the church, in schools, and can be adapted to almost any agreed upon quiet and private place.

Small group community (common unity) facilitates strong bonds among members. Whether the group begins with people of similar interests and background or is diverse in its membership, the small group through prayer, study and sharing of lives becomes a safe place to grow in faith and fellowship. As corporate worship focuses on the human "alikeness" in Christ, small groups focus on the individual gifts, unique

---

[51] Eph. 4:15-16 (NIV).
[52] Ibid.

25

personalities and diverse experiences of those that make up the body of Christ. Bill

Hybels, the pastor of Willow Creek Community Church outside of Chicago made this

statement: "If you create a loving community, first time seekers will sniff it and say 'I

want in.'"[53] Churches with an active small group ministry provide a "safe haven" for first

time seekers and all people, recognizing that diversity is essential to a healthy

congregation.

Mission

A healthy church focuses on the mission of the church as defined by Jesus in

Matthew 28.[54] The Great Commission is a Christian's stated job as Christ's disciples on

this earth: to be His voice, His hands and His feet. A congregation that truly believes it is

called by God to make disciples of all and baptize them in the name of the Triune God

has embraced God's assignment for humankind. To fulfill the Great Commission

requires both the corporate church and individuals to stand up and take clear action.

Many times this action is defined in the "mission" and "vision" of individual churches.

Utilizing the spiritual gifts of its staff and members, a church structures an effective way

to carry out God's plan with the resources God has given to them.

In the author's opinion, a mission statement that reminds a congregation that they

are about sharing the love of Jesus with others, not just within the congregation, is one of

the most critical aspects of health within a congregation. The foundation of any

organization is based on the mission and vision of that organization. This holds true

especially for congregations. "If a man does not know what port he is steering for, no

---

[53] Bill Hybels, "Illustrations" [Internet]; available from
http://sermoncentral.com/sermoncentral_pro/super_illustration_search_keyword.asp?=ye
s&FreetextTerms=first+seekers&category_name=&=63&y=20; accessed on 5 May 2006.
    [54] Matthew 28 (NIV).

wind is favorable to him."[55]

<u>Integrity</u>

Integrity is one of Johnston's five traits of a healthy congregation. Biblical integrity requires a person's words and actions to be congruent. Any contradiction between the two produces not only conflict within ourselves, but with God and those around us. Examples are readily available on television or in the newspaper where the professed Christian through sinfulness has created great public anxiety: the pastor who has an affair with a member, the Elder who molested a child, or the Sunday School Superintendent who took money from the children's Sunday School offerings. This lack of biblical integrity can be so pervasive that it develops a life of its own. Without integrity, the cancer of deceit grows wild. When words and actions differ, others can call into question the love and grace of the God being professed.

Church Images Change

Grace, worship, community, mission and integrity represent positive characteristics of a healthy 21st century church. They are not easy to obtain and require seeking God's help in prayer and through His Word, strong and definite leadership from pastors and church staff, enthusiastic lay leadership and members who are ready and willing to step out in faith. There are times when all of these traits will be alive and well, times when the church focuses more on one attribute over another, and times when chaos and conflict make it difficult to see any positive quality in a church. As Dr. Paul Borden explains,

In the book of Acts, the church was constantly changing. We see changes related

---

[55] Seneca, Roman Philosopher mid 1st century A.D. [Internet]; available from http://en.thinkexist.com/quotes/seneca; accessed 4 May 2006.

27

to how often it met, where it met, how it did ministry, even how it was structured and organized. Every time the world in which the church functioned changed, God caused the church to change in order to adapt itself to reach that world. The only constant in a healthy congregation, besides the message of the Gospel, is change.[56]

A poem ended with these lines, "but since no perfect church exists, made of imperfect men, then let's cease looking for that church and love the one we're in."[57] While a perfect congregation does not exist, a congregation can promote and practice principles in order to remain healthy.

Definition of a Healthy Congregation

Congruent with Johnston's work, Steinke advocates that healthy congregations need to understand diversity and be purposeful in mission. "Congregations are unique and complex. Yet, all congregations are working with a small set of core issues. They are:

1. Mission and how to achieve it

2. Strengths and resources and how to implement them

3. Anxiety and how to manage it

4. Wholeness and how to maintain it."[58]

Struggling ineffectively with one or more of the core issues, congregations can put health at risk. Steinke includes three tools needed for a healthy congregation. "Developing 'wise blood' (mature leadership), fostering gratitude and growing through conflicts"

---

[56] Dr. Paul Borden, "The Only Constant in a Healthy Congregation, Besides the Gospel is Change," Dr. Borden's Seedlings [Internet]; available from http://www.growinghealthychurches.org/art; accessed 19 October 2004.

[57] [anonymous], The Perfect Church [Internet]; available from http://www.geocities.com/lorisgarden/Perfect Church.html; accessed 19 October 2004.

[58] Peter Steinke, "Healthy Congregations" [Internet]; available from http://www.wadehodges.com/booksummaries/healthycongregations.htm; accessed 5 March 2006.

complete his menu for congregational vitality.[59]

Wise Blood

The term wise blood comes from the time before vaccinations to prevent specific diseases. Because doctors knew that people who recovered from an infection recovered more quickly if infected again, they were said to have "wise blood." Today wise blood is not the intellectual prowess of people but the ability to provide mature godly leadership at all times, and especially to deter or resolve conflict among people. Churches are full of people. People are sinful. All people will not work together in unity. Personal agendas come into play and the good of all is banished for the sake of individual egos.

Steinke points out that with "wise blood" comes the churches' immunity to those within the congregation inflicting hurtful actions and attitudes. In the author's experience, congregations can begin to live some of the wise blood once illness has been survived and good health has returned. The antibodies of the past give wise blood and a healthy vision for the future. By working through conflict, people and systems develop wise blood and immune systems which give a point of reference for future health.

Gratitude

Healthy churches are thankful for God's abundant blessings and desire those blessings not only for themselves but for others. Pastors and staff members in healthy churches are the generators for a sense of well being and continual appreciation that permeates the organization, and thus, is passed on to the lay leadership and general membership of the church. Positive tones within the congregation are shared naturally

---

[59] Rev. Peter Steinke, "How Healthy is Your Congregation?," The Lutheran [Internet]; available from http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article_buy.ctm?article_id=93

with others in the community, promoting good feelings and providing an inviting

atmosphere for newcomers.

<u>Growing Through Conflicts</u>

Steinke states:

> At workshops I conduct, I ask congregational leaders if their congregations are healthier now than five years ago. Usually, two-thirds of the participants say "yes." Their answers are basically alike: We met a challenge; we stretched our resources; we examined what we were doing and changed course; we redefined our conflicts as opportunities. Health is 10 percent what happens and 90 percent how we respond.[60]

Healthy churches can grow from conflict. They embrace them as opportunities for

needed change within the organization. When churches put off important decisions, fail

to deal with conflict, refuse to discuss sensitive issues or focus constantly on negative

people and their complaints they are unable to thrive. However, appropriate

confrontation can head off both short term discomfort and long term disability. The

healthy congregation knows when and how to face a challenge and grow from it.

Poorly managed conflict is not something that is actively sought, especially

church conflict. It can be stressful, time consuming and often very destructive.

Avoidance is common. Prolonged, unresolved conflict breeds chaos and chaos leads to

reactive behaviors. Accusations abound, mistrust grows and results include pastors and

church workers being asked to leave, members seeking other congregations and

withholding financial support.

As conflict arises from sin, it is a necessary part of the human condition.

However, conflict itself should not be viewed as always having a negative outcome.

While unresolved conflict resulting from poor conflict management is negative, good

---

[60] Ibid.

30

conflict management can also be a catalyst for positive change by exposing and addressing the underlying sin. Without good conflict management, the situation stagnates and relationships fall apart. The response to conflict is an important driver of the outcome of the conflict.

Donald E. Bossart states, "Conflict is sharpest where bonds are strong and encompass the whole person. This is keenly evident in the church with its standard of commitment to a life's belief system."[61] Because of strong intra-personal relationships within the church, often creating a family-like unit, it is extremely difficult to address conflict directly. Thus, conflict is put off or avoided all together. Eventually, emotions and behaviors can no longer be contained and the problem is brought to light. Unfortunately, by this time the original conflict is surrounded by the gathering of past issues and feelings. Just because close church friends are involved does not mean the conflict will not escalate in intensity and duration.

According to the author, Christians are all about uniting on a "godly" front. They want to be viewed as moral, loving people, working to build God's Kingdom and in service for their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, any unresolved conflict is considered to be bad, derived from sin, and in direct opposition to their spirituality. Growth within the church community is not about stagnant programs or unchallenged practices, it is the result of healthy conflict management where the old way of doing things makes way for new ideas, understanding and opportunities to grow in faith and action.

---

[61] Donald E. Bossart, "Growing Through Conflict" [Internet]; available from http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=297; accessed 25 September 2006.

Summary

The first chapters spelled out the challenges of sin and how it entered the world and continues to exist today. The 21st century church does not need to settle for the perpetuation of sinfulness when responding to challenges. Defining health and utilizing God-given tools, such as God's word, for promoting health are critical. What is needed is open and honest assessment of current conflict as well as application of habits of health within an organization. As was stated in the previous paragraph, there can be positive growth when conflict is addressed and tools are used to work through conflict. In the next chapter, specific challenges and situations within a church body, along with a bit of self-disclosure by leaders within a denomination and specific methods for addressing conflict in the congregational setting, are given.

CHAPTER 4

CONFLICT IN THE LCMS

In this chapter we will see how one Christian church body – The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) - reveals some of the challenges that have arisen over the years within specific congregations. This self-revelation is a first step in dealing with conflict. Not only are conflicts within the Christian Church visible to many, it is also true that there are other challenges in the Christian church that are not as visible.

The church, as a functioning organization, is not exempt from conflict. Christians argue over worship styles, music choices and even church décor among lots of other things. Pastors are often expected to deal with serious conflicts ranging from discord among church staff to special interest group concerns to mounting financial needs. Conflict is a part of the day to day operations of the church. Identifying the conflict, handling the conflict effectively and restoring congregational peace can be difficult. Help from outside the local congregation is often required.

To better understand how these situations are handled by the congregations of the LCMS, the observations of the district presidents[62] were obtained through an open-ended questionnaire. The results provide an overview of the conflicts faced by local congregations and the resources most often used for resolving issues.

Method

Over a ten year period information was received from LCMS district presidents

---

[62] The LCMS district presidents are the chief executives of each of the 35 districts. They are elected by the Districts to carry out the resolutions of the district conventions and supervise the work of the districts. *Handbook of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*(2007), 189.

on how they handled conflict. The information was gathered from a questionnaire sent in 1996, 1998, 2002 and 2006.

The following are the five questions posed in all four questionnaires over the ten year period.

1.   What are the three most common conflicts that congregations in conflict face?

2.   What is your district able to offer congregations and professional church workers to assist in alleviating the conflict?

3.   How effective is that help?

4.   What programs would you implement in your district if you had unlimited resources?

5.   What other information would you like to share with me that I have not asked about?

The above questions were sent by United States mail and/or electronic mail to the thirty-five (35) district presidents. In 2006, nine (9) responses were received. In 2002, seventeen (17) questionnaires were returned. Nine (9) and Twenty-two (22) were received in 1998 and 1996 respectively. One district president in 1996 declined to have his answers published.

As one would expect, the responses are varied with some consistent themes, as indicated in the following discussion of the questionnaire results.

<u>Question 1 – Common Conflicts of Congregations</u>

The three most common conflicts of congregations in conflict mentioned by the

district presidents are categorized by year and frequency of response in Table 2.

Table 2

Top Three Common Conflicts Reported by District Presidents[63]

Year	First	Second	Third
2006	Difference in expectations for conflict resolution	Following biblical principles of conduct (Repent and Forgive)	Lack of understanding of how to resolve the conflict.
2002	Following biblical principles of conduct (Repent and Forgive)	Personalization of the problem. Not understanding the issues.	Lack of understanding of how to resolve the conflict.
1998	Identify and address the conflict in a timely manner (Communication)	Seeking solutions based on desires of individuals rather than the best solution for all involved.	Following biblical principles of conduct (Repent and Forgive)
1996	Personalities and expectations slow down and confuse the reconciliation process	Following biblical principles of conduct (Repent and Forgive)	Lack of understanding of how to resolve the conflict.

The information in the chart can be summarized in three themes. First, the LCMS

looks to God's Word for direction when there is conflict (Repent and Forgive). Second,

sin permeates church life. Finally, frustration exists in determining how to move forward

in a conflicted situation. Even as the LCMS looks to God's Word for direction it can be

concluded that God's Word and the direction derived is often put aside and displaced by

the anxiety that comes through sinfulness. In some ways the responses over the ten years

changed very little. The themes remained constant.

How will the church handle conflict? Who will pastors, church workers and laity

---

[63] Full tabulated results from the District President Questionnaire may be found in Appendix A.

trust to help them use effective conflict resolution techniques? Will they remain tied to

past practices, focus inward and become self-serving or will the church learn to seek a

win/win solution and reach out to a third-party resource when needed? Bossart states:

> First, we must remember that by the very act of creation, God
> gives each individual unique value and worth. Faith in this gift
> allows each member of the church to affirm his or her sense of
> self-worth which enables us to engage in the constructive
> utilization of conflict. Second, we must remember not only to trust
> each other, but also to trust that God uses even our disagreements
> to further the work of the church and our spiritual growth.[64]

Question 2 – Common Resources of Congregations

By year, the three most common resources for congregations in conflict

mentioned by the district presidents are can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Top Three Common Resources Reported by District Presidents[65]

Year	First	Second	Third
2006	LCMS System – District President, Vice Presidents, Circuit Counselors	Peacemaker Ministries / Ambassadors of Reconciliation	Outside training resources and workshops
2002	Peacemaker Ministries / Ambassadors of Reconciliation	LCMS System – District President, Vice Presidents, Circuit Counselors, District Reconcilers	Outside training resources and workshops – Healthy Congregations and Bridgebuilders
1998	LCMS System – District President, Vice Presidents, Circuit Counselors	Peacemaker Ministries / Ambassadors of Reconciliation	Outside training resources and workshops
1996	Peace in the Parish	LCMS System – District President, Vice Presidents, Circuit Counselors, District Reconcilers	Outside training resources and workshops

---

[64] Ibid.

[65] Full tabulated results from the District President Questionnaire may be found in Appendix B.

The Need for Help

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul asks, "Is there not a wise man in the church who can settle a dispute between fellow Christians?"[66] Historically, the church has been a place that helps resolve conflict. In today's world, the church must move quickly to identify the problem and respond in a way that honors God. The church needs reconcilers who are not quick to judge but exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. Wisdom, patience and self-control are skills necessary for success. Additionally, professional church workers, as well as lay leaders, need to work hard to create a caring church that is responsive to the discipleship of the individual member. Through discipleship, members grow in their understanding of the foundational principles of the church, including church discipline.

People do not support what they do not understand. Conflict resolution requires intentional education in the biblical principles of repentance and forgiveness, as found in Matthew 18 and Matthew 5.[67] In the author's opinion, it is an interesting and sad commentary that Christians today want Christ as Lord of some things, but not Lord over conflict. Christians trust God for eternal salvation but believe that God is disinterested or incapable of providing conflict resolution. Christ's timeless principles should be embraced and diligently practiced in order to reconcile relationships and resolve conflict in a God pleasing manner.

Help Is Available

The nature of conflict does not change. And yet, as Steinke stated, "conflicts are more mean-spirited with an emphasis on winning at all costs."[68] In

---

[66] 1 Cor. 6:5 (NIV).

[67] Matt. 18:15-20 (NIV), and Matt. 5:23-24 (NIV).

[68] Peter Steinke of Austin Texas interview by author 23 October 2005 Mt. Olive

ten years the district presidents tend to rely on somewhat the same avenues of help or assistance: (1) the Peacemaker Ministries; (2) Ambassadors of Reconciliation, utilizing Peacemaker's resources to train LCMS District Reconcilers; and (3) the Synodical System stemming from the District President's Office, including the Director of Congregational Care and the Circuit Counselors.

Peacemaker Ministries

The District President Questionnaire in response to Question 2 revealed that a number of district presidents enlisted Peacemaker Ministries for assistance in resolving conflict. Founded in 1982, under the auspices of the Christian Legal Society, Peacemaker Ministries began serving the LCMS in the early 1990's. Many of the ministries of the Christian Legal Society joined together in 1987 to form the Association of Christian Conciliation Services, housing their headquarters at Peacemaker Ministries from 1989 to 1993, eventually becoming a part of Peacemakers in 1993. Currently, the Ministry Relations Division of Peacemakers offers training, seminars and consulting services to individuals and organizations internationally and still includes among their clients the LCMS.

Ken Sande, an evangelical attorney, founded the Peacemaker Ministries to provide a biblically based approach to dispute resolution. Desiring to assist churches in settling conflicts outside of the courtroom, Sande utilized what he believes to be a Christian approach based on four biblical principles, known as the Four G's. They are:

1.	Glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31)

Lutheran Church.

2. Get the log out of your eye (Matt.7:5)

3. Go and show your brother his faults (Matt. 18:15)

4. Go and be reconciled (Matt 5:24)[69]

Sande believes that people respond to conflict in three ways: (1) Escape, (2) Attack or (3) Peacemaking.[70] To Christians conflict can feel uncomfortable and wrong, resulting in avoidance of issues and a desire to escape. At the opposite end of resolving conflict, attacking and blaming allows people to look good and feel that their views will prevail. The goal, however, is to remain centered, working and believing that a peaceful resolution can and will be reached. It is within this centered approach that God's guidance is sought and followed, producing a God pleasing answer.

The Peacemaker approach encourages congregations, both as a corporate unit and as individual members, to look at conflict with a positive perspective. Participants are encouraged to view conflict not as a waste of time or something to fear, but as a God-given opportunity to glorify God, serve other people and become more Christ-like.[71] People are part of ministries because of strong emotional and spiritual investments. They give of their time, talents and treasures in order to participate in Kingdom growth. The highly specialized consultants of the Peacemaker organization understand that a response is required to this personal commitment which will "address the individual hearts of those

---

[69] "The Four G's," Peacemakers Ministry [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/6.958149/k.303A/the_Four_Gs.htm; accessed 12 September 2006.

[70] "Slippery Slope," Peacemakers Ministry [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/958151/The_Slippery_Slope_of_Conflict.htm.; accessed 12 September 2006.

[71] "Peacemakers Pledge," Peacemaker Ministries [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKLFLTOBIpH/b.958159/k.A440/Peacemakers_Pledge.htm.;accessed 12 September 2006.

being affected"[72] by the conflict in order to reach a positive outcome.

Deeply committed to the biblical principles of forgiveness and reconciliation, Peacemaker Ministries focuses on discovering the root cause of why conflict continues. "When faced with conflict, we tend to focus passionately on what our opponent has done wrong or should do to make things right."[73] Once the selfishness is identified, groups and individuals are carefully guided to understand their personal responsibilities in both the conflict and the process of reconciliation. Although group dynamics and other secular psychological aspects of Family Systems Theory are acknowledged, they are not considered significant contributors to the healing process. Peacemaker Ministries believes that these approaches do not enable individuals to look below the surface to examine their own contributions to the conflict.

> Recognizing that every church member is either part of the problem or part of the solution transforms the approach to congregational conflict from a mere transactional event to an event of eternal significance that demonstrates growth in the church's efforts to cultivate a lasting *culture of peace*.[74]

Guiding congregations and individuals through the process of biblical peacemaking is centered within the motivation and desire to please and honor God. Peacemaker Ministries considers itself to be successful when God's interests, reputation,

---

[72] "Regarding Christian Conciliation," Peacemaker Ministries [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKLFTOBHIpH/b931479/k.8151/FAQs_Regarding_ Christian_
Conciliation.htm; accessed 12 September 2006.

[73] Peacemaker Ministries [Internet]; available from http://bookstore.peacemaker.net/htm/heart.htm.; accessed 5 September 2007.

[74] "Church Conflict Intervention," Peacemaker Ministries [Internet]; available from: http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKLFTOBHIpH/b958333/k.6D6F/Our_Distinctive_A pproach_to_
Church_Conflict_Intervention.htm; accessed 12 September 2006.

and commands take precedence over all other considerations.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation

The early 2000's brought an increasing interest in peacemaking from Lutheran

Christians. In response, Peacemaker Ministries supported the founding of Ambassadors

of Reconciliation to serve the Lutheran community through Lutheran consultants,

speakers and reconcilers. Ted Kober, who had served in various leadership roles at

Peacemaker Ministries, left his position as Senior Ministry Consultant with Peacemakers

Ministries in January 2005 to become President of Ambassadors of Reconciliation.

