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POSITIVE FACTORS RELATED TO THE DECISION TO STUDY FOR THE OFFICE OF
THE MINISTRY BY MEN OF THE LUTHERAN SYNOD OF NICARAGUA
(IGLESIA LUTERANA SÍNODO DE NICARAGUA/LUTHERAN CHURCH—CANADA)

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

By
Edmund D. Auger
February 2023

Approved by:	Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.	MAP Advisor
	Dr. David J. Peter	Reader
	Dr. Ely Prieto	Reader

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The MAP is dedicated to Cherie, faithful witness of the Gospel, wife, mother, Lita, missionary servant and deaconess without whose love, enduring patience, and relentless encouragement the MAP would not have become a reality.

Proverbs 31:10–31

¡Te quiero mucho!

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	The Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
BC	Book of Concord
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i> . American ed. 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–86.
ESV	English Standard Version of the Bible
SA	Smalcald Articles
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
Tr	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

CHRONOLOGY OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF NICARAGUA

- 1821 Central America declares independence from Spain.
- 1852 Managua is named as the capital city.
- 1855 U.S. mercenary William Walker invades Nicaragua with intention to secure rights for a canal and declares himself president. Walker is subsequently recognized by U.S. government.
- 1857 Walker is overthrown, and constitutional rule reestablished.
- 1860 Treaty of Managua. Portion of Atlantic coastline declared a reserve under British protection.
- 1893 Nationalist José Santos Zelaya comes to power.
- 1894 U.S. troops intervene four times in five years.
- 1905 British relinquish claims to the Mosquito Coast. Harrison-Altamirano Treaty grants protection to Miskito and Creole populations.
- 1910 U.S. troops intervene. U.S. places Nicaragua under customs receivership for the next thirty-eight years.
- 1912 U.S. marines begin twenty years of repeated occupation of Nicaragua.
- 1916 Bryan-Chamorro Treaty confirms Nicaragua as U.S. protectorate.
- 1926 U.S. marines occupy Nicaragua until 1933 and mount a counterinsurgency war against a peasant army led by Augustino C. Sandino.
- 1932 Liberal candidate Juan Batista Sacassa elected president.
- 1934 Following withdrawal of U.S. marines Nicaraguan National Guard is led by Anastasio Somoza Garcia. Augustino C. Sandino is murdered.
- 1936 Somoza-lead coup removes Sacassa as president. Somoza is elected.
- 1950 Somoza is reelected, and new constitution is approved.
- 1956 Somoza is assassinated. The National Assembly elects his son, Luis, to complete the term of office.
- 1957 Luis Somoza is elected president.
- 1961 *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) is formed by Carlos Fonseca,

Tomás Borge, and Silvio Mayorga.

- 1967 Luis Somoza dies; his brother Anastasio Somoza Debayle is elected president.
- 1971 Congress dissolves itself, abrogates the constitution, and transfers executive power to President Somoza pending a new constitution.
- 1972 Earthquake devastates capital city of Managua. Somoza declares martial law and is named chairman of National Emergency Committee.
- 1974 Anastasio Somoza is reelected.
- 1977 Martial law is lifted. FSLN begins major armed offensive.
- 1978 Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of *La Prensa* and opposition leader, is assassinated.
- FSLN commandos seize National Palace. FSLN forces take Masaya, León, Chinandega, and Estelí for several days.
- 1979 FSLN forces take León and Matagalpa and march on Managua. FSLN enters Managua and installs a revolutionary government.
- 1981 U.S. government cuts off \$9.8 million in food aid to Nicaragua.
- Reagan administration authorizes \$19 million to organize a counterrevolutionary (*contra*) army based in Honduras.
- 1982 10,000 Miskitos flee Nicaragua to Honduras. U.S. Congress approves \$24 million in covert aid to the *contras*.
- 1983 The Contadora Group (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama) seek to avoid direct war between Nicaragua and Honduras. *Contras* engage in large-scale invasion of Nicaragua from Honduras. Nicaragua denounces U.S. support for the *contras* in the United Nations. *Contras* continue heavy offensive and sabotage the ports of Corinto and Sandino.
- 1984 The International Court of Justice condemns U.S. support of the *contras* including involvement in the mining of ports and orders U.S. to cease support of the *contras*.
- Nicaragua agrees to Contadora peace proposal and holds elections. FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega is elected to a six-year term with sixty-seven percent of the popular vote.
- 1985 U.S. declares trade embargo against Nicaragua and approves \$27 million in humanitarian aid to the *contras*.