With the onset of Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Kober introduced into his

training program a greater emphasis on confession and forgiveness. Kober stated in an

interview in 2005, "With the added emphasis on confession and forgiveness, our synod's

reconcilers are learning now to announce God's grace in confession – from a pastor to a

penitent and between fellow believers."[75] This new approach was positively received by

those receiving training. Rev. Thomas Marcis, Jr., pastor of Zion Lutheran Church,

Bismarck, N.D. commented:

> I think the new emphasis will make a big difference in our day-
> to-day dealings. What's more central to Word and Sacrament
> ministry than confession and absolution? Applying confession
> and absolution as we relate to conflict and disagreement among
> us is only natural.[76]

Currently, Kober serves as the President of Ambassadors of Reconciliation,

(Training and Conciliation), Rev. Bruce Zagel is the Director of Restoration Ministries

(Certified Christian Conciliators) and Rev. Ed Keinath is the Director of CrossLife

Ministries (Counseling). According to John Hirsch, Director of Congregation and

---

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

41

Worker Care, Texas District, LCMS, the LCMS may utilize reconcilers trained by

Kober's organization when a conflict within an LCMS congregation comes to the

attention of a district president and requires outside intervention.[77] Kober has been called

on to train Circuit Counselors within the districts of the LCMS.

The LCMS System

The LCMS, and hence its districts, are a system in and of themselves. To that

end, district presidents look inside the system for assistance and answers to conflict

resolution. To the extent that individual districts have conflict management resources

available, they are offered to conflicted congregations. Some districts have full or part

time workers who focus much of their attention on conflicted congregations. As much as

possible, they first attempt to teach congregations in broad ways to constructively

approach conflict. Trained district caregivers and circuit counselors also lend their

expertise to congregations stuck in conflict. These counselors represent a handful of

congregations and help to address low level conflicts.

LCMS district officials use a variety of tools. Some are well trained in conflict

management with advanced degrees and bring with them a myriad of operating

techniques and methodologies. Other tools are used by pastors with some level of

competence stemming from experience with conflicted situations and pastors without

formal training. However, there is a foundation that does not vary, that being the basic

theology of the church body: a biblical underpinning. The benefit of the LCMS district

officials is that they provide some degree of help in conflict management.

Sometimes conflict cannot be resolved because the parties are unwilling to look

---

[77] Personal Interview with John Hirsch, Director of Congregation and Worker Care, TX Dist, LCMS, in Austin, Texas on 17 October 2006.

for help outside their own congregation and church system. When one does not look outside of oneself the cycles of conflict may repeat themselves. One district president comments, "The most severely conflicted congregations tend to stay conflicted because it is their culture. They have never learned how to relate to each other in any other way. Their parents and grandparents fought with each other and with several generations of pastors before them."[78] Contacting an outside source provides a church with a resource to help reconcile relationships and resolve conflicts that may not be resolvable using internal approaches.

Effectiveness of Resources

The results of the surveys give the impression that much of the effectiveness of the help was limited to the motivation of the congregation and leaders. All the outside help from district, synod, or other sources will not work unless the leadership is motivated to address the conflict in a positive manner. According to the author, this is the single most important factor in determining the effectiveness of any intervention or assistance. The motivation was not so much from a biblical standpoint but from interpersonal relationships. Each one of the three major help tools - Peacemaker Ministries, Ambassadors of Reconciliation, LCMS trained reconcilers - has some biblical basis, yet those are only as good as the reception they receive. One of the revealing responses from a district president in 2006 is as follows: "In my experience reconciliation may work for a time, but in any congregational conflict that involves a determined individual or group with an agenda, reconciliation seldom lasts."[79] The author believes that the reconciliation seldom lasts because the congregations addressed the

---

[78] Appendix B, p 123.
[79] Appendix B.

43

conflict, but failed to address the underlying system that led to the conflict.

In a large number of responses[80] the district presidents felt that it was difficult to get church workers to admit they needed help or to accept help. The effectiveness of any of the processes was only successful when the professional church worker was dismissed. When there are no conflict management tools available, human sinfulness and the desire to win or be right at all costs prevent compromise or reconciliation. Church workers and congregation members need to address conflict and come to positive resolution.

Wish List for the Districts

According to the questionnaire results, many district presidents would like to have a full time and at a minimum half time, staffed position at the district level for both workers and congregations to assist in alleviating conflict.[81] Ideally this staff person would be involved not only in conflict resolution but also conflict prevention, i.e., education of professional church workers and laity within the congregation. The perspective of the district presidents is to promote prevention. The anxiety that local congregations naturally experience when facing conflict would be significantly minimized by advanced conflict resolution training by the district office. This prevention would lessen the level of frustration at the district president's level, by equipping local congregations to begin the resolution process before contacting the district. In effect, preventive training sends a strong message that the district is listening and responding in advance to the needs and struggles of the local congregations. As with so many life issues, training and prevention before a crisis are less expensive in terms of time, money

---

[80] For a complete tabulation of the District President's responses to the effectiveness of their current tools for conflict resolution see Appendix B, page 120.

[81] For a complete tabulation of the District President's responses to programs they would like to see implemented and other comments see Appendix C and Appendix D.

and emotional stress. When help arrives after the onset of conflict, often the problem has escalated out of control.

Summary: Where Do the Districts Go From Here?

A review of the ten year responses of the district presidents exposes high anxiety levels among parishioners, pastors and district officials as well. Anxiety sometimes permeates all of those relationships. In a sense the district office is putting out fires as opposed to leading the congregations forward in their missions. Lack of training and resources for the districts and consequently for congregations seems to add a sense of paralysis to addressing conflict in congregations of the LCMS. Reactivity is the only response at the disposal of some of the presidents. Assistance is needed in creating and implementing a synod-wide model for training pastors and laity in conflict resolution thus enabling local pastors and their staffs to cope with the daily anxiety and frustrations of professional church work. Utilization of Systems Theory would provide a proactive approach, replacing frustration and confusion with hope and strategy. The basic tenets of Systems Theory are explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SYSTEMS THEORY

The previous chapter explored how LCMS district presidents look for direction in responding to conflict. Along with God's Word, God provides many avenues for the church to take when navigating through conflict to a more healthy way of serving humankind. What follows is one option that can be used in serving the church. As other tools which help to address conflict within the parish have been described by the author, the last one to be shared is one that has worked well for the author.

Christians have the strength of God and faith that God will empower them with the gifts needed to do His work. One of those gifts is a systems view. Systems Theory, when seen through the eyes of a Christian, is a wonderful blessing that can be used with God's word as a tremendous aid in affecting the lives of others in a positive manner.

The information provided about Systems Theory has been an immense help to the author in his daily work and frames his view of conflict management. Systems Theory, when applied to relationships and conflict, can make conflict management more effective by redefining traditional views of relationships, cause and effect, and leadership. The author believes that an in-depth walk-through of Systems Theory is beneficial to the understanding of forces at work in relationships and conflict. Systems Theory also is incorporated into the conflict management methodology which was researched and is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The Beginnings of System Theory

Dr. Edwin Friedman, a rabbi and family therapist, studied with Dr. Murray

Bowen, a psychiatrist and family therapist, and applied the insights of Bowen's Family

Theory, from which comes family system thinking, to religious institutions and ministry

in his book, *Generation to Generation*.[82] Systems thinking, according to Friedman, came

about in response to the computer age, which was ushered in during the 1950's. The

amount of information that has become readily available through the advent of computers

can overwhelm the processing brain. Friedman suggested that new ways of processing

that information were needed. Computers could aid in the "collecting, storing, and

sorting of information,"[83] but the information still had to be processed, lest it become

meaningless or overwhelming. The concept of relationships helps with the processing of

large quantities of information.

Friedman sets the system agenda as he writes:

> Systems thinking began in response to this information problem. It deals with
> data in a new way. It focuses less on the content and more on the process
> that governs the data; less on the cause and effect connections that link bits of
> information and more on the principles of organization that give data
> meaning. One of the most important ramifications of this approach for
> individuals who must organize and make sense out of a great deal of
> information (such as members of the clergy) is that it no longer becomes
> necessary to 'know all about something' in order to comprehend it. The
> approach also helps establish new criteria for what information is important.[84]

The phrase "Family System" had its origin in the field of psychiatry, in

Bowen's pioneering work in the 1950's and 60's. He derived his theory from

examining the way information is shared, not unlike that of the earlier computer

---

[82] Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985).

[83] Friedman, 15.

[84] Ibid.

age. In as much as information is the key to relationships the way it is shared is of

equal importance. His creative thinking about therapy with families evolved into a

way of understanding emotional process that came to be known as "Bowen Family

Theory."[85]

Bowen Family Systems thinking is a way of conceptualizing emotional process.

It joins the concepts of "systems thinking" and "emotional process." The joining of these

two concepts makes possible a way of understanding and more creatively responding to

the interpersonal dynamics inherent in all human institutions – from families to churches

to the worlds of commerce and nations.

To "think systems" is to focus upon the whole rather than the parts, realizing that

the nature of the whole is always different from the mere sum of its parts. To "think

emotional process" is to be aware of the interpersonal processes that are present in every

human system. The focus is no longer upon symptomatic content. Symptoms are

eliminated by modifying the process rather than by attempting to change the

"dysfunctional identified patient" directly – an effort that results in simply recycling the

symptom to a different place in the system.[86]

Systems Theory is concerned with systems or elements that interact with

each other. Systems are units, something that is qualitatively different from each

---

[85] Lawrence Matthews, "Ministry to Congregations as Family Systems,: Resources for Workshop Participants [Internet] available from
http://www.leadershipinministry.com/workshop_participant_resou.htm; accessed on 10 September 2006.
[86] Ibid

individual interacting element and cannot be explained in simple cause and effect models.[87]

Systems Theory states that there are no beginnings and there are no ends to relationships.[88] This is in contrast to linear concepts in which there is a stimulus followed by a response, which creates another stimulus and response. Linear concepts embrace the theory of cause and effect. One action causes another, or the actions of many cause a reaction in the life of another. Linear thinking goes in steps. Friedman mapped out the cause-and-effect idea.

Illustration 1

Cause and Effect Thinking in Systems Theory

FIGURE 1-2. Linear causation.   FIGURE 1-3. Multiple causation.   FIGURE 1-4. Systems thinking.
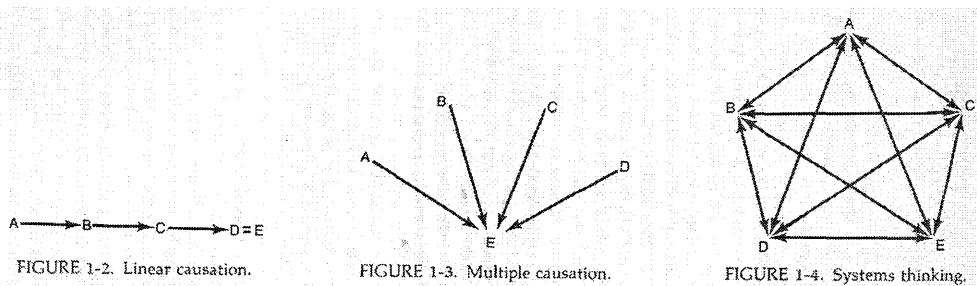
Source: Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 16

Systems Theory espouses an interactive movement in relationships. All of the members in a system influence the others. If one part changes, the system must change. Systems Theory can be pictured as a mobile, where as one part moves, so too does the entire mobile move.

One movement in the relationship causes the entire structure to move or shift.

---

[87] "Family Theory and Systems Theory," Systems Theory; [Internet] available from: http://www.webofloneliness.com/publications/critical/systems_theory.htm; accessed on 10 September 2006.

[88] Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works* (Herndon: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1993), 4.

"Family members are emotionally interdependent and function in reciprocal relationships with one another. Therefore, the functioning of one member cannot be completely understood if taken . . . out of the context of the functioning of the people closely involved with him."[89]

Linear thinking, or as some have called it, "straight line thinking," has the action of an individual being the cause of the response of the action in another. The cause-and-effect rule applies to this type of thinking. In Systems Theory both the cause and the effect influence each other. The arrow of cause-and-effect does not go in one direction but in both directions.[90]

System Theory in Action

Peter Steinke, a personal student of Dr. Friedman, developed the Bridgebuilders Ministry, where the use of Systems Theory in a Christian context assists a group of people in the healing process.[91] The stated purpose of the Bridgebuilders Ministry is to "promote health and healing among clergy and congregations."[92] Steinke envisions that this will be accomplished in two ways. First, there will be an "intervention that involves a structural, tested, and psychological/theological grounded process that leads troubled congregations to focus on their strengths and to utilize their resources for healing."[93] The second portion of the process includes prevention. "That involves a structured educational experience adaptable to different learning settings in congregations, leading

---

[89] Michael E. Kerr and Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 37.
[90] Friedman, *Generation,* 15.
[91] Bridgebuilders Workshop, Austin, Texas, "Bridgebuilders Workbook" (Austin, 2002), mimeographed.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

them to recognize healthy and unhealthy emotional processes and ways to remain on the side of health."[94]

Steinke developed a way for consultants to assist congregations to think differently, all the while employing basic Christian beliefs.

There are a number of items that Steinke has included in his workbook which the consultant is to keep in mind when meeting with the congregation:

1. "Assume the congregation will be intensely anxious,

2. The consultant may be tempted to assuage intense anxiety too quickly,

3. If too much is promised, the consultant sets him/herself up for attracting the system's anxiety,

4. The consultant needs capacity to tolerate pain,

5. There will always be 'some,' no matter how clearly or frequently you disclaim it, who expect the consultant to provide a quick fix,

6. Norman Ackerman's words to the 'wise': 'Pretending to take responsibility for another is usually manifested by trying to change the other. Being responsible for another is accepting that person exactly the way he or she is.'

7. From the beginning the consultant focuses on working the process, not on changing others, alleviating their anxiety, or giving them answers."[95]

Bowen coined the phrase "non-anxious presence" to illustrate what it means to be free of the emotional system yet actually relating to it. The consultant, therefore, focuses

---

[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

on one's own functioning, not others, and to the process, not the outcome.[96]

The Playing Field

The emotional field is a basic tenet of Systems Theory. It is a description of position in life and how to move forward from that position. The concept of the emotional field is like a gravitational field, connecting generations and families. The field is a force to be understood and lived with. The emotional field has many players. The generations from a person's past are present. They influence who that present day person is as the emotional process from each preceding generation is still present. Normally, when looking at the field in a system, one looks at three generations.[97] This is true for both the individual or family and for the congregation or other organizations. For organizations, a generation can be viewed in the context of periods of phases.

Several generations must be considered when evaluating a family. It is essential that issues which originated in previous generations be understood. This is one of the major keys to understanding the present. "The past is always present in the present."[98] Seeking to know oneself means looking carefully at both of one's parents and one's grandparents and as far back as possible. The family in which one is reared is the family of origin. One generally works back one or two generations and ahead to one's children and their children. If a congregation wishes to understand its current situation, it must look at the entire history, the previous generations within the church, and what was

---

[96] Bridgebuilders Workshop, Austin, Texas, "Bridgebuilders Handout" (Austin, 2002), mimeographed.

[97] Monica McGoldrick, M.S.W. and Randy Gerson, Ph.D., *Genograms in Family Assessment* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), 1.

[98] Edwin H. Friedman, "Family Systems in the Church and Synagogue" Seminar Notes Taken by Author, Faith Lutheran Church, Austin, TX, 1990.

brought into the church through those individuals.[99] Each of these pieces of the puzzle

makes up the congregation. Each has an influence on the other parts of the system of the

congregation.

For the nuclear family the parents and grandparents are not the only ones who

influence people. Cousins, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and all others with

whom the family is connected have an impact on that family system. Likewise for the

congregation, the relationships that people had within the church at different points in its

history are vital. In effect, the consultant becomes an investigator, collecting as much

information as possible, putting together a picture. Like the slinky, where there is not just

the first ring or first two rings but a host of other rings that influence the first one, there

are many influences in an organization beyond what might be readily apparent.

Genograms: The Relationship Map

One of the ways to map family or congregational history is through genograms.

"A genogram is a format for drawing a family tree that records information about family

members and their relationships over at least three generations."[100]

Genograms enable an individual to investigate his or her family of origin.[101] The

family of origin is the family in which one was raised. It is a person's history.

Investigating that history is being about the work of creation. A look at the past allows a

person to create an intentional future.

A genogram allows a pastor, or anyone else, to see a picture and visualize the

system in which he is working. Normally, the family of origin is charted with the great

---

[99] Peter Steinke (conference).
[100] McGoldrick and Gerson, 33.
[101] Ibid.

grandparents' generation and all subsequent generations. Relationships are charted, not just the information of who lived and died and to whom they were married. The greatest advantage of a family genogram is the pattern that may be seen. Themes in the family become more pronounced and visually accessible.

Genograms[102] give an indication, in picture form, of how a person relates to others. One of the most helpful aspects of the genogram is that one focuses on the whole, not just a part of the system. Other structures have allowed for the whole being larger and more important than the sum of all parts. Systems Theory espouses the idea that the whole is not just the total person but instead the total family or system context. In a very real sense a person gets the big picture and the context of his or her existence and position.

"When we focus on a symptom, we are preoccupied with its cause or relief. At the same time we are not attentive to the systems, the structure, patterns, and processes behind the symptom."[103] Genograms have a helping capacity. Transgenerational focus is the Bowen Family Theory way to focus on conflicts and to see the entire picture. One finds, as one seeks family information or congregational history, that the seeking of information can be just as therapeutic as receiving the information. According to Steinke, "extending its application to larger, more complex systems such as businesses, schools, and churches presents a worthwhile challenge."[104]

The activity of making and looking at the genogram reaffirms the importance of process. Systems work is a process. A first step in charting the congregation's genogram

---

[102] An example of a genogram may be viewed in Appendix E.
[103] Peter Steinke, Church Family Works, 114.
[104] Peter Steinke, interview by author, December 28, 2007.

would be the creation of a time line which would include the following items according to Steinke[105]:

1. Predecessor Organization – What group(s), if any, contributed to the start of this church? What groups still influence it?

2. Style of Incorporation – How have new members become integrated into the life of the congregation? Has it always been easy for new members to join? What are the obstacles to full participation? How do new members become aware of the culture, history, mission and opportunities for involvement in the congregation?

3. Style of grief/recovery from loss of members – How has/does this parish process loss of staff or members? What rituals are followed? Are exit interviews utilized?

4. Strengths – What are the strengths of this congregation in various time periods? What clear patterns of health and vitality have been part of this congregation?

5. Mission Focus - How clear has the mission focus been? How has the mission changed?

6. Financial History - When were the stable times? When were the challenging times? Has any group or individual attempted to hold the congregation hostage financially? What values does the use of money reveal? What tends to be under-funded in this parish? How openly are financial matters discussed?

---

[105] Ibid.

7. Major Conflicts - What major conflicts have this congregation wrestled with? Which have been resolved successfully? Which remain active? What has the congregation's style of conflict management tended to be (avoidant, polarization, win/lose, etc.)? What "battle wounds" are still seeking revenge?

8. Suffering - What is the history of suffering in this congregation? How do members express their pain? How does healing and reconciliation happen?

9. Decision making - What model of decision making has prevailed? (leader/follower; collaborative; divide and conquer, etc.) What is the pattern for gaining input into decisions? How consistently are decisions tied to the larger mission?

10. Information Exchange – What are the vehicles for communication? How clear are members about what is going on? Was there a time when communication seemed to be better?

11. Overfunctioning/Underfunctioning – What are the patterns of over and under functioning on the part of those responsible for doing the work of the congregation?

12. Functional Power Structure - How are changes made? What major changes, if any, have occurred over time? Why and how were these changes made? How has pastoral authority been expressed/related to? Does contributing more money automatically translate into having more influence in the congregation? Does belonging to a particular group,

family or era afford someone more functional power? Who are unintentionally disenfranchised in the congregation?

13. Expressing Nurture - How has this church provided nurture for its members? Do some subgroups feel more nurtured than others? How are volunteers supported? How is the leadership equipped to do its job?

14. Having Fun Together - How has/how does this church experience shared recreation? What forms of play are encouraged?

15. The 'Good Old Days' – When were they and what made them such?

16. Traumatic events - Clergy misconduct, embezzlement, loss of property, tragic deaths, when did they occur? How were they responded to? What influence(s) do they still have on the life of a parish?

17. Patterns of Unhealth – Secrets, triangles, blaming, diagnosing, scapegoating, etc. What is the history of this church's favorite bad habits?

Yet another way to chart the congregation or other System is to use a modified genogram, in a congregational setting, which visualizes the way that the leadership functions with each other. In a typical medium-sized church, the pastor often functions as the "Dad" and the lay leadership functions as the "Mom." The relationships between them, such as how well they function together or how they make decisions, can then be more readily seen. Repeated behaviors, over time, which become embedded the congregational (or family) history comes to light when the genogram is connected to a time line. These behaviors, often reacting to events, people, and situations, become "triggers" of reactivity to individual or system wide issues, often underlying ones. Such patterns are repetitive and self-defeating. New pastors and new members walk into a

church totally unaware of the congregation's "triggers," as well as their own.

One of the questions that could be asked is, "When one thing changed, what influence did it have on the rest of the congregation?" When a large change took place in the life of a family or congregation, ask the question "Why now?" instead of "Why?" Using the genograms to asses these questions and triggers would help to reduce reactivity and anxiety, allowing the participants to focus their energy on positive conflict resolution.

Emotional Triangle

An emotional triangle[106] is formed by three persons or issues. The basic law of emotional triangles states that when any two persons in a system (a dyad) become uncomfortable with each other, they will triangulate or focus on a third person or issue to release anxiety. This allows the relationship to stabilize. When anxiety or tension increases in a relationship, the "more comfortable" person will move to reduce anxiety by attempting to bring a third person into the situation. (Kerr, 1981)[107] When two people are very close they form a coalition against the third. A person is "triangled" if he or she is caught in the middle. The anxiety of the relationship is focused on that third person to lower the anxiety level in the other two. This allows anxiety to be shifted around the system, rather than addressed or released. The triangulation process reduces the possibility that one side of the relationship will become emotionally overwhelmed by shifting all of the anxiety to the other side of the relationship.[108] There has to be a place where two people can go to release anxiety. That place is communication and honesty.

---

[106] More information regarding emotional triangles may be found in Appendix I.
[107] Kerr, 1981.
[108] Ibid.

Who, then, is most likely to be triangulated? It is the most vulnerable or responsible individual in the system. The weak link usually catches the weight of the relationship of others, such as the youngest child or a sick person. This process can happen to anyone in any situation. Triangulation can be formed by either three people or by issues. The key to unhealthy triangles is anxiety and discomfort. The process is a natural gravitation to release tension or anxiety. How does one stay detriangulated? It involves the "use of casual comments, humor or reversals," although Bowen points out that "once triangled, or emotionally involved, a therapist's use of humor will come across as sarcastic and mean."[109]

The Identified Patient

There is often a tendency to label one family member, whether it be in an individual family or a church family, as the "sick" person. The person is referred to as the identified patient. This means that he or she is labeled as the one who needs to change when, in fact, the system might need to change. Friedman says the identified patient is not necessarily "the sick one but the one in whom the family stress or pathology has surfaced."[110] It is interesting that the ramifications for assessing health in either a congregational family or other relationship families is that one need not only work with the identified patient, but instead can work with any individual in the system. When any portion of the system changes or any one individual within the system changes, the structure, the system, will change.

The family, the congregation, the system is made up of more than just one person who needs help. When anxiety is in the system and it is not coming from just one person,

---

[109] http://www.dreamworld.org/sfc/a clinical application of bowen.htm.
[110] Friedman, *Generation*, 19.

the system is extremely upset. One cannot merely look at the system and fix a person. In actuality, what usually happens is that one person is called the identified patient or the scapegoat and the rest hope and pray that he or she will change so that they do not have to change.

Homeostasis

"Homeostasis literally means to stand in the same place. Homeostasis is opposed to change. It denies that tension and change are part of life."[111] Each system seeks homeostasis. As there is a change in one member of the system, there is also the attempt to get the person to change back so as not to upset the life of the system. This means that "one should not expect medals when he/she tried to change self, a relationship, procedure, policies, programs, etc."[112] As issues provoke anxiety and sometimes linger, efforts to compromise are shunned. This takes place because the issues under dispute are really not the issues that have caused the turmoil. The question then arises, "What is the process involved in the relationship as opposed to what 'caused' the issue?" Process is much more important than content. How people respond to one another is far more important than what seems to be the issue.

It Is What's Underneath That Counts

Often people rely on what is seen at the surface only to be surprised when something crawls out of the water. "Keep looking below surface appearances. Don't avoid doing so just because you might not like what you find," states Colin Powell.[113]

According to Systems Theory, one needs to look at not just what is happening on

---

[111] Peter Steinke, Bridgebuilders Workbook, 5.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Colin Powell, *Leadership Excellence,* Vol. 23, No. 6 (June 2006).

the surface, but also what is going on underneath the situation. Homeostasis is a very powerful force that strives for sameness at high cost. Relationships strive for balance. If it is at all possible, balance and sameness are what most families strive to achieve, sometimes at all costs.

"Family systems thinking locates a family's conflicts in the nature of the system rather than in the nature of its parts."[114] This means that any system will strive to keep a balance. That balance will allow the system to continue. Often that which goes into the keeping of the balance is destructive. When imbalance occurs, it is an attempt to bring the system back to homeostasis."[115]

The individual personalities are not as important as the balance of the system. Relationships are to be conducted in a manner to foster community. The ramifications of obtaining balance in the congregation are profound, just as they are for the nuclear family. "Like an organism, an organization must adapt to disturbances and conflicts to its balance."[116] The ability for the organization or congregation to "adapt" explains how a perpetual destructive behavior functioning under the service can promote a sense of balance. The behavior may be unattractive, feel terrible and be very unhealthy, but the consistency and familiarity help to maintain balance for the members of the group. In those situations, the perceived sense of balance overrides the health that could be obtained by disturbing the status quo.

When conflicts arise it might be helpful for the pastor to ask the congregation or the family not only "why" symptoms have surfaced, but "why now"? What has caused

---

[114] Friedman, *Generation*, 23.
[115] Friedman, *Generation* 24.
[116] Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations* (Herndon: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1996), 16, 19.

the imbalance? Homeostasis, then, is the "fundamental drive of a family to stay in balance."[117] Questions that might be considered are:

1. What are some of the issues that have kept things the same? What stops things from changing? What has caused things to change?

2. How did Jesus deal with those who were resistant to change?

3. What happened when Jesus would upset the homeostasis of the established group?

4. In the present congregation or family, what keeps things balanced? and finally,

5. In the present congregation or family, what is the path to growth?

Differentiation of Self

Each of us has a position on the playing field. We all fit somewhere in that arena. How we relate to those around us on that field is of utmost importance. Karl Galic, a family therapist, LCMS parish pastor and consultant, and student of Family Systems, stated that "It is very hard to be who we are, because it doesn't seem to be what anyone wants."[118]

The issues of self-differentiation, critical to systems thinking, address the ubiquitous tension, "How can we be ourselves and form colonies?"[119] How can one stay connected to someone without losing himself in the relationship? How can one share and minister to someone without taking ownership of their problem? How does a person keep from getting fused with others and lose their individuality and goals?

---

[117] "Alliance: Pastors and Lay Leaders," *Leadership Magazine* (Fall Quarter 1989), 111.

[118] Karl Galic, interview by author, Austin, TX 1997.

[119] Friedman, Draft "Bowen Theory and Therapy," 45.

Self-differentiation is not the same as being an individual or being independent. It has far greater significance. Bowen's view of normal family functioning is that of a clear differentiation of self. Friedman gives this definition of differentiation, "Differentiation is the life long process of striving to keep one's being in balance through the reciprocal external and internal processes of self-definition and self-regulation."[120] Friedman also gives a practical definition which is similar,

> Differentiation means the capacity of a family member to define his or her own life's goal and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures, to say 'I' when others are demanding 'you' and 'we.' It includes the capacity to maintain a (relatively) non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems, to take maximum responsibility for one's own destiny and emotional being.[121]

Ronald W. Richardson, retired pastor and Systems Theory author, defines differentiation of self as an "ability to be closely connected with just about anyone we choose and still be self, still maintain a sense of one's own functional autonomy within the close relationship."[122] Dr. Froma Walsh, Professor in the School of Social Service Administration and Department of Psychiatry at the University of Chicago, notes that "differentiation involves an emotional balance and intellectual balance."[123] Bowen points out "that no person who is poorly differentiated has the capacity for autonomous functioning."[124] The two major forces of "being separate" and "being connected" are very challenging to maintain at the same time. Self differentiation is:

---

[120] Friedman, Draft "Bowen Theory and Therapy," 16.
[121] Friedman, *Generation,* 27.
[122] Ronald W. Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor,* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 56.
[123] Froma Walsh, *Normal Family Processes,* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1982), 27.
[124] Kerr and Bowen, 69.

1. Defining yourself and staying in touch with others;
2. Being responsible for yourself and responsive to others;
3. Maintaining your integrity and well-being without intruding on that of others;
4. Allowing the enhancement of the other's integrity and well being without feeling abandoned, inferior, or less of a self; and
5. Having an 'I' and entering a relationship with another 'I' without losing yourself or diminishing the self of the other. [125]

Friedman offers a number of characteristics of the self-differentiated person:

1. Has the capacity to set/define limits;
2. Has the capacity to think/feel for oneself;
3. Is responsible for one's own destiny;
4. Shows resiliency through a full repertoire of responses;
5. Allows time for process;
6. Has a well defined belief system;
7. Is often clear in his/her thinking (objective vs. reactive); and
8. Stays separate but remains in touch.[126]

Galic coupled the ideas of self-differentiation and being grace defined. In essence

he suggests that the two might be interchangeable. Some of his ideas are as follows:

1. A self-differentiated leader leads by defining his/her goals and visions while staying in touch with the needs of the followers.
2. A grace defined pastor loves the people he serves and knows that he cannot (and should not) take on their anxieties.
3. A self-differentiated father explains to his children what he believes while allowing them to search and question for themselves.
4. A grace defined mom loves her children dearly and realizes that her responsibility is to equip her children to be independent.
5. A well differentiated boss manages a crisis by allowing time for emotional processes to unfold and not seeking quick fix, rubber stamp solutions.
6. A grace defined congregation knows that it is part of the Body of Christ on earth and recognizes its specific mission where God has planted it.
7. Self-differentiation means being separate together or being connected selves.[127]

---

[125] Ibid.

[126] Peter Steinke, Bridgebuilder Conference, Austin, TX., 2002.

[127] Karl Galic, interview by author, Austin, TX., 2000.

Relationships that are fused demand that one person think, feel, or act exactly the same as the other person.[128] When couples are fused, one often speaks for the other. They likewise will have few individual positions.[129] In the couple, one of the persons is often highly reactive to change in the partner. The system is described as "too richly cross joined."[130] Melody Beattie in *Codependent No More*, describes too much attachment as "becoming overly-involved, sometimes hopelessly entangled."[131]

At the other end of the spectrum, the primary drawback in being cut off is that fewer opportunities then exist for growth through energy-enhancing communication. It is easy to separate from another person or an entire group. The church as a system must recognize this and work diligently to accomplish two things in this area. The first is that health begins with communication. Communication equals energy. When energy is added to the system it normally functions in a more productive manner. The boundaries of each person must be porous enough to allow others to get inside to a certain degree. The second is that the thoughts and opinions of others must be respected, and their ideas and lives should be responded to in a calm and non-reactive manner. Bowen believes that a "non-anxious presence" is called for in life as a therapist or in any situation. This means that being able to maintain one's base and identity while being in an anxious situation takes much strength and peace. The author believes that peace ultimately comes from God. It allows others to know that, no matter what the situation, one will not be

---

[128] Peter L. Steinke, "The Congregation as an Emotional System," *New Creation* Vol. 5 No. 1, (2002).

[129] Neil S. Jacobson and Alan S. Gurman, ed. *Clinical Handbook of Marital Therapy* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1986), 75.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Melody Beattie, *Codependent No More* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1987), 52.

drawn into reacting.

Bowen suggests that as one looks at how a system functions, "a key variable in the degree to which any family can change fundamentally is the amount of self-differentiation that existed in previous generations in the extended families of both partners."[132] This applies to any system. It applies to nuclear families as well as congregational families. Does one have the inner strength to be attached and yet to be separate? Can one belong and yet remain apart from the group?

The four groups of self-differentiation[133] point out that the range is from emotional "cut-off" to emotional "fusion." The more "normal" and healthy a person is, the more separateness and closeness are close to the middle, which are the counterbalancing forces of life. The greatest conflicts come when one is stuck at either end of the spectrum.

The goal of therapy is maturation, or more formally, self-differentiation, which allows a person to have a separate identity and yet be connected to the colony. Some people can keep connected at the cost of the relationship. Others err 180 degrees by losing self but being over connected. With many individuals the issue is "deselfing." The issue is not too much self. Today, the word "self" is used the same way the medieval world used the word "heart" and the people in Jesus' day used the word "soul." It is the basis of life, where persona resides.

One aspect of differentiation in Systems Theory is that which Friedman spoke of in one of his writings (it was actually Bowen who originally exposed this idea).

> Differentiation means the capacity of a family member to define
> his or her own life's goal and values apart from surrounding
> togetherness pressures, to say 'I' when others are demanding

---

[132] Friedman, *Generation,* 27.
[133] Additional information regarding self-differentiation may be found in Appendix F.

'you' and 'we.' It includes the capacity to maintain a (relatively) non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems, to take maximum responsibility for one's own destiny and emotional being.[134]

There Are Limits

According to Steinke, an undifferentiated cell is called cancer[135]. When one does not have the ability to regulate oneself in life form, death is the result. Cancer cells do not know where they end and hence glob with other cells, taking them over. Undifferentiated people act as cancer agents. Boundaries are critical. Knowing where "I" begins and ends is critical in knowing oneself and relating to others.

There are extreme cases when one is fused with another, and very few independent stances are taken. There are few boundaries, if any. The circle erected as the boundary is very porous.

Some boundaries are often easy to see and label. A fence, as well as a rope, to keep waiting people in a straight line, is an easy boundary to see and label. People often plant hedges to separate their property from the neighbors. "A boundary is your personal 'property line.'"[136] The boundary marks the property, helping to "let your yes be yes and your no be no."[137] No one has the right to come onto or invade or take control of it without permission.

The very same holds true for one as a person. ". . . Boundaries help define who we are in our relationships."[138] Proverbs, in chapter 4, states "guard our hearts."[139]

---

[134] Friedman, *Generation,* 27.

[135] Dr. Peter Steinke of Austin, Texas interview by author, 23 October 2005, Austin, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church.

[136] Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries: Face to Face* (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2003).

[137] Matthew 5:37 (NIV).

[138] Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries: Face to Face.*

Connected to the heart and the soul of a person is the concept that if a person does not have the mind and the heart and the soul connected it is not possible to take that relationship outside of that person in a healthy manner. To be connected to others means that one needs to be connected inside.

Language is critical when describing boundaries. "I" language is vital. Does one have the ability to define oneself using "I" language? What is meant by "I" language is not the ability to use a certain pronoun, but to describe oneself as being separate from others.

A person can use the pronoun "I" and yet still be speaking of others. If one were to say, "You intimidate me," it puts the responsibility for the boundary with the other person. Instead one could say, "When you behave in that way, because I am who I am, my reaction to you was to be intimidated."

"When I Feel Responsible for Others,"[140] or stated another way when one feels responsible for another's emotional well being, phrases these ideas differently, telling the story of a person who takes responsibility for others without necessarily having the power to change them. According to Systems Theory, change comes through the power of the system, not from the outside. One can take responsibility for others and their actions only to set oneself up for disaster.

Additionally, relationships have a freeing aspect. One is not responsible for others but instead to others out of his or her own accord. The very last sentence sums up the column: "I can trust and let go." Biblically, this fits well into the theology of

---

[139] Prov. 4:23 (NIV).
[140] Appendix G.

68

Christian faith. If one wishes to gain eternal life, one needs to lose one's life,[141] letting go

of that which binds and inhibits the work of the Holy Spirit, and releasing the binding

factors of manipulating others. Pastors are to take responsibility for themselves, not for

others. The assisting of others in their faith walk is closer to what the Lord did for those

who walked this earth with Him. He did not take responsibility for others' actions; He

instead helped them to make their own decisions.

Our differentiation of self empowers technique. Friedman once stated that a well-

differentiated person is able to lead well because he or she has the entire system in mind,

while the charismatic leader is too dependent on his function. He or she is unable to

separate himself from the position which he or she holds.[142]

"The concepts of differentiation which are included in Systems Theory are not to

be confused with such similar ideas as individualization and independence along with

autonomy."[143] The author states that differentiation has less to do with a person's actions

than with one's emotional being. It also has to do with one's existence and integrity.

Jesus was and is a "self-differentiated person." The following are biblical

examples of the concept of differentiation in practice.[144]

> Concept: The capacity to define His life's goals and values apart from
> surrounding togetherness pressures.
>
> Example:
>   Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up,
>   left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.
>   Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they
>   found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

---

[141] Mark 8:34-36 (NIV)
[142] Edwin H. Friedman, "Family Systems in the Church and Synagogue" Seminar
Notes Taken by Author, Faith Lutheran Church, Austin, TX, 1990.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."[145]

Concept: Capacity to define His own life's goals and values.

Example:

Then he called the crowd to him along with the disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"[146]

Concept: Capacity to maintain a (relatively) non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems.

Example:

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them, they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into the pit."[147]

Example:

"Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.[148]

Example:

"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I

---

[145] Mark 1:35-38 (NIV).
[146] Mark 8:34-36 (NIV).
[147] Matt. 15:1-2, 12-14 (NIV).
[148] Mark 15:2 (NIV).

have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."[149]

Concept: The capacity to be an 'I' while remaining connected.

Example:

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?' But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"[150]

Concept: Jesus teaches others to be self-differentiated.

Example:

Jesus said, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you lave that town. And if anyone will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."[151]

With Jesus there was a definite attempt by the leaders of His day to sabotage His ministry. There was an attempt to put Him away for being different and being a leader. Jesus' attempt to differentiate was met with huge amounts of resistance. The sabotage by the rulers of the religious establishment was not just to do away with an individual who spoke a message different from theirs. It was their way to negate the threat that was posed by His leadership.

What was highly disturbing to those in control in the hierarchy of the religious

---

[149] John 19:10-14a (NIV).
[150] Mark 11:15-17 (NIV).
[151] Mark 6:10-11 (NIV).

establishment was that Jesus' way of defining Himself was not over and against them. He told them who He was. Because of that the Pharisees and the Elders felt the most threatened. It is difficult to fight a person or entity that will not fight back but instead moves in his own direction with conviction. A close look at what Jesus did, not just what He said, reveals the true threat to the organized religious establishment of His day. Differentiation and leadership were the keys, leadership even to the cross - the irony of Christianity.

Bowen developed a scale whereby an individual can help determine his or her new position to others in terms of differentiation[152]. One of the major goals of "family of origin" work is to be able to identify and to pursue an "I" stance: to have what one wants in life and to be able to live in continuity with one's beliefs while maintaining a close relationship with others. The challenge for the pastor is to take what he believes and allow that to motivate him and be the guiding force on his journey. It is easy to be with others in a congregation when they want what the pastor wants. At the other extreme, it is more difficult and takes more integrity to set boundaries and to be self-differentiated in the midst of a hostile congregation. In the end it means that the pastor as the chief spiritual leader in the congregation must not be controlled by the approval or disapproval of those around him or those who sign his check. Instead, approval for one's actions must be primarily from self and from God, not from others or to others.

In the differentiated self, in this case the pastor, several questions arise: "How well is one able to be oneself around those close to him?" and "How comfortable does one feel in the midst of disagreement?" and "How well is a pastor able to be himself in

---

[152] Appendix H.

72

ministry and in life in general?" Self-differentiation necessarily means taking responsibility. "Objectivity is inversely proportional to reactivity."[153]

The Triune Brain

The late Paul D. MacLean, M.D., Ph.D., formerly of the National Institute for Mental Health in Washington, D.C., has spent a lifetime in research and study of the brain. He postulates a model called the "Triune Brain."[154] With this model he offers some explanation of why people are not in their right mind in the midst of high anxiety and reactivity.

The brain is divided into three parts. "Each of the three parts has its own sense of time and space, and its own memory, motor activity, and other functions."[155] The first part is called the reptilian brain. It is the smallest and is located at the inner bottom of the brain. "Its mechanisms regulate automatic processes such as circulation, respiration, and hormonal balance."[156] This part of the brain is designed for the survival of the organism. Because it is automatic, one acts in this mode without "thinking." In effect it just happens. Its decisions are an effort to get us out of danger, to make existence more comfortable.

The next part is the mammalian brain. This part of the brain controls the emotional response of the individual. "This brain regulates behaviors that include playing, nurturing, flocking, defining territory, mass migration, hunting, hoarding,

---

[153] Friedman, Bowen Theory and Therapy, 47.
[154] Paul D. MacLean, M.D., "Expanding Lifestyle Learning," New Horizons for Leaning [Internet]; available from http://www.newhorizons.org/future/Creating_the_Future/crfut_maclean.html.; accessed 9 June 2005.
[155] Peter Steinke, Church Family Works, 14, 15.
[156] Peter Steinke, Church Family Works, 16.

bonding, as well as emotive expressions, such as shock and sorrow, repugnance and rejoicing."[157] This part of the brain is responsible for being the go-between, helping to keep a balance between such things as "pleasure-pain, tension-relaxation, and fight-flight."[158] These first two parts of the human brain make up about 15% of the brain mass. They are involved with involuntary responses. They are not inventive or adaptive. They take care of the major functions of the body in a mechanical fashion.

Illustration 2

A Schematic Cross Section of the Human Brain
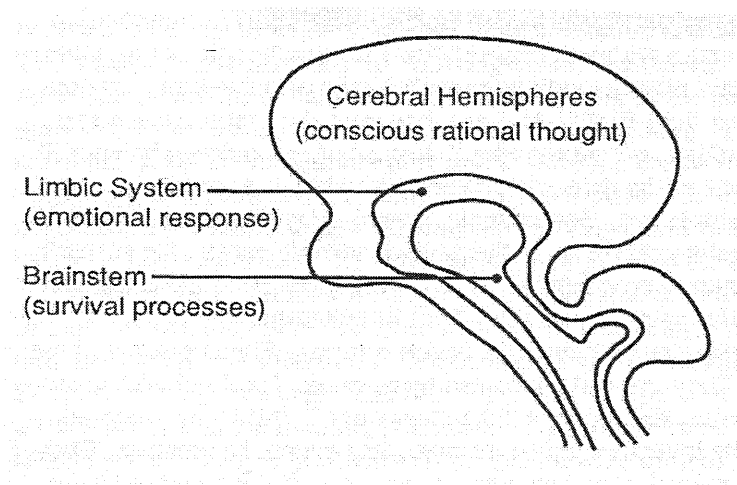
Source: Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works:* 1993 (Herndon: The Alban Institute, 1993), 15.