- 1986 Additional \$100 million *contra* aid package approved by U.S. Congress.
- 1987 New constitution is signed. Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua sign Esquipulas II peace accord.
- 1988 Nicaraguan government enters into direct talks with the *contras*. Provisional cease-fire signed in Sapoá. *Contras* break off peace talks.
- Hurricane Joan causes an estimated \$800 million in damages in Nicaragua.
- 1989 Central American presidents call for a plan to disband the *contra* army. U.S. Congress approves \$49.75 million in nonlethal aid to keep the *contras* intact.
- Nicaraguan Opposition Union (UNO) selects Violeta Chamorro and Virgilio Godoy as candidates in the 1990 presidential elections.
- Following escalation in *contra* attacks, government defensive response, and suspension of the cease-fire agreement, government and *contra* representatives meet face-to-face to work out a plan for *contra* demobilization.
- 1990 Violeta Chamorro wins election as president with 60 percent of the popular vote. FSLN assumes its new role as national opposition party.¹

¹ Tom Barry, *Central America Inside Out* (New York: Grove, 1991), 347–50.

CHRONOLOGY LUTHERAN CHURCH—CANADA MISSION IN NICARAGUA

- 1995 LCC Exploratory Trip to Nicaragua
- 1997 Rev. Sandor Arguello begins work in Chinandega
- 1998 Hurricane Mitch devastates Nicaragua.
- 1999 First Seminary Cycle begins.
- 2002 First Seminary Class Graduation
- 2004 Second Seminary Cycle begins
- 2006 Second Seminary Class Graduation
- 2007 Third Seminary Cycle begins.
- 2008 ILSN organizes as National Church
- 2008 LCC and ILSN Protocol Signed
- 2009 Third Seminary Class Graduation
- 2011 Fourth Seminary Cycle begins
- 2014 LCC, ILSN, LCMS Protocol is signed
- 2015 Fourth Seminary Class Graduation

ABSTRACT

Auger, Edmund D. “Positive Factors Related to the Decision to Study for the Office of the Ministry by Men of The Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua (Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua / Lutheran Church—Canada).” Doctor of Ministry. Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary, 2023. 128 pages.

The Lutheran Church throughout the world needs a continuing supply of men to serve as faithful pastors in the public ministry of the Gospel. The identification and spiritual formation of candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry is critical for the young national church body, Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua).

This project is a study of the life experiences of ten men who made the decision to study for the ministry in the Seminario Reforma of the Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua. The seminary program is facilitated by Lutheran Church—Canada. The field research was completed through interviews of a diverse group of men who belong to the Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua. The research questionnaire sought responses regarding their journey from first contact with the Lutheran Church to the decision to study for the ministry. The selection of the research participants was not influenced by their status in ministry service. The field research, together with the literature review, informs the summary report and recommendations to the Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua and its partner church, Lutheran Church—Canada. The cultural context of Nicaragua and the history of Lutheran church planting place natural limits on the outcomes of the field research.

The findings of this project may shed light on efforts to identify candidates for the pastoral ministry in similar settings, such as the neighboring countries of Central America. Finally, the project recognizes the challenges associated with sustaining theological education in an environment where the Lutheran Church exists in the early stages of institutional formation.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCTION

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. 2:1–2)

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the MAP in the context of a personal story of the journey toward the ministry of the gospel in the Lutheran Church and through a brief account of the origins of the Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua in the contexts of Lutheran Church—Canada missions in Nicaragua and the political and religious landscape of the country. St. Paul recognized the future of the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ depended on a supply line of faithful men. As the apostle mentored Timothy in the work of ministry, he cited the need to entrust the local ministry of the word and sacraments to others. Across twenty centuries of church history, men have responded to God’s calling to serve in the work of pastoral ministry.

The vocation of pastoral ministry is grounded in the life of Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who called untrained men to Himself. He taught them the essence of kingdom work through His words and deeds. After His resurrection and ascension to the Father, these words and deeds of Jesus were recorded by the evangelists. The gospel narratives became the foundation for teaching the fulfillment of God’s salvation through faith alone in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit has called some men from catechesis to the greater responsibility of serving as shepherds of emerging faith communities. The pattern of passing on the message of salvation was already established by God in relationship with His people. Psalm 78 narrates God’s ongoing self-proclamation which resulted in the call of young David as a shepherd over Israel.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,

things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children,
but tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

He established a testimony in Jacob
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers
to teach to their children,
that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and arise and tell them to their children,
so that they should set their hope in God
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;
and that they should not be like their fathers,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.

He rejected the tent of Joseph;
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,
but he chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion, which he loves.
He built his sanctuary like the high heavens,
like the earth, which he has founded forever.
He chose David his servant
and took him from the sheepfolds;
from following the nursing ewes he brought him
to shepherd Jacob his people,
Israel his inheritance.
With upright heart he shepherded them
and guided them with his skillful hand (Ps. 78:1–8, 67–72).

The Holy Scriptures are the foundation for training in ministry. The forward movement of the witness of Christ in the world encountered new people, languages, and cultures. Initial efforts to translate the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular were viewed as a threat to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Translators were regarded as enemies of the true Church and labeled as heretics worthy of execution. Nevertheless, the Word of God was necessary for the work of

proclaiming and teaching the faith to the next generation in every land. The spread of Christianity from its place of origin through western Europe toward the western hemisphere was fueled by emigrating people groups who carried the faith in their own language. The advance of the Lutheran Reformation from its roots in Wittenberg to regions throughout the world required the Word of God in the language of the people. An enduring commitment to catechesis as the work of equipping the saints of God for the ministry of the gospel resulted in the planting of new communities of faith.

Genesis for the MAP—Personal Pathway

The genesis for the Major Applied Project for the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary was present in my pre-seminary vocational journey. I have defined the pre-seminary experience as a journey from “first thoughts” about ministry to “decision for ministry.” I acknowledge that God was at work calling me to the pastoral ministry early in my life.

“Have you ever considered going to the seminary to become a pastor?” I remember the question with considerable clarity. I had completed instruction to become a communicant member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Keene, New Hampshire. Following my adult Confirmation, Rev. Stephen Brusco invited me to share an assimilation conversation. I remember that he asked how I might like to serve in the ministry of the congregation. I do not remember my response to his question. I do remember the affirmation that followed: “You should pray about becoming a pastor.” I remember thinking to myself, “This man must be crazy! Me, a pastor?” I was taken by complete surprise. In that moment, I did not understand what motivated him to encourage me to consider God’s calling to the ministry of the Gospel. The conversation with Pastor Brusco was the formal beginning of my pre-seminary experience that culminated with my acceptance for admission to Concordia Theological Seminary. After more than thirty-seven years in the ministry, I view that conversation with Pastor Brusco as the *continuation* of my pathway to the

decision for ministry—a pathway that God had begun to pave for me earlier in life. It was a path with ups and downs, filled with blessings and crosses.

God first called me to new life in His Son, Jesus Christ, when He made me His child through Holy Baptism. I was received into God’s kingdom as an infant in September 1951 at St. Bernard’s Catholic Church, Keene, New Hampshire. I was the firstborn of two children. My brother, William, was born three years later in September 1954. My parents, Edmund and Elizabeth Auger, were devout Catholics. My spiritual life in childhood was completely informed by my experience as a member of the Roman Catholic Church. At the age of six, I was enrolled at St. Joseph’s Catholic School. St. Joseph’s was a significant component of St. Bernard’s parish ministry. All of the teachers in the school were nuns who belonged to the Order of the Sisters of Mercy. The parish typically had two or three priests in residence. Life in the parish and school was shaped and formed by the devotional practices of the traditional Catholic parish.

My religious life during childhood was filled with the rites and symbols of the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church. My recollections merit reflection given the influence of my experience on my formation in the Christian faith. My family attended Mass every Sunday. During the second grade I was prepared to receive my First Communion. Subsequently, I received formal training to serve as an altar boy in the parish. The worship schedule of the parish included four Masses every Sunday morning. Numerous other opportunities to serve in the sanctuary were available in daily Masses led by the priests, additional Masses for special Feast days and liturgical seasons, the Stations of the Cross during Lent, and other extraordinary rites.

The role of the altar boy in the regular celebration of the Mass was interactive with the priest. Altar boys were required to commit the responses for the Latin Mass to memory. I did so

with reverence and diligence. All my memories of service as an altar boy during elementary and middle school are consistent in terms of my spiritual experience. I experienced a complex set of emotions as I vested in cassock and surplice to serve during the Mass. Awe, reverence, and the fear of God's punishment for sin attended my experience. The sanctuary featured a large and detailed crucifix hanging over the fixed altar. My eyes were frequently drawn to the nails in Jesus' hands and feet. Lenten devotional life included the weekly celebration of the Stations of the Cross. I readily embrace "Christ crucified" in my spiritual life due to my practical roots in the Catholic Church.

Faithful practice in the Catholic Church included making private confession to the priest on a regular, if not weekly, basis. I recall the anxiety associated with stepping into that small dark space of the private confessional: "Bless me father, for I have sinned. It has been seven days since my last confession." The outcome of the experience was spiritually confusing. It was a relief to hear that my sins were forgiven. I was left with the daunting task of saying the prayers, "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," multiples times as penance in response. Given my tendency toward perfectionism, my prayers at the altar rail were not reassuring. Daily prayers to Mary and the saints were common practice. I have no recollection of ever feeling entirely safe from God's punishment for my sins. I do recall frequent encouragement to pursue good works that would merit an additional measure of God's grace.