The third part of the brain, which is also the largest, is called the neocortex or the cerebral hemisphere. It encompasses about 85% of the brain. "The supreme tier processes concepts, symbols, and insights. It is associated with voluntary movements."[159]

The Right Brain for Right Decisions

A vital ingredient in the emotive process is that of reacting or responding. The

---

[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

first two parts of the brain would put a person in the reactive mode, where the person is made to do things - as opposed to actively making choices - because they are not thinking with their neo-cortex. When anxiety is present, the involuntary actions of the first two parts of the brain almost always overwhelm the voluntary responses of the brain. The neocortex is paralyzed during this time unless one can label the anxiety and have the neocortex take control of the situation. That means that one switches from being reactive to being responsive in a calm manner. This is not automatic; it is intentional.

Humans have the capacity to choose. They can either react, by being in the automatic mode of allowing the reptilian and mammalian brain to take over in the face of anxiety, or they can respond, by overriding the automatic system and acting intentionally.

When anxiety is present and it evokes a reaction on the part of another, the first party in turns reacts to that. The cycle is in effect. What the individuals are left with is rigidity and polarity that causes division. Anxiety does not have to cause reactivity. Individuals have choices. No one makes an individual do or be something. There need be no division or polarity in relationships. According to Steinke, "A 'saint' is someone who has managed to move from the reptilian and mammalian brain and is living primarily in the new brain."[160]

Just Calm Down

While possibly unable to eliminate anxiety entirely, the clergy leader should strive to be a non-anxious presence, or less anxious presence[161]. ". . . The capacity of members of the clergy to contain their own anxiety regarding congregational matters, both those related to them, as well as those where they become the identified focus, may

---

[160] Peter Steinke, Church Family Works, 16.
[161] Richardson, Creating a Healthier Church, 173.

be the most significant capability in their arsenal."[162]   The non-anxious presence comes

out clearly in two ways, Friedman says. The first is the seriousness with which some

people approach conflicts. The actual solution to a challenge or problem lies more in the

process than in the content. The way in which a pastor or the congregation looks at the

problem is often more important than some of the contributing surface issues. Anxiety is

bound in so many instances because of the seriousness of both parties. When playfulness

can be interjected, the outcome is more often positive. The second part of the non-

anxious presence by the clergy for the aid of the congregation has to do with the

following quote by Friedman. "The capacity of clergy to be paradoxical, challenging

(rather than saving), earthy, sometimes crazy, and even 'devilish,' often can do more to

loosen knots in a congregational relationship system than the most well-meaning 'serious

efforts.'"[163] When one finds oneself in an environment that is hostile, one can make a

decision to be either responsive or reactive. One can reduce the anxiety in the system by

opening up the secrets and the seriousness of the situation. How one functions is more a

product of perception and being than of specific answers and solutions. When a pastor

does not react, but instead helps the congregation define the nature of the challenge, the

natural resources of the congregation or system will resurface.

One of the key issues related to the ability of the leader to remain calm in the face

of anxiety is that of sabotage. The level of anxiety is raised tremendously when sabotage

is present. "The capacity to recognize sabotage and deal with it, and the ability to keep

one's self separate and not get caught up in the anxiety, is far more significant than skin

---

[162] Friedman, *Generation,* 208.
[163] Friedman, *Generation,* 209.

color and religious or economic class."[164] Friedman noted the reason for strife between individuals and groups, "It gets down to this. The social sciences have become humanity's defense against itself. It enables us to look at data that is really not important."[165] This allows society to sabotage accountability by putting focus on data and blame while taking little or no responsibility for personal behavior.

It's All In The Head

The head of any entity, be it a nuclear family or a congregation, would do well to exhibit the non-anxious presence in order to lead favorably. Leadership has to do inherently with a part of the organism that is basic to life, the head. Leadership is not necessarily showing others how to do a given task or the way to certain feelings. Leadership instead tells, shows and conveys models for the entire structure. Leadership in a non-anxious system allows for the entire system to function to the best of its ability. Each person has a particular position.

A biblical example of this is Christ as He dealt with those around Him in a non-anxious way. He was not training them to be the head of the church; instead, He was allowing them to see how the head acts.

How does clergy and laity function? They can either be differentiated or undifferentiated.[166] When a leader functions in a well defined and well differentiated way it encourages others to act in the same way. The key to leadership is not how a leader manages others but instead how a leader manages him or herself. "Self-defined

---

[164] Edwin H. Friedman, "Family Systems in the Church and Synagogue" Seminar, Faith Lutheran Church, Austin, TX, 1990.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Wade Hodges, "Functional Range- Page 97ff" *Healthy Congregation* [Internet]; available from http://www.wadehodges.com/booksummaries/healthycongregations.htm; accessed 12 September 2006.

leadership is the capacity to define oneself, to regulate one's actions to others, and to increase one's threshold for pain while learning to enjoy the pinch and challenge of change."[167] When the leader takes responsibility for his actions instead of blaming, it promotes health. Friedman said that many leaders have a failure of nerves. In a highly anxious family or congregation, no one can take a stand, because if one does try to take a stand, the togetherness forces overcome the stand immediately. If the father or the pastor tries to take a stand, the other members of the family or congregation will automatically de-self the father or pastor. That happens when others try to guilt the father or pastor, the one attempting to self-differentiate, into fusing to be comfortable. The path of least resistance is through fusing[168], where one unites with the views of the majority and loses part of his or her identity rather than standing apart from the family structure through self-differentiation. One need not be concerned about feeling awkward. One feels the same as the others do.

Leadership Within Systems Theory

The primary job of a leader, because of his position, is to create an emotional environment of calmness and low anxiety. The only way to achieve this type of leadership is to have leaders who are not automatically reactive. This is closely tied to differentiation. To move ahead as a leader one must learn how to deal with sabotage and how not to panic but instead to remain non-anxious, or at least have low anxiety, and yet remain present. It is very difficult to remain non-anxious and yet present. It is very difficult to remain vulnerable as a leader. When those in the system see that the leader will not change as he or she sets the direction, the system changes. Often times the

---

[167] Doug Hester (rdhester@earthlink.net) personal email to author, summer 2006.
[168] Ibid.

leaders or other members of the system become too anxious for issues to remain unresolved for a long period of time. Anxious systems want a quick fix. Very often they do not allow time for growth to occur. Growth often takes place at the end of the journey or growth cycle as in plants and flowers. Spring growth comes after the harsh winter.

Leaders would do well to remember that anxiety can be dealt with well if the anxiety is not collected by the leader. Triangles can be diffused if the anxiety is returned to the person who is creating it. If a leader can regulate his own reactions, and not take on the anxiety of the system, he or she has an opportunity to lead well and be effective. Maturity in a leader equals being able to self regulate in the face of reactivity.

The extent to which a leader or any other person can remain in the system in the face of an entire range of sabotage will dictate whether a shift in the entire system will take place. Non-anxious leaders facilitate shifts and changes in systems. Leaders would do well to give anxiety back to others, that is, to backwash anxiety. One cannot be an effective leader when he or she is focused only on the pain of others. When leaders make decisions others will inevitably be bothered by them. Making decisions and taking positions does mean that others have choices.

Someone in the system has to have the ability to regulate the anxiety if the stem is to be healthy. Emotionality has to be put in check. Leadership necessarily means objectivity and clarity, with sensitivity to others. Leadership defines what it will allow and what it will not allow. There is no vision without a head; there is only the reptilian part of the brain. The reactivity is then paramount.

"Developing greater clarity about our own symptoms of anxiety and how we live them out within the system is critical to being more objective about the larger

situation."[169] One can test the nerves or ability to lead as a non-anxious person by asking questions. Is the leader willing to stay in there and be non-anxious? Is the person willing to hear the call to lead and heed it, or to have a vision and to live that vision as a leader? A leader's excessive reaction to the issues of the congregation or group inhibits successful resolution to the crisis.

Loneliness

Congregational leaders are connected to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the calling of the Holy Spirit. They have been given a special place through which their ministry is performed. Leadership must also take into consideration that even as part of God's family, loneliness can be expected. Leaders are lonely. Support groups for clergy are not necessarily very effective, for loneliness comes with the territory. If one cannot stand for the loneliness then one might want to think of doing something else.

Jesus knew loneliness as a leader. The Garden of Gethsemane[170] reiterated that. There are no religious leaders who have received their "calls" in a crowd. That takes place in the individual. God and His Word are the clergy's source of strength as he or she leads. It is also God who has called him into ministry and leadership. All leaders experience loneliness. No one else can see the picture like the leader – from the top. One can listen to people to get their perspective and that is helpful. What remains is that the leader is alone.

Leadership – The Key to Managing Conflict

---

[169] Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*, 174.

[170] Luke 22:39-44 (NIV).

The leadership of Jesus in the church and in individual lives is critical.

Leadership from a system's view is critical, as well. Bowen described the qualities of a

leader in "An Odyssey Toward Science" in the epilogue he wrote for *Family Evaluation*

by Michael Kerr. A leader is one:

> With the courage to define self, who is as invested in the welfare
> of the family as in self, who is neither angry nor dogmatic,
> whose energy goes to changing self rather than telling others
> what they should do, who can know and respect the multiple
> opinions of others, who can modify self in response to the
> strengths of the group and who is not influenced by the
> irresponsible opinions of others.[171]

Richardson, in *Creating a Healthier Church,* stated that the level of one's own

differentiation helps tremendously in living of that hope and assurance. "This process of

realizing one's own salvation by God, of more actively being a member of Christ's body

in the world, is vastly strengthened by one's ability to be a more differentiated self."[172]

Richardson goes on to share that even with the right beliefs, those who fail to be well

differentiated "will not be able to act consistently on our beliefs."[173] Richardson notes

that Bowen, a non-religious man, used the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, as well as the

example of Jesus Christ to define differentiation.

> A major quality in the differentiation of self is complete
> selflessness in which 'doing for others' replaces selfish personal
> goals. Jesus Christ has been a model of total selflessness....A
> well differentiated self has to get beyond the selfish promotion of
> itself. One has always to be aware of 'the other.[174]

Steinke shared some similar thoughts concerning leadership.

Leaders can be the 'salvation' of a congregation. Well

---

[171] An Odyssey Toward Science; quoted in Leadership
[172] Richardson, Creating a Healthier Church, 182.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

differentiated, they respond with a wise repertoire of responses. They give the congregation 'wise blood,' wisdom derived from countless conflicts to the church's integrity. Leaders can be the 'ruin' too – if they do not resist alien forces, if they overreact."[175]

Without leadership any organization will coast, at best, and will most likely flounder. Jesus exhibited leadership which allowed his followers to know not only who He was but who they were in relation to Him. Leadership is not only about showing others how to be leaders but, more specifically, communicating to others how they fit into the organization. The responsibility for moving an organization forward rests with both the leadership and the organization in general. The organization needs to have a culture of support for ministry and leadership. Leaders need to able to show the organization the way. This means that they necessarily need to have the ability to see what is actually happening. Leaders need to be in tune to the reality of the organization, the church, in order to be able to lead with different options. In a very real sense the leader needs to be outside of the organization in order to be able to see the organization for what it is and yet the leader needs to be connected at the same time.

Leadership has to do with a vision for the organization and a way to empower the members of the organization and trust that people will do what is right. A leader communicates well and participates with the other members of the organization even as he or she delegates. Jesus was such a leader.

Secrets

Communication is the lifeblood of the system. Secrets are blocks. For the system, secrets are a major enemy. However, when one changes the covert, hidden and secret, to overt and open, the system is empowered. Jesus came to reveal the truth, not to

---

[175] Peter Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 99.

hide it or keep it hidden.

Most systems carry and perpetuate anxiety through family secrets. Secrets separate individuals in a family rather than bringing them together. Anxiety is sometimes unknowingly bound in family secrets. The same holds true for congregational families. When secrets are kept it effectively halts the life giving communication process of ministry. Whether within a board, a staff or a congregation as a whole, if secrets are kept ministry is severely impaired.

Frederick Buechner, as a young man of ten years, lost his father to suicide. Buechner wrote of that time in his life years later and revealed the anguish of that death and the secret that the family kept. The family moved from New Jersey to Bermuda, using distance as a way to keep the secret intact. He tells of those days when nothing was shared concerning the death of his father.

> "Don't talk, don't trust, don't feel is supposed to be the unwritten law of families that for one reason or another have gone out of whack, and certainly it was our law. We never talked about what happened. We didn't trust the world with our secret, hardly even trusted each other with it. And as my ten-year-old self was concerned anyway, the only feeling I can remember from that distant time was the blessed relief of coming out of the dark and unmentionable sadness of my father's life and death into fragrance and greenness and light."[176]

Buechner found light in revealing the secret. He found freshness in life when he did not have to hide the past. Secrets clog communication, the lifeblood of any system.

Secrets exist in a variety of forms. Some secrets are between two people and are considered to be of little harm to others. Some secrets are present where a congregation or family, without conscious effort, has conspired to keep information that is important to the system locked in a position not readily available to many. Another type of secret in

---

[176] George Conner, ed., Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 41.

the family system is where an opinion or perception is accepted at face value and not verified.

All that one works with, all of one's impressions, feelings and thoughts, all that one gains each day, and all that one uses in that same time, is based on information that one has obtained in the system. When that information is incorrect, the individual is working with a secret that will only allow him to relate to the system on a secondary level. Illusions are then reality for the person who does not have the whole truth. Half-truths and secrets have a way of making a person subservient. They have a way of binding an individual to anxiety over which he or she has little control.

Another type of secret tends to create alliances that bind people together and exclude others. Secrets dilute the natural strength of the family. Secrets cause a much higher anxiety level, allowing for few open relationships to form. For a system to be healthy any wound must be dealt with openly. In order for wounds to heal they must first be opened completely and exposed for what they are. Wounds do not heal as well when they are automatically and immediately covered. The healing begins when the open wound is named and dealt with in a mature manner.

Friedman gives a clear picture of the secrets that can occur in the home or church.

One kind of family secret is where member A gives information to member B and asks him not to tell members C-Z. Another type of family secret is where the family without conscious effort has conspired to keep information closeted. A third type of family secret which is less obvious is where opinions or perceptions are accepted at face value and not checked out. A fourth kind of secret exists also, and this might be classified as the unmentionable subject.[177]

An example of the first type of secret is telling Mom something and asking her not to tell

---

[177]Edwin H. Friedman, "Secrets and Systems" Bridgebuilders Workshop, Austin, Texas, (Austin, 2002), mimeographed handout.

Dad. An example of the second type is that someone in the family has done something horrible and yet no one talks about it. An example of the third type is telling a son or daughter that another person in the family is upset with him or her. And the fourth type has an example of mother's son who died at the age of six and the mother not being able to share that with anyone.

Secrets bind and close. Health is restored or given for the first time by opening the family secrets. Secrets within a congregation are almost always kept to control others and to keep power within the hands of a select few. The murmuring that goes on within a congregation can be effectively dealt with by naming the challenge and opening up the wound or exposing a potentially destructive undercurrent. Secrets revealed are secrets deflated and neutralized. Anxiety can then be dissipated, the issue discussed, and solutions found. A natural consequence of exposing secrets is that change may occur in areas that are unrelated to the secret. Openness abounds and the system is changed, never to be the same. It is the existence of a secret, rather than its subject matter, which seems to affect the relationship system.[178]

The church can become ill through secrets. Secret meetings destroy a system. Secret letters and notes bind relationships. Steinke relayed this story.[179] The pastor had conflicts with the congregation, in particular a few members. The anxiety level continued to rise. There were things said behind the backs of others that caused the entire congregational system to be out of balance. The pastor received a unsigned letter asking him to resign. Had the pastor kept the letter a secret he would have been bound in an

---

[178] Ibid.
[179] Bridgebuilders Workshop, Austin, TX, "Bridgebuilders Handout" (Austin 2002), mimeographed.

unhealthy way with the writer and those calling for his dismissal. The murmuring would

not stop. The secret meetings and the secrets would not stop. Upon the advice of

Steinke, the pastor called an open meeting of the congregation and read the letter to get

the secret out in the open and restore open communication, obtaining health. Whether this

incident led to a health level that allowed the congregation to move forward is not known.

What is known is that helped them to move to another issue. It allowed for the pastor,

part of the leadership, to exhibit openness in the community. One solved issue does not

solve the challenges of a congregation, One solved issue after another solved issue along

with others help the congregation to move in a direction of health.

When there are secrets in a system it keeps it in a state of unbalance. When

something just is not right people will guess why it is not. In the author's opinion, more

often than not, people guess wrong when not given all the facts. From the family at home

trying to figure out why there is no cohesiveness, to the church that cannot seem to have

harmony in relationships, secrets cause skewing.

Freidman gives a number of examples of how secrets inhibit free-flowing

communication.

> 1. Secrets put some in the "in" position and others outside of the power in the family system.
> 2. Family secrets create unnecessary estrangements as well as false companionship.
> 3. Perception is distorted through the keeping of family secrets. Only a part of the total picture is given to the individual members and faulty conclusions are often drawn.
> 4. Family secrets exacerbate other pathological conflicts for the anxiety level of the system is held high. Family secrets or system secrets bind a person to a position instead of freeing him to relate freely with those around him.[180]

Friedman states:

---

[180] Ibid.

86

> Family members will say that they kept a secret 'to spare' someone's feelings; the truth is more likely to be that they did so in order to spare their own feelings. Few of us are irreparably hurt by upset. Chronic anxiety, on the other hand, kills.[181]

People can wither away because secrets have bound them through chronic anxiety.

The pain involved with revealing or uncovering a secret is sometimes immense. However, as stated by Friedman, the anxiety is even worse. In the practice of Systems Theory, the freedom that one has after the revelation of a secret is tremendous. One then has more information upon which he or she may draw and base conclusions in a less anxious manner. Correct information is one of the keys to freedom within a family system, such as a congregation. Freedom occurs more readily with free choice than through bound anxiety.

A person has a limited number of years on this earth as life is a timed existence. Secrets waste time by retarding the growth of the system and sometimes restricting it until death. One need not waste life with secrets.

Systems Theory and the Law and Gospel

Among Lutherans there are two parts to the Christian message: Law and Gospel. Knowledge of this is vital to a Christian perspective of Systems Theory. A number of factors should be kept in mind concerning Law and Gospel. The Law shows people their sinful condition, but to know a condition does not change that condition. Likewise, a person cannot be willed to change. Just because an activity is wrong does not mean that a person will stop doing it.

All individuals live with some conflicts or burdens. The Law helps define those burdens, and yet only defining them does not alleviate them. Defining the burden

---

[181] Ibid.

through the Law is a way to begin to have a right relationship with God in Jesus Christ. The Law is always preparatory to the message of salvation. The Law is spoken first to define one's condition and position with God.

The Gospel, or the saving activity of God, is the second part of God's message. The Gospel is the story of Jesus paying for the sins of all on the cross and through the tomb from which He rose. Jesus has paid the price for sins and burdens. These two parts of the message are essential to having a clear perspective of life. It brings clarity to life including Systems Theory for Systems theory is based on how people relate to one another. That relationship is ultimately defined by God through Law and Gospel. Systems theory can be a great blessing when understood through this perspective.

One of the greatest conflicts to the issue of truth and secrets is the definition of the truth. Truth is an absolute when viewed through the eyes of Christ's message. There are items in life that are wrong, and there are items in life that are God pleasing. There is a way to be right with God as one receives that free gift from God, and there are numerous ways to be distant from God. In a very real sense, the inability to confront truth and see it for what it is, is to tell oneself a lie or, in effect, to push that truth down so deep that it becomes a buried secret. Jesus in the Gospel of John said, "The truth shall make us free." No matter how uncomfortable absolute truth is at times, it always has a freeing capacity.

Summary

This extensive description of Systems Theory was offered to provide information about Systems Theory and the unseen forces at work in relationships and conflict. Additionally, the author has discussed how Systems Theory can work alongside the Law and Gospel. The integrating of Systems Theory into one's way of viewing the world and

hence thinking is not an easy road, but it is a road worth traveling as it broadens the view

of relationships, allowing for new ways to address conflicts and other characteristics of

human and organizational relationships. Some of the ways that this theory is practiced,

along with research around its effectiveness, will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

SYSTEMS THEORY IN PRACTICE

Having described Systems Theory in the previous chapter, it is incumbent upon the author to describe how well Systems Theory works. How well does Systems Theory work? When combined with Scripture and Christian ideals does it enhance the ability of a congregation to deal with conflict? The Gospel is the first and foremost source of power when dealing with conflicts and anxiety. Systems Theory has also been used in conflict resolution since the 1960's.

The information in this chapter describes the field research on the application of Systems Theory that has been described based on bibliographic research in the previous chapter. The analyzing and evaluating of the effectiveness of a Systems Theory approach called Bridgebuilders in several LCMS congregations will be presented. This field research dovetails with the previous research done with the district presidents. The district presidents set the stage as they described the need for assistance as their existing tools that address only the symptoms of the conflict did not provide for a long-term healthy conflict management plan. This field research was done to gather information that addresses driving issue for the author: how can conflict be addressed and resolved in the parish?

The Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution

The Bridgebuilders intervention process was developed by Steinke to assist churches in working through their anxiety and moving toward health and growth. The

Bridgebuilders process,[182] as defined below, follows much of what has been presented in the previous chapter on Systems Theory.

The purpose of the Bridgebuilders Intervention Process is to lead the church:

--From a focus on weakness to strength

--From a position of "stuckness" to adaptation

--From anxiety to clarity

--From problem to challenge

--From condition to response

--From confusion to options

--From reactivity to response

--From conflict to peace

The structure of the Bridgebuilders Intervention Process includes five steps:

--Entry Meeting - Introduction of the process and the consultant.

--Learning Event - Teaching Systems Theory and relationship components.

--Interviews - Information gathering from congregational individuals and groups.

--Action Report - Finding from the information gathered including conclusions.

--Aftercare - Options and assistance with option by the consultant.

With conflict, as in all uncomfortable situations, a quick solution is desired but seldom occurs. Time, effort and commitment are required in the intervention process for a successful and lasting answer, as the process involves a teaching component of Systems Theory, an information gathering component, a report giving component by the consultant which included information about the present, along with options for the

---

[182] Peter L. Steinke, Bridgebuilders,[Internet]; available from http://www.nisynod.org/resources/bridgebuilders.htm; accessed 3 August 2006.

future. Bridgebuilders consultants spend 15-25 hours over a 3-4 month period in direct

contact with church members. In addition, the consultants require additional hours of

preparation and reporting. The church must be specifically focused on the Bridgebuilders

process for 3-4 months and continue, for months to come, to implement the course of

action recommended by the consultants.[183]

The role of the pastoral staff will depend upon the desired result of the

Bridgebuilders consultation and the preferences of each church. The lay leadership of the

church in conjunction with the pastoral staff should define and agree upon the role of the

pastoral staff before the Bridgebuilders process begins.[184] By reaching an understanding

of roles and expectations in advance, added anxiety and misunderstandings can be

avoided.

The Post-Intervention Questionnaire

In May 2006, as a way to check the effectiveness of the Bridgebuilders process a

questionnaire[185] was sent to six churches that had completed the Bridgebuilders

intervention process within the prior year that were randomly selected by Steinke. The

questionnaire was accompanied by a letter from Steinke[186] requesting completion to

support the author's research regarding the effectiveness of the intervention process.

Twenty questions were posed to post-intervention congregations, with four[187] of the six

congregations responding. For compilation purposes, the four responding congregations

were randomly assigned numbers.

---

[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Appendix J.
[186] Appendix K.
[187] Appendix L.

<u>Responses</u>

The first five questions presented to the congregations were:

1. Who initiated the contact with Pete Steinke?

2. Briefly describe the conflict.

3. What did you want the intervention to accomplish?

4. Who would accomplish it?

    a. Pastor

    b. Pastor and Leaders

    c. Leaders

    d. Congregation at Large

5. Did you implement other conflict resolution methods prior to Steinke's intervention?

The respondents' answers to the five questions are presented in tabular format in Table 4.

Questions 6 -8 and 10-20 of the questionnaire required answers based on a sliding scale of 1-5, one being the lowest or most negative response and 5 being the highest or most positive response. Question 9 was multiple-choice (See Table 5 Note).

Table 4

Compiled Results for Congregational Questions 1-5

Cong. #	1. Contact	2. Conflict	3. Goals	4. Who	5. Other
1	Elected Leader	Large percentage of members were upset by rector's efforts to lead parish away from Episcopal Church.	We hoped rector would return to the Episcopal Church's teachings, prayers. Lay leadership (instead of larger staff.)	Pastor and Leaders	No
2	Judicatory, Synod Bishop	Senior Pastor performance and conduct issues. Negative impact on congregation members and church health.	Third party to offer informed feedback to congregation so situation could be dealt with objectively.	Congregation at large	Yes, Council and Synodical Assistance
3	Elected Leader	Revolved around Senior Pastor's resignation.	Council and congregation wanted issues that led to the Pastor's resignation investigated and reported back to the congregation so situation could be dealt with.	Congregation at large	Three person committee formed by Council – Consultant was hired to appease opponents to committee
4	Judicatory, Committee on Ministry	Pastor acting inappropriately – Lying, dating while separated, poor manager, many conflicts	Bring Session to uniform understanding and appropriate action steps.	Leaders	No

Table 5

Compiled Results for Congregational Questions 6-20

Question	Cong. 1	Cong. 2	Cong. 3	Cong. 4
6. How much did conflict interfere with the mission of the church?	5	5	4	5
7. How conflicted were the leaders of the Church themselves before intervention?	4	5	4	5
8. How conflicted were the leaders of the church after the intervention?	2	3	3	4
9. How does your organization define Leadership? (See Note Below)	B	E	B	A&B
10. Following the intervention has the definition of leadership changed?	5	1	4	1
11. Because of the intervention was the Leadership changed?	3	5	3	**Probable termination**
12. How effective were the follow-up Components of the intervention process?				
a. Teaching	4	3	4	5
b. Interviewing	5	5	4	4
c. Information Gathering and Report Giving	5	4	4	4
d. Follow up	3	4	4	4
13. Were the goals attainable?	5	5	4	5
14. Were the goals obtained?	1	5	3	**undetermined**
15. What part did intervention play in getting you where you are today?	5	5	3	5
16. Would you recommend this process again?	5	5	3	5
17. Did the Pastor feel the process was Effective?	1	5	2	1
18. Did the leaders feel this process was effective?	4	3-4	3	4
19. Did the congregation feel this process was effective?	3	3	4	3
20. Are you still using this process?	**1 not Needed**	4	4	4

Note: Question 9 Multiple Choice Answers are: (A) Pastor, (B) Pastor/Governing Board
(C) Governing Board, (D) Hidden or Silent Leadership, (E) Congregational Assembly

<u>Limitations of the Data</u>

There are several issues with the data and findings. First, the sample size is very small. With only four congregations responding, it is easy for one congregation with either very favorable or very unfavorable results to affect the results dramatically. With only four responses, there is no room to adjust the data by culling potential outliers or using statistical sampling to harvest the results.

The second issue is the "random" sampling methodology. Steinke assisted with the research process by randomly selecting congregations for survey, provided that those congregations had completed an intervention process within the year prior to the survey. Regardless of the unintentional bias that could have existed in the selection of the sample, bias in the results exists because of the mindset of the congregations. Because these congregations had completed an intervention process, it can be assumed that the congregations were highly motivated to deal with the conflict. In essence they did something, in this case, utilizing the resources of Bridgebuilders. This acknowledges that the motivation was there to work through the issues and the assistance of Bridgebuilders allowed the congregation to have an avenue to health.

A third issue with the finding is that the responses to the questionnaire are entirely subjective and cannot be confirmed through more statistical means. Had the questions been more objectively attainable, such as validating the reduction of diabetes as opposed to conflict, the results would be less subject to the opinions of those who were deeply in support of or deeply in opposition to the process from the outset, and who may be harboring some of their original emotion in spite of the intervention process.

In spite of these limitations, the author believes that the data is sufficient to

provide insight into the effectiveness of the utilization of Systems Theory in the resolution of congregational conflict.

Results

The results of the questionnaire reveal that the conflict in the congregational setting was very high before the intervention. The mean responses to questions 6 (conflict interfering with the mission of the church) and 7 (level of conflict among leadership) were 4.7 and 4.5 respectively. Following the intervention, the perceived level of conflict among leadership dropped. The post-intervention perceived level of conflict among leadership (question 8) resulted in a mean of 3, as compared to the pre-intervention mean of 4.5 (question 7).

Questions 10 (leadership definition changes post-intervention) and 11 (leadership changes post-intervention) deal with the definition of leadership and who fills those rolls within the congregation. These results are interrelated and should not be evaluated separately. For question 10, in two of the congregations, the intervention process led to a significant redefinition of leadership (results 5, 4), while in the other two congregations there was no redefinition (results 1, 1). However, when compared to the responses in question 11, for the congregations who did redefine leadership due to the intervention, there was no significant change in leadership from a staffing perspective (results 3, 3). In those congregations where the definition of leadership did not change, staffing changes were high (results 5, probable termination). From the data, it appears that the intervention process allowed congregations to take a hard look at their definition of leadership and the related staffing, and based on the results of the intervention process, implement changes based on their process.

Question 12 (effectiveness of intervention process) asks about the effectiveness of the specific components in this intervention process. The results were very favorable, with all components (teaching, interviewing, information gathering / report giving, and follow-up) receiving mean scores of 4 or higher.

Questions 15 (role intervention played in congregational progress) and 16 (would they recommend intervention process) provide clear evidence that those participating in the intervention process were pleased. Both questions had mean results of 4.5, which are very favorable results. Question 15 and the related results indicate a strong perception that the intervention process played a role in getting the congregation to where it is today. Additionally, Question 16 indicates that those who have used the process would recommend it again.

Questions 13 (were goals attainable) and 14 (were goals obtained) have goal attainment as the theme. At first glance, the goals appear to have been highly attainable (Question 13, mean 4.7) but not highly attained (Question 14, mean 3). Taken alone, these results could throw into question the success of the intervention process. However, when compared to the other questions, the results indicate that while the goals may have been highly attainable, it is possible that goal attainment might not have been the correct goal in the first place. The results by congregation for goal attainment were lowest for those congregations who redefined leadership as a result of their intervention process. This would indicate that those congregations were open not only to resolving the conflict that was presented, but also to questioning and redirecting their baseline assumptions in order to move forward in a holistic and systemic way.

Questions 17 (pastor's view of intervention process), 18 (leadership view of

intervention process) and 19 (congregational view of intervention process) provide the perspectives of the individuals participating in the intervention process. Question 17 asks about the pastor's view of the effectiveness of the intervention. These results were varied, with a mode of 1, a mean of 2.25, and a high score of 5. Question 18 questions the leaders' view of the process, with more positive results (mean 3.6). Question 19 asks about the congregation's view of the effectiveness of the process, with mean results of 3.25 and a mode of 3. At the onset of the intervention, the pastor would likely feel the greatest strain from the conflict, as the research has indicated the heavy toll that conflict takes on staff. The pastor is very emotionally involved, and may feel threatened by the intervention, as the pastor very likely feels that the need for intervention is the result of a weakness in his leadership ability. The lower perception of effectiveness can be tied to this clearly, as the pastor may feel the process was all about changing his behavior or addressing his failure. At the next level of engagement is the leadership of the congregation. The congregation is a large body of individuals that generally would not be highly engaged in the conflict. It would be expected that many did not think the process was effective, and just as many thought it was very effective. Those who were highly engaged in the conflict would have little ability to affect statistically the overall views of the congregation in terms of the success of the intervention process.

A final question (Question 20) asks about the continued use of the systems based conflict intervention process. The results include a mean of 3.25 and a mode of 4. Most participating congregations are continuing to use the process on an ongoing basis. The response indicates that the process is no longer needed. The author believes that while the specific conflict may have been resolved, the congregation now has the intervention

experience as a part of their ongoing conflict management toolkit.

<u>Findings</u>

Based on the results of the research, the author concludes that a systems-based conflict management tool can be an effective tool for LCMS congregations entrenched in conflict. While the author acknowledges that the responding congregations were highly motivated to deal with the conflict, the results of the questionnaires indicate a favorable reaction to the systems-based conflict management tool that they experienced. The steps within the process were effective, and the congregations were able to reduce their level of conflict while addressing key leadership issues such as leadership definition, staffing, and appropriateness of goals.

The utilization of Systems Theory in addressing conflicts allow participants to remove some of the emotional aspects from the discussion and focus their efforts toward the solution that best serves the mission of the congregation. One drawback to the effective utilization of a systems-based approach is that it is not a quick fix. Those involved in the conflict resolution must have appropriate expectations regarding the level of effort, time commitment, and personal change commitment that may be involved in the process.

Summary

The purpose of the field research was to determine how well the Bridgebuilders process works. The information was gathered through surveys sent to a sample of congregations who had completed the Bridgebuilders process. The evaluation of the small sample, which primarily focused on the how successful the participants viewed the Bridgebuilders process, showed that the participants believed that the process was

effective for the resolution for parish conflict. The author concludes, based on both this limited field research as well as the more extensive research on Systems Theory, that the Bridgebuilders process is more successful when compared to the existing conflict management tools available to congregations.

What follows is a summary of how the pieces of this research puzzle fit together, along with some of the general conclusions the author reached during this research process.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this project, a number of tools have been utilized. The author began as a student of Systems Theory and studied under the direction of Peter Steinke as well as Edwin Friedman. Ongoing studies at Concordia Seminary also gave the author the opportunity to further explore congregational care and develop the curiosity to research how the LCMS responded to conflict.

In support of this research project, the author enlisted the help of the district presidents as they shared information regarding conflict within the congregations in their areas. Congregations who have experienced conflict and received the assistance of a Bridgebuilder's consultant were also researched. The information regarding congregational conflict was coupled with training in the area of Systems Theory and library research to determine what works well in managing congregational conflict.

Each one of the contributions point out that congregations face vast amounts of conflict, which exist as a result of the sinful human condition. In the experience of the author, one of the greatest threats to the present day church is unresolved congregational conflict. Avoidance of conflict leads to apathy and apathy leads indifference which leads to a stagnant congregation. Members distance themselves from one another and from the church. Some are bitter, some pretend ignorance and others leave for a less conflicted spiritual home. The mere idea of change brings more turmoil and opens the conflict - both real and perceived - for all to see. Now, what to do with it?

Glorifying God in the Midst of Conflict

One demonstration of God's love and mercy is in conflict management. Conflict resolution among Christians is a living example of the cross of Christ. As the church seeks to resolve conflicted situations, the choice of a reconciler becomes paramount to handling conflict within the Christian belief system.

All reconcilers are not the same. It is necessary to look carefully at the belief system of the conflict resolution organization that is utilized by the church. Are the theological views of the church and reconciler the same? Will the reconciler uphold the integrity of the values of the congregation during the reconciliation process?

Conflict resolution can and must be seen as an opportunity to glorify God and see His grace and mercy in action. Rather than being paralyzed with fear caused by anxiety, those managing conflict well will come to realize that movement creates change. Change, directed by God through His Word and through tools like Systems Theory, can get a person and organization unstuck and on the road to health. The intervention process should promote a heightened awareness of the fruits of serving others, laying the foundation for healthy growth. Conflict resolution does not come without the price of many hours of one's time and attention. The reward for one's faithfulness is the growth and satisfaction that comes when living as God's child within God's plan.

The Parish Pastor

Anxiety and secrets inhibit the health of a congregation. Anxiety can be managed when open communication takes place and when individuals take responsibility for their own issues and conflicts, thus their own anxiety, instead of forming alliances with others against another individual. The maturity of the leadership is essential in these two issues.

If the leadership can be open in their dealing with others and if the leadership can hold their own anxiety, then the congregation or other organization will have tools for moving forward in ministry, setting an example for the world to see. This example will be seen as favorable to those peering in from the outside viewing the ministry and the mission of the local parish.

Maturity in leadership begins with the individual working hard on his or her own personal issues including those relations to family of origin. Healthy congregations and other religious institutions know through Systems Theory that what they become together is more than the sum of their parts. They are a part of a life larger than themselves. Leaders make themselves aware of the challenges described in Systems Theory and avail themselves to openly address the issues in their own lives and the collective life of the congregation. Maturity is about personal responsibility as it relates to the entire system.

The position of leadership in laity and clergy is central to health in the congregation. This cannot be overestimated. Without leadership, without direction, organizations struggle. Pastors and leaders are the primary contributors not only to the health of the congregation but to the successful management and outcome of conflicts. The ability of the leader to define him or herself, to lead with strength and having a calming effect on followers will lead to a much healthier organization.

There will always be resistance to health if it is a change from the status quo. Change to a more healthy way of ministry will take place when, in spite of the resistance to change present in the system, leaders are willing to move an organization towards the health of God's direction and path. It takes a strong will - God's will - followed by leadership.

Healing takes place when leaders lead with a minimal amount of anxiety and when the congregation or organization faces the conflict. When outside assistance is used, non-anxious presence and differentiation of self is critical. In offering assistance, health must be present in the helper.

Who is in charge of the church? Who is the true leader? It is the Lord himself. He is the one who created the church and the relationships that exist within it. The system of relationships is God given and should always be God directed.

The Author's Growth Through This Process

The experiences of parish life coupled with additional training in Family Systems Theory, the opportunity to use that information and experience with congregations in conflict and extensive study through the Major Applied Project have afforded the author the opportunity to see again that our vision of Christ is central to our emotional health. Hebrews 12:2 reminds of the strength that is available to all. "Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." It is unfortunate that people often focus on the challenge instead of the solution. People see conflict and get entangled in its web as opposed to keeping their eyes on Christ, the one who brings forgiveness and hence healed relationships and the assurance of life forever. The encouragement from the book of Hebrews is for the pastor and the congregation.

The author has come to realize that conflict and anxiety are not dealt with quickly, but rather the healthy management of them requires effort throughout life, be it the life of the individual or the church. With Christ as the head of the church His leadership in His life can be that very powerful example to those seeking health in their relationships

within and outside of the congregation. Christ's leadership is the pattern that can be followed by pastors, other church leaders, and the congregation alike. Christ defined himself as the one who came to bring healing to individual hearts and mankind as a whole. That same kind of self-differentiation needs to be employed by the leadership on the congregational level. It begins with the pastor and emanates to the entire congregation and even beyond.

Solutions to Conflicts in Congregations

Congregations and church workers need to know where they can go for assistance. They need to know what their options are. They need to be reminded that Scripture is full of God's power and guidance for living. They need to know that the basic way humans respond to one another is a tool for creating healthy relationships. Both Scripture and a keen understanding of how relations work in a system are tools that bring hope. There are some who espouse using Scripture only. The author believes that one begins with Scripture and uses other God given tools through which God's grace can be understood through a different opportunity. Combining God's Word with an outside source for help provides a church with a resource to help reconcile relationships and resolve conflicts that may not be resolvable using internal procedures. A *Conflict Management Guide*[188] has been developed by the author based on the knowledge obtained during this research project. The guide is available to congregations for their reference in obtaining assistance for conflict resolution. The guide can be used to direct a congregation's first step toward healthy conflict management, and can help provide confidence to them that the next step will come from their Christ-centered foundation.

---

[188] Appendix M.

106

Summary: Legs of a Stool

The author suggested that the beginning point in conflict resolution is prayer. Prayer can be viewed as one leg of a stool, with the stool being a platform of support for parish health. As pointed out by Sande earlier in the paper, prayer is a point of power from which solutions can emanate. Those in conflict should set aside time for private prayer as well as corporate prayer. It is very difficult to continue in a conflicted relationship when one prays for the very best for another party or group of people. A helpful way to organize one's prayer life in a conflicted relationship is to write down what one wants to change and what one feels that the Lord would want for both parties. The next step is to pray for that.

The second leg of the stool is Scripture, more specifically passages on how people fall short of what God calls for and how He brings healing through forgiveness. Again a helpful way to navigate the road to health, emotional and Spiritual, is to write down the Scripture that speaks to the issues.

Two of the legs that support health being brought to a conflicted situation are prayer and Scripture. Yet another leg is that of seeing relationships in a system. Systems Theory is a way to organize ones thoughts and ideas into a workable plan. Again, the process of listing the helpful components of Systems Theory coupled with specific ways that Systems Theory can be applied would be of utmost help. When one is able to see conflict from a systemic point of view and not one in which there are isolated incidences then clarity is much more available.

That gives three legs with which to work. While they are not all of the same length and strength, they are all necessary in the author's opinion.

As the author has lived the parish life, along with conflict, he has seen how all three of these legs play a roll. Through the study of Systems Theory and utilization of it in daily parish life, the author has seen how a God-given way to look at relationship is helpful in bring health to the parish. The author's research has shown from the replies of the district presidents that the current system does not work by itself. The author also believes that what Kober and Sande propose are very helpful and yet forced. Their way of bringing reconciliation can be short-sighted especially when it has been noted that conflict in the parish is more mean-spirited than ever. Hearts are not always open to the cleansing action of Law and Gospel. So deeply entrenched are some conflicted people that hearts are closed to even Scripture itself.

The author has found Systems Theory to be that which brings the added dimension of awareness of how a system has gotten to be conflicted and all of the ways that conflict has entered that system. As lives are not lived in a vacuum so too can they be seen best in relation to others. Those others include God, others within the congregation, and systemically, within one's family of origin and within the other families in which one lives.

There is yet another leg to the arsenal of help for congregations. The author believes the leg of action is critical. Prayer, Scripture, Systems Theory, and action itself are all ones that support health in a parish. The district presidents bore this out. Some congregations are so stuck in conflict that they can not move. They are entrenched with a sense of no way out. The author's suggestion is for those entrenched in conflict to move in some direction or take action. Each time an attempt is made to reconcile it moves those parties that much closer to reconciliation. If one way does not work, another way

should be tried. Church bodies, districts, local pastors and parishioners want the very best for the Church, and they should be seen as avenues to health and reconciliation. God works through people, including people in conflict. He works through prayer and Scripture applied and Systems Theory studied and lived.

As much as the author is a product of Law and Gospel, he also is a product of additional God given tools. Family Systems Theory is the way in which the author views the world, more specifically the congregation in which he serve the Lord and the family in which the Lord has placed him and blessed him with a wife and three sons.

The author is grateful for a healthy way to look at relationships through the eyes of Scripture as well as the eyes of Systems Theory. The author is also grateful for the opportunity to live those relationships under God's direction and blessing.

Appendix A

Responses to LCMS District President Questionnaire

Question 1. What are the three most common conflicts
that congregations in conflict face?

Year/ District	First	Second	Third
	Leadership Crisis	Looking for help	Misconceptions about how to resolve
	Early identification	Ability to manage conflict	Lack of understanding of help, i.e. Peacemakers
	Willingness to work through conflict in a Christian manner Difficult for all parties to admit their personal contribution to conflict	Wanting to get rid of professional worker hoping that by doing so the conflict will end	Desire for instant solutions Want District President to come into the situation and "order" a resolution to the problem
	Work through the conflict in a Biblical manner (Matt. 18)	Repent when sin is exposed and to change once was forgiveness has been granted	To allow rumors and innuendos to complicate and derail the process
	Differences between congregational and pastoral expectations	None given	None given
	Getting people to the table	Any kind of openness to hearing the other's perspective	A willingness to ignore the council of God for His people in conflict

Year/ District	First	Second	Third
■■	Overcoming the lack of trust	Overcoming the inability to communicate well	Poor conflict management skills e.g. no differentiated non-anxious leadership
■■	Trying to gain and maintain objectivity and battle against high emotions	Trying to keep personalities out of the focus (unless they are the problem) and focus on the issues	Trying to identify the question or problem amidst high emotions, past histories and the like
■■	Expectations are different between congregation and Pastor		
■■	Ignoring conflict until too large to handle	We can handle this ourselves without outside help	People responding by leaving or withholding funds
■■	Getting the Lord's work done	Having income to pay bills	Working together to build the Kingdom
■■	Don't have a commonly accepted/ recognized technique for problem solving	Tendency to personalize issues	Fixation on the short Term
■■	Lack of patience through the resolution process	Try to resolve quickly with unloving actions	The unloving behavior becomes the problem driving the conflict rather than the real problem
■■	Control	Priesthood of Believers – Office of Pastor	Face to face (Matt. 18)
■■	Recognizing how dangerous and destructive unresolved conflict can be	Recognizing that outside assistance could be helpful	Proper follow-through when the congregation does receive outside help
■■	Lack of clear vision/ Loss of vision	Unrealistic expectations	Inability to communicate and thus deal with conflict

Year/ District	First	Second	Third
	Preparedness to deal with conflict	Frustration(s) with process	Post conflict healing
	Denial – Refusal to face conflict Escape through leaving	Power plays Who can muster control By-law support	Getting at conflict too Late
	Being honest about what the real problem is	Not knowing our own LCMS Doctrine and practices	Financial concerns override the real concerns Low self-esteem for professional workers
	Confess/Forgive Forget	Lack of living in the Gospel	Live in forgiveness of sin
	Following proper procedure (Matt. 18)	Overcoming unchristian ways to drive out Pastor/ Withholding funds	True reconciliation – People just decide to leave and go elsewhere
	Little or no knowledge of the Biblical mandate for reconciliation (Matt. 5, Matt. 18)	Lack of under- standing of the meaning of the 8th Commandment	Lack of training in how to work with conflict and receive reconciliation
	Decreased financial support because of conflict	Inability to act scripturally toward one another	Move to a view of the call as a "hire and fire" relationship
	Stubborn Pastor	Stubborn members	Attitudes concerning conflict
	Unwillingness to seek outside help	Layers of organizational pain that keeps them stuck	Tendency to seek scapegoats – usually Pastor or professional church worker
	Power and control	Arguing on visions and missions	To stay Gospel focused
	Properly defining the issue resulting in the conflict	Keeping the focus on the issue and not on personalities	Remaining objective and not allowing emotions to dominate
	Postpone addressing conflict until too late	Congregation leadership unwilling to address conflict in a helpful way	Knowledge of available resources to help resolve the conflict

Year/ District	First	Second	Third
	Unwillingness to submit to the Word of God	People seek justice for themselves	Pastor finds it difficult to acknowledge his own wrongdoing if involved in the conflict
	Shut down of communication leading to power plays	Wanting someone else to solve the conflict, solve it the way they want it solved	Patience and willingness To work with the conflict on the basis of God's Word
	Aiding people to listen to each other	Willingness to seek a win-win	Not digging up the past putting the past to rest
	Honest Communication	Corrective evaluation of the situation	Repairing relationships between at least two people
	Leadership – internal and external to deal responsibly with the conflict	Adequate resources to manage the conflict	Addressing the conflict before it reaches Level 4 or 5
	Obtaining an objective view of the circumstances	Developing a uniform plan for addressing the problem creating the conflict	None given
	Pastor/People	Money	Internal parishioner conflicts
	Willingness to look at solution other than changing pastors	Ability to move conflict out of a win/lose environment	Understanding the Lord's expectations to edify one another, to build up the body of Christ, to work from the bond of speak the Spirit gives
	How to deal with a Pastor who is not doing his work	How can people with different views function in the same church	How to pay the bills when there are conflicts

Year District	First	Second	Third
■	An "arena" to talk it through	Fail to see the real focus in ministry and get lost in "Present"	The practice of Forgiveness
■	Clearer communication regarding the conflict	Polarization	Resolution which includes putting the problem away and moving into the future
■	Desire (or lack of) for reconciliation	Hire/Fire mentality	No clear vision of their purpose
■	How to handle change	A Pastor that brings in new Doctrine/practice without proper preparation of the congregation	A pastor who does not relate or who is lording over the congregation Control
■	Do not have in place a way to deal with conflict in a responsible, Christian manner	Tend to designate someone for blame, father than see what is happening in the System	Not losing focus on The mission
■	Work toward reconciliation rather than attempt to control one another	Recognize the need for mutual repentance and forgiveness rather than fire the professional church worker or excommunicate the conflicted member	See conflict as a Biblical/Spiritual challenge that needs a Biblical/Spiritual Resolution

114

Year / District	First	Second	Third
■	Having a pastor that attempts to "lord it over" the Congregation	Having a pastor who is doctrinally "out of sync" with the congregation	Congregation refusing to accept a pastor who does things differently than their previous pastor
■	Understanding the "ghosts" of the past – because they were unresolved or kept rearing their ugly heads	Experiencing God's grace which enables them to approach the conflict creatively rather than having to prove the other party wrong	None given
■	Dealing with a Pastor who won't admit he's wrong (if he is) and won't say "I'm sorry"	Dealing with arrogance of Pastor	Insecurity of Pastor who results to Biblicism to protect Himself
■	Congregation resisting efforts of change initiated by Pastor	Pastor resisting efforts to change wanted by the congregation	Division over the mission and future of the congregation Conflict between staff
■	Pastor/People relationships especially with recent graduates	Where to get help Ask District President to resolves with no power	8th Commandment, Gossip, Fighting for "truth"
■	Getting at the conflict too late	Sidetracked from mission of the church	Loss of servant attitude (Mark 9)
■	Need to regain a vision for their mission – turned inward	Need to get beyond personalities to the issues and deal with them	Need to reduce the heat and generate far more light

115

Year District	First	Second	Third
▮▮	Conflict between professional workers and leadership of the congregation	Inability to surface the real issues in conflict	Healing and reconciliation after issues of conflict have been resolved
▮▮	Following Matthew 18	Communicating constructively and positively	Identifying the real causes for the conflict
▮▮	Congregations must acknowledge conflict	Congregations need to address conflict in a scriptural manner	Need a positive attitude in applying church discipline
▮▮	How to weather the crisis without a drastic loss of members and financial resources	How to repair relationship with Pastor/or how to secure a pastoral change	How to avoid polarization
▮▮	Pride	People at odds with one another have difficulty hearing one another's perspective Sometimes the sage advice of a truly neutral party	People at odds with one another wait too long to seek the kinds of assistance that is available to facilitate healthy dialogue
▮▮	Professional church worker incompetence	Intra-congregational tension and conflict	Dwindling human and financial resources as people embroiled in conflict become discouraged and leave the congregation

116

Year District	First	Second	Third
■	Congregation resisting efforts of change initiated by Pastor	Pastor resisting efforts to change wanted by the congregation	Division over the mission and future of the congregation Conflict between staff
■	Pastor/People relationships especially with recent graduates	Where to get help Ask District President to resolves with no power	8th Commandment, Gossip, Fighting for "truth"
■	Getting at the conflict too late	Sidetracked from mission of the church	Loss of servant Attitude (Mark 9)
■	Need to regain a vision for their mission – turned inward	Need to get beyond personalities to the issues and deal with them	Need to reduce the heat and generate far more light
■	Conflict between professional workers and leadership of the congregation	Inability to surface the real issues in conflict	Healing and reconciliation after issues of conflict have been resolved
■	Following Matthew 18	Communicating constructively and positively	Identifying the real causes for the conflict
■	Congregations must acknowledge conflict	Congregations need to address conflict in a scriptural manner	Need a positive attitude in applying church discipline
■	How to weather the crisis without a drastic loss of members and financial resources	How to repair relationship with Pastor/or how to secure a pastoral change	How to avoid polarization

Year District	First	Second	Third
■	Pride	People at odds with one another have difficulty hearing one another's perspective Sometimes the sage advice of a truly neutral party	People at odds with one another wait too long to seek the kinds of assistance that is available to facilitate healthy dialogue
■	Professional church worker incompetence	Intra-congregational tension and conflict	Dwindling human and financial resources as people embroiled in conflict become discouraged and leave the congregation

Appendix B

Responses to LCMS District President Questionnaire

Question 2.   What is your district able to offer congregations and
professional church workers to assist in alleviating the conflict?

Question 3. How effective is that help?

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	LCMS System Trained reconcilers Circuit Counselor, Vice President	Ambassadors of Reconciliation	Peacemakers, Inc.	The effectiveness of the help is in direct relationship with God's work to open hearts and spirits to His care and keeping through those means. There are episodes of restoration and episodes of spiritual {seems to cut off unexpectedly}
■	Congregation ministry Facilitator	Referred conflict Resources	Ambassadors of Reconciliation	If the congregations are committed to the process and cooperative, the resources are helpful.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Circuit counselors, and Praesidium trained in peace-making	District reconcilers	President's discretionary fund for professional counseling	It is very difficult to get Ordained and Commissioned Ministers to admit that they need help and to accept it. It is very difficult to get lay leaders of a congregation to recognize their contribution(s) to the conflict and to accept objective help. Most often, by the time help is accepted the conflict is so serious that any help give is too little, too late. The professional church worker is dismissed.
■	Four Synodically trained reconcilers within district	Printed material	None given	Reconciliation may work for a time, but in any congregational conflict that involves a determined individual or group with an agenda, reconciliation seldom lasts.
■	Informal reconciliation via circuit counselor and Vice President	Informal reconciliation via District reconcilers	Formal reconciliation following Synod constitution	Most generally conflict is dealt with before formal reconciliation is required.
■	None given	None given	None given	Effective to some degree about half the time. Effectiveness increases with the amount of time spent.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Much love for partners in the love of Jesus	Trained reconcilers	Referral to professional reconcilers inside and outside of the normal church channels	Somewhat to very effective, but never totally (while we are still in this world…).
■	Assessment of conflict consultant/ Bridgebuilders	Coaching for the Professional church Worker by that Consultant/coach	Healthy congregation training, i.e. Pete Steinke	The Consultant/Coach is effective because he always does what he promises. The effectiveness is ultimately dependent on the willingness and ability of the worker and congregation leaders to understand and apply conflict management skills and tools. Effectiveness is also dependent on the willingness of worker and leaders to apply the Biblical/Confessional Principles of conflict management and peacemaking as well as the resiliency and openness of the congregation.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Circuit visitors, Vice Presidents and District Presidents	Emphasize congregation focus on Christ and live our doctrine	Professional reconciler and Synodical reconciler	In most cases the help has been very effective. The Wyoming District has never had a Dispute Resolution Panel deal with a conflicted situation, which is testimony to our process.
■	Four district dispute reconcilers trained in Peacemaker ministry	Three additional professional workers trained in Peacemaker ministry	None given	Depends on the individual situation and how far the conflict has advanced. We've had some very fine outcomes and we've had an equal number of frustrations.
■	District President offers to come and talk about the problem	Reconcilers who can help	None given	Fairly effective if congregation really wants peace.
■	Synodically trained Reconcilers and Circuit Counselors Trained in Peacemaker Ministry	Congregational Ministry Facilitator (District Staff) with conflict resolution skills	Member of the clergy roster of the District who is trained in Healthy Congregations and Bridgebuilders	Some get it and work it out, but it takes a great deal of commitment. Most can't do it alone – they need an outside referee. Most severely conflicted congregations tend to stay conflicted because it is their culture. They have never learned to relate to one another in any other way. Their parents and grandparents fought with each other and with several generations of pastors before them.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Circuit Counselor, Regional Vice President and District President	Part time staff person trained to do intensive conflict resolution work	None given	The assistant doing the intensive work has been in place for just a short time. The limited work he has done appears to be quite effective.
■	Two pastors who have been Synodically trained in Synodical conflict Resolution	None given	None given	It is difficult to measure effectiveness. I believe the help given is quite effective but the follow-up is the problem.
■	District reconcilers	District staff and Circuit Counselors trained in Peacemaker Ministry	Values, Vision, Mission workshops Natural church development clinics	It has worked well when given the opportunity. Often by the time the District learns of the conflict the battle lines are deeply entrenched.
■	Reconcilers	Congregation ministry facilitator	Circuit Counselor with Peacemaker training	On a 0-10 scale, about a 5.
■	Trained people to assist Reconcilers, Circuit Counselors trained in conflict Resolution	District encouragement to address issues locally rather than look for "Mr. Fix-it" to solve the conflicts.	None given	Some victories – some defeats. Overall more positive because we can help them face issues and offer assistance or counsel.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
▉	District President, Vice Presidents, Circuit Counselors are there for helping	Reconciliation process	Monetary funds	It varies from very helpful to little help.
▉	District President and members of the District reconciliation team	Professional counselors may be recommended to individuals in conflict	None given	In some cases, there is no resolution, but in others peace and harmony is restored. Effectiveness is controlled by the spirit of those who are in conflict and who have said that they want reconciliation. If there is no willing spirit, the chances of reconciliation happening are very low.
▉	District Director Pastoral Care Intervention	Circuit Counselor trained in Peacemaker Ministry	District President Trained in Peacemaker Ministry	Minimal.
▉	Training of Circuit Counselors in Peacemakers Ministry	None given	None given	Somewhat effective, but to be truly effective demands considerable investment of time by the reconciler.
▉	Peacemaker trained Reconcilers	Synodical Dispute Resolution process	None given	Quite effective, actually, but total reconciliation seldom happens…the problem is worked through but the pastor leaves.
▉	Synodically trained reconcilers	Circuit Counselors Vice Presidents	Director of Ministerial Health	Quite effective.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
▮	Workshops on managing conflict and change	Three area mission and ministry facilitators	Staff conflict consultant	We are doing well in addressing conflict fairly quickly
▮	Better informed Pastors	Training Circuit Counselors, Vice Presidents	Full time District staff person to deal with conflict	It seems to work well when congregations and pastors want to work on the conflict.
▮	Official visits to every congregation in the District at least once every three years. Through these visit we try to be proactive and address issues that have potential for conflict before they actually develop.	Trained Circuit Visitors in conflict resolution and employee them in every situation that we can	Trained professional conciliator in District.	So far the plan has been well received and we have had good success with it.
▮	Several workers who have done advanced study in the area of conflict	Trained dispute reconcilers, one of which is a communicatio ns specialist	Staff has provided conflict intervention	There's an old adage which says, "You get what you pay for." I believe congregations often are looking for a quick and "cheap" fix. While we have a few people trained in conflict intervention, more often than not the most effective help comes from competent and skilled conflict interventionists who receive a fee for their service.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Interventionist	Perspective	Support and healing process	Depending upon the level of conflict and relative health of the congregation, very effective to ineffective.
■	Four trained District reconcilers	Trained and supportive District President	Support of Circuit Counselor	All working together can make a difference. Somewhat, but not totally effective.
■	Counsel of Circuit Counselor, District President and Vice Presidents	Sometimes monetary support	None given	Limited.
■	District reconcilers with consent of pastors and their congregations	None given	None given	Somewhat effective, but does not necessarily result in restoring full reconciliation.
■	The District is a resource to help identify what the conflict is, helping them to explore what options are before them. They, however, need to take Responsibility for what they do.	None given	None given	Depends how far they are into the conflict. Many times it is so far gone with sides taken that it does not resolve in a good way.

126

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Shalom	Four trained reconcilers	Consultant to clergy Peacemakers	Pretty good success. Still could use more skills.
■	District President's Office	Trained conflict reconcilers	Circuit Counselors	Very.
■	Regional deployed mission and ministry facilitators	Consultants trained in conflict	Workshops in conflict management	Hard to answer since outcomes are dependent on the level of conflict, depth of the conflict, width of the conflict and the willingness of the congregation to work on it.
■	District President, Vice Presidents, Circuit Counselors visit the congregation, go through discovery process to identify issues, and then via Word of God ministry help the congregation address the issues.	None given	None given	So far, it's worked well. Just providing a sounding board seems to help. In addition, responding quickly sends a message that the church cares and will try to help. Also, having a third party involved helps provide objectivity, identify the issue and make them accountable to a solution.
■	District reconcilers	Staff including District President	Special consultants	Sometimes excellent – depends on whether it is a "teachable moment."

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Two pastors who have been trained in "Peace in the Parish" (Qualben)	One pastor and three lay people trained dispute reconcilers for the synod	None given	Marginally effective to effective. It really depends what level of conflict has developed prior to the bringing in someone from outside the congregation.
■	Services of District staff	LCMS counselor (Psychologist)	Variety of workshops	Very effective, but not totally
■	Synodically trained reconcilers on an informal of if needed a formal basis	None given	None given	When it is used, especially early in the conflict, it has been very effective.
■	Trained conflict Management personnel	Groups such as Alban Institute	None given	Fairly effective, but not totally effective.
■	Peace in the Parish	Reconcilers	Circuit Counselors trained in conflict resolution	50/50 Best after the pastor leaves.
■	Trained Circuit Counselors in Peace in the Parish reconciliation techniques	Synod/District Reconcilers	Professional conflict managers (fee for service)	With time – quiet effective.
■	Trained reconcilers	Two trained pastors in Bridgebuilders	Pastor trained in Peace in the Parish Ministry	Depends on how far and how intense the conflict has grown.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Two lay and two clergy trained in Peace in the Parish consultation process	One clergy trained and two in training for Bridgebuilders Process	Six trained District reconcilers who are used in formal and informal mediation situations	Effectiveness is not determined by the process that is used but on the good faith of those with whom it is uses.
■	Synod's reconciliation process	None given	None given	In some cases, excellent. In others, temporary calming of the problem. In still others, not at all effective.
■	Consultation with District reconcilers	Initial ministry from Circuit Counselor	Peace in the Parish process	In every case we have worked with in the past ten years, some resolution has been achieved.
■	Trained Peace in the Parish workers	Staff of the District	Referral of professional counselors	Mostly successful. Sometimes no solution is possible – only a call or a few deaths can help.
■	Circuit Counselors trained in conflict/ Leadership matters	Qualben trained reconcilers	Staff in consultation to the clergy	Some

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Trained consultants in Peace in the Parish Reconciliation methods	Alban Institute theories	None given	These two approaches are the best available.
■	20 Trained in the Peace in the Parish process	Two trained workers in the Bridgebuilders approach	Full time counselor for professional church workers	It depends on the willingness of the participants. Sometimes we've been remarkably successful. Other times we've failed. Sometimes we have to wait for the harvest of peace to come further down the road.
■	Synod reconciliation system	Ministerial Health Team	None given	Very effective in most situations.
■	Ministry of Circuit Counselors	Efforts of District President	Synodically rained reconcilers	Depends upon situation and receptivity.
■	District reconcilers	None given	None given	Very effective.
■	Counseling by District Presidents and Circuit Counselors	Synodically trained reconcilers	Trained Bridgebuilders	It depends on the intensity of the conflict. The success rate that I and the Circuit Counselors and District Reconcilers have had has been good.
■	District staff	Lutheran Counseling and Family Services	Members of the District's Ministerial Health Committee	It runs the gamut from effective and salutary to not effective, perhaps even harmful.

Year District	First	Second	Third	Effectiveness
■	Director of Congregational and Worker Care (DCWC)	Twelve Congregational Care Providers under the direction of the (DCWC)	Resources of the District President and Circuit Counselors	It depends on how far the "search and destroy" mentality has progressed and the tenacity of the incompetent church worker.

Appendix C

Responses to LCMS District President Questionnaire

Question 4. What programs would you implement in your district
if you had unlimited resources?

Year District	Programs to Implement
■	Be more pre-emptive both on the part of our workers and their families, as well as to enlarge our training and lifting up of the spiritual life of the lay leadership of the church.
■	A program identifying a peacemaker or peacemakers in each congregation, training them and using them proactively before conflict levels escalate.
■	I personally don't believe there is enough financial help available to provide the kind of staffing that is really needed as it is my opinion that at least ten to fifteen percent of Missouri District Professional workers and/or congregations are in need of this help. We have a lot of troubled situations.
■	A strong educational program that would teach both the principles of biblical conflict resolution as well as the proper and appropriate use of church discipline in the Christian congregation.
■	Professional counselors and reconciler staff with credentials and experience provided by a Lutheran agency.
■	Full time reconciler and Reconciler/Peacemaker/Health Congregations training for all professional workers.
■	A full time staff person to work at reconciliation issues between … well you know … between church combatants. More theologically based materials that address the results of conflict, that is, the leftovers, physically and emotionally.
■	Training for all professional church workers in Conflict Management and Peacemaking. Training for church leaders in Conflict Management and Peacemaking. Coaching for professional church workers. Significant emergency fund to assist congregation in securing a conflict consultant.
■	More training for District leaders. More training for our pastors and congregations. The development of professional resources such as our District Conciliator.

Year District	Programs to Implement
████	I would have access to two or three fully trained professional conflict managers.
████	Program of Ted Kober of Billings, Montana
████	Train every Circuit Counselor to train every professional worker and every chairman of every congregation in Peacemakers ministries principles. Offer to every congregation consultative services in identifying the critical outreach targets in their community and developing the Apostolic Mission mindset necessary to reach into that community with the Gospel. In the opinion of the author conflict arises when there is inward focus. Work to provide a culture of security and support for the professional workers of the District so that they would have the spiritual energy and emotional resilience to deal with tough issues in the parish.
████	Expand the part time assistant position to full time so that between the full time conflict manager and the District we could keep in more direct and frequent contact with all the pastors, professional church workers and congregations of the district.
████	Peacemakers Ministry
████	Have the elders of every congregation fully trained in the Peacemakers Conflict Resolution and to be able to have regular follow-up on that for reinforcement.
████	We are working on a program of "Ministry Enhancement" – a preventive program. A sabbatical program that would allow for evaluation.
████	Every congregation set up with a trained conflict/crisis team. Every congregation has a trained "peacemaker." Every congregation has a post traumatic incident conflict team.
████	Train more lay people for conflict resolution at congregational level.
████	More counseling and mentor opportunities. Implement programs such as PALS and Peace in the Parish.

Year District	Programs to Implement
▉	Fund circuit workshops on conflict management and do all in my power to see to it that all professional church workers in the circuit and leaders of every congregation in the circuit were present at the workshop. Part of the workshop would include fundamental theological study of the meaning of forgiveness.
▉	Perhaps a full time Director of Pastoral Care and Reconciliation
▉	Try to involve every pastor (and professional church worker) in an extended training in the biblical principles and practice of being peacemakers. (Matt. 5:9)
▉	Peacemaker group training – since conflict usually involves the congregation vs. the pastor.
▉	More on assimilation. Scholarships for sabbatical leave.
▉	Full time conflict consultant. Worker in care of pastors and professional workers. Training by Peacemakers for all pastors and principals.
▉	Mandatory training for each pastor as to how to deal with conflict. DLM and PLI are steps in the right direction.
▉	Conflict resolution training for all pastors. More lay leadership training for chairman, vice chairman, elders and others in our congregations.
▉	Two full time parish health counselors who would devote themselves to ministerial health for professional workers and congregational life.
▉	Long term, disciplined, lay leadership development.
▉	Train congregational leaders – get reconciliation working at grass roots.
▉	More intentional interim pastors and longer vacancies between church workers in a congregation.
▉	Understanding the applications of Matthew 5:21-25 and Matthew 18:15-17 as well as other Bible passages which address the matter of reconciliation. Begin with pastors in teaching and training them how reconciliation and peace-making should be done. Develop a way of teaching our people in the congregation.
▉	Have all congregational leadership trained in conciliation training. A staff person to be proactive in this area.

Year District	Programs to Implement
■	Train more reconcilers and strengthen the consultation provided to clergy.
■	Put a conflict reconciler in each congregation. A professionally trained person to listen and deal with gripes.
■	A full time conflict consultant to work with congregations over a period of three years to build Health and Immunity.
■	Training for pastors in conflict management. The ability to use professionals in conflict resolution in our congregations.
■	More intentional intervention. Parish planning in advance of difficulties. Ability to make key decisions more quickly.
■	Two trained parish health specialists who would be able to represent the District office in some of the more severely conflicted situations and who would be able to assist with training others (particularly circuit counselors). Pay to have every seminary candidate participate in a two day "readiness for ministry" inventory offered through The Center for Ministry in Oakland, California. Have a "Pete Steinke" type workshop with clusters of congregations for the purpose of helping congregations understand family systems and how these apply to congregations.
■	To get staff, especially District President, out more.
■	A consultant to the clergy/congregational leaders to deal with personality and other disorders. Regular, regional, annual conferences on mission-ministry and conflict resolution.
■	Ongoing opportunities for pastors to grow in self-understanding and in relational skills.
■	Full time counselor for professional church workers, including Career Assessment.
■	Courses for pastors/principals/church leaders in handling change and conflict.

Year District	Programs to Implement
■	Train pastors and work for prevention as opposed to intervention.
■	Congregations and Schools of Healing is a program to assist professional church workers in reentry following situations that have been devastating to them personally. Intentional Interim Ministry program to assist congregations in finding healing. Leadership Series initiated by Lutheran Counseling and Family Services to help clergy understand how to lead as servants. Lay leadership training to assist lay people and professional workers in ways of holding one another accountable in Christ centered ways. As part of the Conflict Response Program train one lay person, one clergy and one educator/principal in each of the District Regions as conflict interveners in congregations that request assistance from the District Office. Include positive ministerial health topics in each conference of clergy and educators to help them build up in their spiritual lives and understand the tools available to deal with disagreements before they become dysfunctional conflicts.
■	Bring in someone like Dr. Qualben of Peace in the Parish.
■	Training of parish pastors to del creatively with conflict.
■	A cadre of trained conflict resolution/mediation folks. Annual seminars for pastors on conflict resolution, mediation and general problem solving.
■	A calling position in the District that makes regular pastor and church worker calls.
■	Pro-active preventative awareness and training.
■	Full time conflict resolution manager who brings both skills and attitude to the task. Train more people in the Bridgebuilders concept.
■	Expansion of mental health programs for professional workers in stress and conflict. Educational programs to help prevent some conflict.

Year District	Programs to Implement
■■■	Greater availability of professional resources. Sabbatical time for pastors.
■■■	Pastors and other professional church workers and congregations would receive training in conflict resolution.
■■	One or two staff members whose main job description was to visit with professional workers and congregational leaders. Listening, supporting, mediating, networking.
■■	Develop an Early Intervention team made up of carefully trained people upon whom the District School person and District President would be able to call upon to make "intervention and facilitation visits" to developing or evolving conflicted situations in our schools and churches. This would have to include an educational process that alerts congregations and leaders to the help available.
■	A ministry designed to retool/retrain the incompetent professional church worker, enabling him/her to enter a different profession/vocation. A much more sophisticated and thorough process of pre-screening candidates for congregational call list prior to their being called by the congregation.

Appendix D

Responses to LCMS District President Questionnaire

Question 5.   What other information would you like to share with me
that I have not asked about?

Year District	Other Information from District Presidents
■	I continue to pray daily that the Lord of the church would set aside the devil's plans and that the power of a church built upon the cross and empty tomb might daily find strength for the battle and always be sure that the arrows are flying the right direction in our fight.
■	I believe that it is essential that our Synod does a much more thorough job screening individuals prior to their enrollment at our Universities and Seminaries to diagnose existing mental, emotional and family problematic situations. Many of the conflicts that I am confronted with occur because the church worker is intellectually capable of achieving the grades necessary to graduate from the University or Seminary, but does not possess the skills necessary to function in a congregational setting . . . often this is because of personality conflicts, behavioral issues or family conflict that was not identified prior to the first assignment. A real problem in our church is a goodly number of our professional church workers lack interpersonal relationship skills needed to succeed in ministry.
■	In my 21 years as a District President, the area of work that has increased most dramatically has been conflict in the congregation, usually between the congregation or a portion thereof and the pastor or professional staff. It is my perception that the laity of our church are much more demanding of their professional workers today than they were 20 years ago. In 2 Timothy 4:3 Paul writes, "The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions." If Paul were writing that today, I believe that he would say, "The time has come when..." and in view of the selfish and self-centered nature of our American culture, he would change "they will accumulate" to "they will demand."
■	So much of conflict grows out of lack of vision for mission and/or power struggles between pastor and people or pastor and school.

Year District	Other Information from District Presidents
██████	Be sure that you help us all with what you are doing here …there is so much pain…here.
██████	Workers are under significant stress and do not have adequate support in many cases. Conflict in our churches is expanding. Most of it has to do with the relationship and expectations between pastor and laity.
██████	Prayer is a vital tool!
██████	It appears to me that the need for future intense conflict resolution work within our congregations will continue to grow for the foreseeable future. Our challenge is to determine how best to get it done.
██████	We need to learn and teach "churchmanship" – how brothers and sisters in Christ deal with one another – at the seminary for pastors and within our congregations.
██████	Would be interested in your results.
██████	I think that the LCMS is doing a great job in work on the financial end. Also, would like to see more work done on the emotional and physical health areas.
██████	The solution for conflict is not going to be found by tweaking the system and making adjustments to the techniques taught to reconcilers and mediators. What is needed is fundamental theological renewal about the meaning and application of the Gospel.
██████	Basic courses of conflict in the parish. Usually the congregation's expectations of its pastor and staff are falling short of its ideals.
██████	One of the major causes of conflict is the inability or unwillingness of many of our pastors to admit they are wrong and to ask forgiveness from their people. When I ask the question "Why do you find this so difficult?" I get the answer, "I need to protect the dignity of my office." Too few of our pastors and professional church workers know and understand the implications of Ephesians 4:26.
██████	Today I see conflict of experienced pastors in a congregation who come to a new congregation. The expectations and the reality do not match what they perceived the new call to be all about.

Year District	Other Information from District Presidents
▮	Our Synod is making good advances in reconciliation training, etc. probably more than most mainline Protestant Church bodies. I would like to see much more done at the Seminaries to prepare and equip pastors.
▮	We have an ad hoc "Grievance Committee" which will seek to provide congregations with a program which proactively would prevent some of these conflicts by providing listening opportunities to people who are hurting.
▮	Information on conflict from Alban.
▮	Sin continues. As long as sin continues there will be conflict in the church. We must rely on the healing power of the Gospel for healing.
▮	I would simply state that conflict is not necessarily bad and that if it is managed properly, it can result in great blessings, just as God has promised. (Romans 8:28)
▮	How does conflict get started? When are the best times to intervene?
▮	One of the conflicts for a congregation that has responded favorably to intervention comes with implementation. Again, because of the geographic size of the District, providing follow up care (i.e. holding feet to the fire) becomes a problem. Yet, I have learned that regular follow up for a year, possibly two, is essential.
▮	Something has to be done to help pastors to be pastors. Many new graduates do not know what they are to do. They also need help in living within their means.
▮	Share your results! There is an emphasis on intentional prayer time, specific Bible readings (Phil., Eph., parts of I Corinthians and II Corinthians), contacts by leaders with selected households of the church during conflict periods . . . to keep praying . . . and a strong emphasis on receiving Holy Communion to gain God's empowering and forgiving strength to persevere in Christ-like witness and service . . . in the midst of conflict.
▮	I believe that most conflicts are never completely resolved and that the residuals stay with congregations underneath the surface for at least a decade if the conflict was very serious.

Year District	Other Information from District Presidents
■	Much of the conflict source is found in the unevangelical teaching that seems to flow from certain seminaries that teach a different doctrine of the holy ministry. I will close with a quote from a recent Ft. Wayne graduate. "The proper place of the pastor is to rule the Congregation."
■	Seminary education must include strategies of handling small disagreements and differences before they explode into harmful dysfunctional conflict. Teach seminarians and prospective educations better leadership principles than have been taught in the past. Teach educators at their terminal schools how to deal with differences and disagreements between members of their staff. Teach pastors, both at the seminary and after seminary training, how to minister to staff in such a way as to help in dealing with differences and disagreements before they explode into harmful and destructive conflict. Teach Elders and Board of Education, etc. how they are partners in ministry with the professional church worker not bosses or controllers of them.
■	Mentor program.
■	The level of spirituality and faith development makes all the difference in conflicted situations. Let's grow people to be more Christ like!
■	Conflict is part and parcel of the human endeavor. It can be positive if honestly faced and addressed with the mind of Christ. A positive vision for mission and ministry is absolutely essential.
■	Conflict resolution takes a major portion of my time either by district involvement or in guiding and directing those who are directly involved.
■	Every conflicted situation must be individually addressed. There are no easy answers. Ultimately Law and Gospel must make the difference.
■	As Chairman of the Task Force on Conflict, I feel that our church will continue to struggle with this matter and continue to depend on legal resolutions until we are able to provide training for professional workers at our colleges and seminaries. The same holds true for the teachers and professors in these schools, they need to set forth a good example for others to follow.

Year District	Other Information from District Presidents
███████	You are working in an area that truly needs attention in order that we move away from the very real trend of embarrassing our God and His Gospel in Christ Jesus (to say nothing of ourselves) with conflicted situations and unchristian behavior defeating our very purpose for being.
███	This subject is crucial to the future of our church body.

Appendix E

Genogram

1. Family Structure

2. Family Functioning

Key
Square (□) indicates male
Circle (O) indicates female
Solid line (—) means connection
Double line (═) indicates emotional fusion
Broken line (----) signifies emotional cut-off
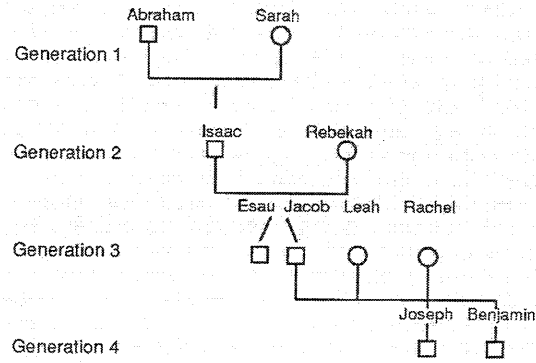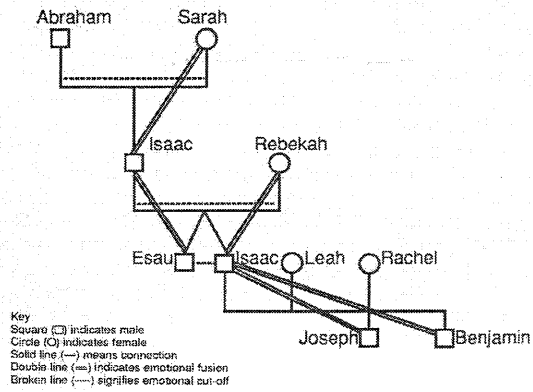
Source: Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works*, 35.

Appendix F

Self Differentiation
Two Counterbalancing Forces of Life

Emotional Cut-Off	Separateness (respectful individuation) Closeness (affectionate connectedness)		Emotional Fusion
1. Automatic, instinctive, anxious	1. Responsive, reflexive, intentional		1. Automatic, instinctive, anxious
2. Reactivity of opposition	2. Define self and stay in touch with others		2. Reactivity of submission
3. Differentiation over against	3. Differentiation within (what one thinks, feels, values, will, will not do)		3. Differentiation lost by tucking self into the emotional pull of the system
4. Differentiation by thick, overdrawn boundaries	4. Differentiation between (where one begins and ends, where other begins and ends)		4. Lack of self-dictated boundaries and respect for the boundaries of others
5. Too rational, too objective	5. Knows boundaries of the internal system, distinguishes between thinking and feeling		5. Too enmeshed emotionally
6. Rigid	6. Resilient		6. Reptilian
7. Boundaries are impermeable	7. Boundaries are lost in passion, in ecstasy, in play, yet can be re-established afterward		7. Boundaries are lost in pleasing, shaming, laying guilt trips, intense criticism
8. Define self in comparison to others	8. Define self before defining others (how they handle self before how they'll handle others)		8. Defined by others/ define others

Appendix G

WHEN I FEEL RESPONSIBLE

WHEN I FEEL RESPONSIBLE
FOR OTHERS . . .

I
- fix
- protect
- control
- carry their feelings
- don't listen

I feel
- tired
- anxious
- fearful
- liable

I am concerned with
- the solution
- answers
- circumstances
- being right
- details
- performance

I am a
- manipulator

I expect the person to
- live up to my expectations

WHEN I FEEL RESPONSIBLE
TO OTHERS . . .

I
- show empathy
- encourage
- share
- confront
- level
- am sensitive
- listen

I feel
- relaxed
- free
- aware
- have high self-esteem

I am concerned with
- relating person-to-person
  - feelings to the person

I am a
- helper-guide

I expect the person to
- be responsible for himself and his own actions
- I can trust to let go

Appendix H

Differentiation of Self Scale
Murray Bowen

LOW LEVELS (0-25)

    a. feeling dominated world (difficulty distinguishing feeling from fact)
    b. love and approval seekers (withdraw or fight to get it)
    c. little energy for life-directed goals (goals, if expressed are vague, "happy, successful")
    d. relationship oriented to exclusion of self-expression
    e. keep relationship harmony
    f. dependent relations/borrow strength from other to function

MODERATE LEVELS (25-50)

    a. some differentiation between emotional and intellectual
    b. guided by emotional system but less intensely and more openly expressed
    c. pseudo self-expression
        i. avoid "I believe," others in authority
        ii. blend and bend self in different relationships
    d. low anxiety – functioning resembles good levels of differentiation; high anxiety – functioning resembles low levels of differentiation
    e. pleasing, who you know, relationship status
    f. some flexibility or adaptability in functions within a relationship
    g. self esteem dependent on others
    h. approval more than goal-directed
    i. energy directed to what people are thinking

MODERATE – GOOD LEVEL (50-75)

    a. make some decisions on own
    b. can feel but extricates self when necessary
    c. emotional/intellectual (cooperative team)
    d. solid core self
    e. clearer self-evaluation
    f. from within rather than from what others think
    g. keep power

HIGH LEVELS (75-100)

    a. rare

Appendix I

LAWS GOVERNING TRIANGLES

There are some specific laws about the way such triangles work that have a very high degree of predictability. For example:

1.   The relationship of any two members of such a triangle is kept in balance by the way a third member relates either to each of them or to their relationship.

2.   It is not possible to change the relationship of the other two directly for more than a week.

3.   Efforts to bring about change in a relationship to which one is not a part, particularly trying to separate them or bring them closer, generally get converted to their opposite intent. As examples, one might consider pushing someone to be more responsible – that is, trying to change a person's relationship to his or her symptoms (e.g., taking out the garbage, being more punctual); or pushing someone <u>away</u> from his or her symptom or another person (e.g., trying to make someone stop drinking, gambling or see their lover). The effects of such efforts usually blind the others to the dangers in what he or she is doing.

4.   If a person has endeavored unsuccessfully to bring change, the more he or she tries, the more he or she becomes "triangled" into the relationship of the other two. When that occurs – and sometimes it is from the first effort – not only will the efforts be ineffective, if not counter-productive, but also, if the helper becomes too responsible for the problem, he or she will wind up with the stress for the entire system!

5.   Relationship systems have more than one triangle, of course, which often interlock through a common person. For example, a mother could at the same time be in an emotional triangle between her child and her husband, and also, between her parents; or also, between her child and her mother, or her husband and his mother. Similarly, a rabbi can be in a triangle with two members of a family in the congregation, as well as in a triangle with one of those members (or both) and another individual or family within the administrative system of the congregation. An important feature of interlocking triangles is the extent to which a person is stuck in the other(s) also. Conversely, getting "unstuck" in one triangle often will bring more flexibility of action and perception in the other(s).

6.   One "leg" of any emotional triangle tends to be more conflictual than the other two. In "healthier" relationship systems, that conflict will "swing around the horn," so to speak, surfacing in different relationships at different times. In relationship systems with important unworked-out issues, the conflictual or negative side will always be the same, though because of the homeostatic principles enumerated in 1. and 2., that very negativity can keep the triangle in balance (something like Cincinnati retaining its purity by keepings its sin in Covington). The importance of this principle is that members of a relationship system, as much as they may want to see the negative side change, will also have a vested interest in it not changing.

7.   The way to bring change to the relationship of the other two parties of any triangle (and no one said it is easy) is to touch with both other parts, without getting caught with the responsibility for the relationship. Anyone can avoid getting caught by distancing, but that just preserves the problem. However, it is equally useless over the

long run to stay in touch and get stuck in the middle."

Source: Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 36-39.

Appendix J

Intervention Follow-Up Questionnaire

1. Who initiated the contact with Pete Steinke?

a.   Pastor
b.   Elected leader
c.   Judicatory
d.   Member at large

2. Briefly describe the conflict.

3. What did you want the intervention to accomplish?

4. Who would accomplish it?
a. Pastor
b. Pastor and Leaders
c. Leaders
d. Congregation at large

5. Did you implement other conflict resolution methods prior to Steinke's intervention?

6. Were they internally driven or externally driven?

7. How much did conflict interfere with the mission of the church?
                        Lowest   Highest
                        1   2   3   4   5
8. How conflicted were the leaders of the church before intervention?
                        Lowest   Highest
                        1   2   3   4   5

9. How conflicted were the leaders of the church after the intervention?
                        Lowest   Highest
                        1   2   3   4   5

10. How does your organization define leadership?

a. Pastor
b. Pastor/Governing Board
c. Governing Board
d. Hidden or Silent Leadership (Insiders)
e. Congregational Assembly

11. Following the intervention, has the definition of intervention changed?

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

12. How do leaders, current and future grab hold of system's theory?

a. procedural
b. taught
c. understood through corporate culture

13. Because of the intervention has the leadership changed?

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

14. How effective were the follow-up components of the intervention process?

a. Teaching

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

b. Interviewing

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

c. Information Gathering and Report Giving

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

d. Follow up

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

11. Were the goals attainable?

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

12. Were the goals obtained?

	Not at All			Completely	
	1	2	3	4	5

13. What part did intervention play in getting you where you are today?

None   Totally
                          1   2   3   4   5

14. Would you use this process again?
                        No   Yes
                          1   2   3   4   5

15. Did the Pastor and leaders feel the process was effective?
                Not at All   Completely
                          1   2   3   4   5

16. Did the congregation feel the process was effective?
                Not at All   Completely
                          1   2   3   4   5

17. Are you still using this process?
                Not at All   Completely
                          1   2   3   4   5

Appendix K

Peter Steinke Cover Letter for
Intervention follow-up Questionnaire

May 22, 2006

Greetings! I hope you are well.

I am writing on behalf of Rev. Paul Meyer, Pastor at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Oak Hill, Texas. He is completing a Doctor of Ministry degree at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

His final project is a study of conflict intervention. I have given him your name as one who might complete his questionnaire with regards to the Bridgebuilder Intervention completed at your congregation. The information you supply will be used solely for the purpose of Rev. Meyer's research. Please return the questionnaire to Paul Meyer, 10408 Highway 290 West, Austin, TX 78736.

Thank you for your assistance in helping in this project.

Sincerely,

Peter L. Steinke

Intervention Follow-Up Questionnaire

1. Who initiated the contact with Pete Steinke?

   a.   Pastor
   (b.)   Elected leader
   c.   Judicatory
   d.   Member at large

2. Briefly describe the conflict.

   LARGE PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERS WERE UPSET BY RECTORS EFFORTS TO LEAD PARISH AWAY FROM EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

3. What did you want the intervention to accomplish?

   WE HOPED RECTOR WOULD RETURN TO THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH'S TEACHINGS, PRAYERS, LAY LEADERSHIP (INSTEAD OF LARGER STAFF).

4. Who would accomplish it?

   a. Pastor
   (b.) Pastor and Leaders
   c. Leaders
   d. Congregation at large

5. Did you implement other conflict resolution methods prior to Steinke's intervention? *NO*

6. How much did conflict interfere with the mission of the church?

   Lowest   Highest

      2   3   4   (5)

7. How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves before intervention?

   Lowest   Highest

     1   2   3   (4)   5

8. How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves after the intervention?

   Lowest   Highest

     1   (2)   3   4   5

9. How does your organization define leadership?

a. Pastor
b. Pastor/Governing Board *(circled)*
c. Governing Board
d. Hidden or Silent Leadership (Insiders)
e. Congregational Assembly

10. Following the intervention, has the definition of intervention changed?

$$\text{Not at All} \qquad\qquad \text{Completely}$$

$$1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad \boxed{5}$$

1. Because of the intervention has the leadership changed?

$$\text{Not at All} \qquad\qquad \text{Completely}$$

$$2 \quad \boxed{3} \quad 4 \quad 5$$

12. How effective were the follow-up components of the intervention process?

a. Teaching

$$\text{Not at All} \qquad\qquad \text{Completely}$$

$$2 \quad 3 \quad \boxed{4} \quad 5$$

b. Interviewing

$$\text{Not at All} \qquad\qquad \text{Completely}$$

$$2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad \boxed{5}$$

c. Information Gathering and Report Giving

$$\text{Not at All} \qquad\qquad \text{Completely}$$

$$2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad \boxed{5}$$

d. Follow up

$$\text{Not at All} \qquad\qquad \text{Completely}$$

$$2 \quad \boxed{3} \quad 4 \quad 5$$

13. Were the goals attainable?

$$\text{Not at All} \qquad\qquad \text{Completely}$$

$$2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad \boxed{5}$$

155

14. Were the goals obtained?

Not at All   Completely

(1) 2 3 4 5

15. What part did intervention play in getting you where you are today?

None   Totally

1 2 3 4 (5)

16 Would you recommend this process again?

No   Yes

1 2 3 4 (5)

17. Did the Pastor feel the process was effective?

Not at All   Completely

(1) 2 3 4 5

18. Did the leaders feel the process was effective?

Not at All   Completely

1 2 3 (4) 5

19. Did the congregation feel the process was effective?

Not at All   Completely

(3) 4 5

20. Are you still using this process?

Not at All   Completely

(1) 2 3 4 5

IT IS NO LONGER NEEDED.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided to:

Rev. Paul Meyer

10408 Hwy. 290 West

Austin, TX 78736

Intervention Follow-Up Questionnaire

Who initiated the contact with Pete Steinke?

a. Pastor
b, Elected leader
c. (Judicatory) – Synod Bishop
d. Member at large

2. Briefly describe the conflict.

Sr. Pastor performance and conduct issues. Negative impact on congregation members and church health.

3. What did you want the intervention to accomplish?

3rd party to offer informed feedback to congregation so situation could be dealt with objectively.

4. Who would accomplish it?

a. Pastor
b. Pastor and Leaders
c. Leaders
d. Congregation at large

5. Did you implement other conflict resolution methods prior to Steinke's intervention? Yes, Council and Synodical Assistance

6. How much did conflict interfere with the mission of the church?

Lowest   Highest

1   2   3   4   (5)

How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves before intervention?

Lowest   Highest

1   2   3   4   (5)

How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves after the intervention?

Lowest   Highest

     4   5

9. How does your organization define leadership?

a. Pastor
b. Pastor/Governing Board
c. Governing Board
d. Hidden or Silent Leadership (Insiders)
e. Congregational Assembly

10. Following the intervention, has the definition of intervention changed?

Not at All   Completely

(1)   2   3   4   5

11 Because of the intervention has the leadership changed?

Not at All   Completely

1   2   3   4   (5)

12. How effective were the follow-up components of the intervention process?

a. Teaching

Not at All   Completely

2   (3)   4   5

b. Interviewing

Not at All   Completely

1   3   4   (5)

c. Information Gathering and Report Giving

Not at All   Completely

2   3   (4)   5

d. Follow up

Not at All   Completely

2   3   (4)   5

13. Were the goals attainable?

Not at All   Completely

1   2   3   4   (5)

14. Were the goals obtained?

	Not at All			Completely
	2	3	4	(5)

5. What part did intervention play in getting you where you are today?

	None			Totally
	2	3	4	(5)

16. Would you recommend this process again?

	No			Yes
	2	3	4	(5)

17. Did the Pastor feel the process was effective?

	Not at All			Completely
	2	3	4	(5)

18. Did the leaders feel the process was effective?

	Not at All				Completely
	1	2	(3)→(4)		5

19. Did the congregation feel the process was effective?

	Not at All				Completely
	1	2	(3)	4	5

20. Are you still using this process?

	Not at All				Completely
	1	2	3	(4)	5

Please return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided to:

Rev. Paul Meyer

10408 Hwy. 290 West

Austin, TX 78736

159

Who initiated the contact with Pete Steinke?

a.   Pastor
ⓑ   Elected leader
c.   Judicatory
d.   Member at large

2. Briefly describe the conflict.

see attachment

3 What did you want the intervention to accomplish?

see attachment

4. Who would accomplish it?

a. Pastor
b. Pastor and Leaders
c. Leaders
ⓓ Congregation at large

5. Did you implement other conflict resolution methods prior to Steinke's intervention? *see attachment*

6. How much did conflict interfere with the mission of the church?

Lowest		Highest
1	3	④

How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves before intervention?

Lowest			Highest
2	3	④	5

8 How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves after the intervention?

Lowest			Highest
2	③	4	5

9. How does your organization define leadership?

a. Pastor
b. Pastor/Governing Board
c. Governing Board
d. Hidden or Silent Leadership (Insiders)
e. Congregational Assembly

10. Following the intervention, has the definition of intervention changed?

              Not at All   Completely

                  2   3   ④   5

11. Because of the intervention has the leadership changed?

              Not at All   Completely

                  1   2   ③   4

12. How effective were the follow-up components of the intervention process?

Teaching

              Not at All   Completely

                  1   2   3   ④   5

b. Interviewing

              Not at All   Completely

                  1   2   3   ④   5

c. Information Gathering and Report Giving

              Not at All   Completely

                  2   3   ④   5

d. Follow up

              Not at All   Completely

                  2   3   ④   5

13. Were the goals attainable?

              Not at All   Completely

                  2   3   ④   5

14. Were the goals obtained?

                      Not at All   Completely

                             (3)   4   5

What part did intervention play in getting you where you are today?

                    None   Totally

                 1   2   (3)   4   5

6 Would you recommend this process again?

                    No   Yes

                                4   5

7. Did the Pastor feel the process was effective? *Pastor Halden*

               Not at All   Completely

                 1   (2)   3   4   5

18 Did the leaders feel the process was effective?

               Not at All   Completely

                      2   (3)   4   5

19. Did the congregation feel the process was effective?

               Not at All   Completely

                      2   3   (4)   5

20 Are you still using this process?

               Not at All   Completely

                      3   (4)   5

Please return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided to:

Rev. Paul Meyer

10408 Hwy. 290 West

Austin, TX 78736

Answers to Questions 2, 3, and 5

#2. The conflict revolves around the issues that led to our senior pastor's resignation. Over the course of Pastor Todd Hylden's three year ministry at First Lutheran Church, several issues were dealt with that did not have unanimous approval. Some members of the minority positions were active in their opposition to the majority and worked diligently in opposition to Pastor Hylden's majority approved positions. Several issues developed from these differences of opinion that were especially upsetting to Pastor Hylden and eventually led to his resignation. Among those were:

- o Pastor Hylden was given an appraisal interview by the council president and vice president that he considered unfair and inaccurate.
- o Untrue rumors concerning Pastor Hylden's actions and character began circulating in the congregation. These malicious rumors were affecting his family.
- o While Pastor Hylden was away attending his father's funeral, the council president appointed a council member to meet with the contemporary service musicians. Pastor Hylden returned from the funeral in time to attend that meeting. Discipleship Pastor Ken Nelson advised Pastor Hylden to not attend. Pastor Hylden did attend and was treated poorly by some in attendance.

#3. The council and congregation wanted the issues that led to Pastor Hylden's resignation accurately investigated and reported back to the congregation in Christian love and respect for all involved so that the congregation could deal with the findings and be strengthened to continue its mission of serving our Lord.

#5. The council attempted to form a three-person committee of respected and talented congregational members to accomplish that which was explained in question 3. However, some members wanted that task to be performed by a consultant. A consultant was ultimately hired to appease those that did not want the process to begin with by a committee appointed by the council.

It is interesting that little of Dr. Steinke's consultation time dealt with the historical facts and events that led to Pastor Hylden's resignation. The issues emphasized in the consultation revolved around the six forward looking Action Planning Committee issues of:

        Boundaries
        Governance
        Guidance for Change Process, Growth, and Conflict
        Personnel
        Synodical Relationship
        Worship (and Music).

Dr. Steinke's process seems to have the approval of a large segment of the congregation. However, some members think Dr. Steinke in reporting the "perceptions of those interviewed" in "The Action Report" gave the impression to most readers that those perceptions were facts. Some perceptions if not false are in dispute.

Intervention Follow-Up Questionnaire

Who initiated the contact with Pete Steinke?

a. Pastor
b. Elected leader
c. ✓Judicatory
d Member at large

Committee on Ministry recommended consultant

2. Briefly describe the conflict. *Pastor acting inappropriately - lying, dating while separated, poor manager, many conflic*

3. What did you want the intervention to accomplish? *Bring session to uniform understanding and appropriate action steps*

4 Who would accomplish it?

a. Pastor
b. Pastor and Leaders
c. ✓Leaders
d. Congregation at large

5 Did you implement other conflict resolution methods prior to Steinke's intervention? *no*

6 How much did conflict interfere with the mission of the church?

Lowest				Highest
1	2	3	4	⑤

How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves before intervention?

Lowest			Highest
2	3	4	⑤

8 How conflicted were the leaders of the church themselves after the intervention?

Lowest		Highest	
2	3	④	5

9. How does your organization define leadership?

a. ✓Pastor
b. ✓Pastor/Governing Board
c. Governing Board
d. Hidden or Silent Leadership (Insiders)
e. Congregational Assembly

10. Following the intervention, has the definition of intervention changed?

Not at All   Completely

①   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Because of the intervention has the leadership changed?

Not at All   Completely   *Probably will result in termination -*

1   2   3   4   5

12. How effective were the follow-up components of the intervention process?

a. Teaching

Not at All   Completely

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **⑤**

b Interviewing

Not at All   Completely

1   2   3   **④**   **5**

c Information Gathering and Report Giving

Not at All   Completely

2   **3**   **④**   **5**

d Follow up

Not at All   Completely

1   2   3   **④**   5

13. Were the goals attainable?

Not at All   Completely

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **⑤**

165

14 Were the goals obtained?

Undeterminal at th time. Administrative Commission on hand presently.

Not at All   Completely

3   4   5

What part did intervention play in getting you where you are today?

None   Totally

2   3   4   (5)

16. Would you recommend this process again?

No   Yes

2   3   4   (5)

17. Did the Pastor feel the process was effective?

Not at All   Completely

(1)   2   3   4   5

18 Did the leaders feel the process was effective?

Not at All   Completely

1   2   3   (4)   5

9. Did the congregation feel the process was effective?

Not at All   Completely

2   (3)   4   5

20 Are you still using this process?

Not at All   Completely

2   3   (4)   5

Please return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided to

Rev. Paul Meyer

10408 Hwy. 290 West

Austin, TX 78736

Petr was expert. Our Session is evenly split regarding Some folk are in denial face thind.

166

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED

Anonymous. *The Perfect Church Church* [Internet]; available from
      http://www.geocities.com/lorisgarden/Perfect Church.html; accessed 19 October
      2004.

Beattie, Melody, Codependent No More (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1987).

Borden, Paul Dr. "The Only Constant in a Healthy Congregation, Besides the Gospel is
      Change." Dr. Borden's Seedlings : 1-2, August 1, 2004,Journal online. Available from
      American Baptist Churches of the West.

Bossart, Donald E., "Growing Through Conflict" [Internet]; available from
      http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=297; accessed 25 September
      2006.

Byrd, Joseph. "Reflection on Parish Conflict: Occasions Without Compromise." Journal of
      the American Academy of Ministry (Fall 1994).

Cloud, Henry and Townsend, John, *Boundaries: Face to Face* (Grand Rapids, MI;
      Zondervan, 2003).

Conner, George, ed., Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner
      (San Francisco: Harper, 1992).

Dudley, Carl S. "Conflict: Synonym for Congregation," Faith Communities Today
      [Internet]; available from
      http://fact.hartsem.edu/research/fact2000/topical_article3.htm.

Dudley, Carl S. and Sally A. Johnson. Energizing the Congregation: Images That Shape
      Your Church's Ministry. Westminster: John Knox Press, 1993.

Friedman, Edwin H., Draft "Bowen Theory and Therapy," to be included in the revised
      edition of *The Handbook of Family Therapy*, ed. A. S. Gurman and D. P. Kniskern
      (New York: Brunner-Mazel, in press, 1991).

_____. "Family Systems in the Church and Synagogue" Seminar, Faith Lutheran Church,
      Austin, TX, 1990.

_____. *Generation to Generation* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985).

_____. "Secrets and Systems." Bridgebuilders Workshop, Austin, Texas, (Austin,
      2002), mimeographed handout.

Galic, Karl, interview by author, Austin, TX 1997

Hartung, Bruce. "Minister to Minister," *Texas District Church Professional Newsletter* 30 (April-June 1994),

Hester, Doug, personal email to author, summer 2006.

Hirsch, John, Interview with author in Austin, Texas on 17 October 2006.

Hodges,Wade, "Functional Range- Page 97ff" *Healthy Congregation* [Internet]; available from http://www.wadehodges.com/booksummaries/healthycongregations.htm; accessed 12 September 2006.

Hybels, Bill, "Illustrations," [online] Sermon Central, available from <sermoncentral.com>.

Neil S. Jacobson and Alan S. Gurman, ed. *Clinical Handbook of Marital Therapy* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1986).

Johnston, Ted. "Five Habits of a Healthy Congregation." [Online] Communications Network, 2000. Available from <Gospel.com>.

Kerr, Michael E. and Bowen, Murray, *Family Evaluation* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988).

Kober, Ted, *Confession and Forgiveness: Professing Faith as Ambassadors of Reconciliation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002).

Laskowski, Rich. "Understanding Leadership & Church Relationships," Lazarus Ministries [Internet]; available from http://www.lazurusministries.com; accessed 3 October 2006.

Leadership Journal,"What Does A Healthy Church Look Like? (Part 1)," [Internet]; available from http://www.ctlibrary.com/le/1997/summer/71334a.html; accessed 12 March 2006.

MacLean, Paul, M.D., "Expanding Lifestyle Learning," New Horizons for Leaning [Internet]; available from http://www.newhorizons.org/future/Creating_the_Future/crfut_maclean.html.; accessed 9 June 2005.

Matthews, Lawrence, "Ministry to Congregations as Family Systems,: Resources for Workshop Participants [Internet] available from http://www.leadershipinministry.com/workshop_participant_resou.htm; accessed on 10 September 2006.

McGoldrick, M.S.W., Monica, and Gerson, Ph.D., Randy. Genograms in Family

Assessment. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985.

Newberger, Kenneth C. "Theological Foundations for Resolving Church Conflict." [Online] Mediate.com, 2001. Available from <www.mediate.com/articles.cfm>.

Peacemaker Ministries, an organization dedicated to equipping and assisting Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically. www.peacemaker.net , accessed February 11, 2008.

_____. "Church Conflict Intervention," Peacemaker Ministries [Internet]; available from: http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKLFTOBHIpH/b958333/k.6D6F/Our_Distinctiv e_Approach_to_Church_Conflict_Intervention.htm; accessed 12 September 2006.

_____. "The Four G's," [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/6.958149/k.303A/the_Four_Gs.ht m; accessed 12 September 2006.

_____. "Peacemakers Pledge," [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKLFLTOBIpH/b.958159/k.A440/Peacemakers_ Pledge.htm.;accessed 12 September 2006.

_____. "Regarding Christian Conciliation," [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKLFTOBHIpH/b931479/k.8151/FAQs_Regardin g_Christian_Conciliation.htm; accessed 12 September 2006.

_____. "Slippery Slope," [Internet]; available from http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/958151/The_Slippery_Slope_of _Conflict.htm.; accessed 12 September 2006.

Powell, Colin *Leadership Excellence,* Vol. 23, No. 6 (June 2006).

Redner, Lewis H. "O Little Town of Bethlehem," original text by Phillips Brook in *Lutheran Worship,* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982).

Richardson, Ronald W., *Becoming a Healthier Pastor,* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

_____. *Creating a Healthier Church,* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

Sande, Ken, *The Peace Maker: A Biblical Guide to Solving Conflict,* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

Seneca, Roman Philosopher mid 1st century A.D. [Internet]; available from http://en.thinkexist.com/quotes/seneca; accessed 4 May 2006.

Steinke, Peter "Bridgebuilders Workbook," (Austin, 2002), mimeographed.

_____. Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No *Matter What*, (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006).

_____. "Healthy Congregations" [Internet]; available from http://www.wadehodges.com/booksummaries/healthycongregations.htm; accessed 5 March 2006.

_____. "How healthy is your congregation?" The Lutheran, April, 1996, 1-5.

_____. How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations As Emotional Systems (Herndon: An Alban Institute Publication, 1993).

_____. Interview by author, 23 October 2005, Austin, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church.

_____. "The Congregation as an Emotional System," New Creation 5, no. 1.

Walsh, Froma, Normal Family Processes (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1982).

Warren, Rick. "Resolving Conflict In Your Church." Ministry Tool Box 40 (2002): 1.