During my eighth grade at St. Joseph's school in November 1964, my family was confronted with a crisis that changed our lives forever. My father, Edmund, was scheduled for a routine surgical procedure. My dad was experiencing chronic sinus problems. The doctor anticipated that a simple procedure would be therapeutic. Tragically, a large frontal brain tumor was discovered during the surgery. My father was diagnosed with terminal cancer. One year

following the surgery, my father passed away at age thirty-seven. My dad was my hero. He served in the U.S. Navy on aircraft carriers of the Pacific fleet near the end of World War II. My father was a pious Catholic, quiet, and fervent in faith during his latter days. In the aftermath of my father's death, I found myself angry with God. I became convinced that God had acted unjustly in allowing my father to die of cancer. My personal faith was rocked. The trauma of my father's death overwhelmed every member of my nuclear family. We were left in great emotional and spiritual need with little support from extended family and friends.

A parish priest who had recently arrived in our community engaged our family in ministry presence during the final weeks of my father's life. I came to understand that he took advantage of the vacuum created by my father's death. We appreciated the priest's apparent kindness and the attention he afforded to me, my brother, and my mother. My mother was deeply wounded by the loss of my dad. She was not aware of the unhealthy nature of the priest's attraction to me. For a period of two years following my father's death, my personal trauma was exacerbated by the unhealthy nature of attention and affection that I received from the "father."

God intervened in my life with His grace when I made first acquaintance with Cherie Crossman at age sixteen. Cherie introduced me to the fullness of God's grace in Christ at Trinity Lutheran Church. Many of the symbols of the Christian faith in the Lutheran Church were familiar to me. I saw a crucifix, an altar, candles, and liturgical colors. We sang hymns and said prayers to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet one element of the faith was new to me. God opened my eyes, mind, and heart to His Word in the Holy Scriptures. For the first time in my life, I was reading the Word of God.

My journey to communicant membership in the Lutheran Church did not happen quickly. Cherie and I were married at Trinity Lutheran Church after a four-year courtship. Nevertheless,

the Catholic Church still had a functional grip on me. In an act of loyalty to my family heritage, I sought the formal approval of the Catholic Church for my marriage to Cherie. A parish priest attended our wedding ceremony to validate the permission granted by the Diocese for a legitimate Christian marriage.

During the first five years of marriage to Cherie, I was not a spiritually mature husband. I did not provide the leadership for our household that Cherie deserved. I was not honoring God with my life in worship, service to His Church, and the stewardship of His gifts to me. Shortly after our fifth wedding anniversary, God called me to attention. Our son, Edmund, was born on March 21, 1977. Pastor Stephen Brusco visited the hospital shortly after Edmund's birth. I was overwhelmed with the joy of our first child, God's gift of a son. Yet once more, Cherie conceded my loyalty to the Catholic Church. We planned to baptize Edmund in a private ceremony at St. Bernard parish. The experience was an embarrassing disappointment. The lead priest of the parish arrived in the sanctuary at the appointed time in an obvious state of intoxication. He failed to properly speak Edmund's name in the celebration of the sacrament. Cherie was justifiably upset. I never returned to the Catholic Church following Edmund's Baptism. Several years later, a respected professor at Concordia Theological Seminary assured Cherie that the sacrament was valid. Cherie took comfort in the water and the Word of the Trinitarian formula.

I began to worship regularly with Cherie at Trinity Lutheran Church. We were assured that there was no need to baptize Edmund again. I began to reflect on my life in the faith. God convicted me of the need to study the Catechism and embrace the spiritual responsibility of my life as a husband and father. Pastor Brusco responded enthusiastically to my request to study for Confirmation in the Lutheran Church. My employment responsibilities at that time required me to work evenings. Pastor Brusco proposed a daytime Confirmation class for adults. I was the

only student. The one-hour class frequently extended to two-hour conversations. Pastor Brusco introduced me to the Word of God as the sole authority in the life of every Christian. I remember anticipating our scheduled time for Confirmation instruction as a highlight of each week. When I was confirmed as a communicant member of Trinity Lutheran Church, some members were surprised. They assumed that I had previously been instructed in the faith. I remember feeling a sense of joy and satisfaction that I was becoming familiar with the Word of God. Soon after the rite of Confirmation, Pastor Brusco invited me back to his office for the prayerful conversation regarding service in the life of the church. “Have you ever considered going to the seminary to become a pastor?”

Within a few months, I accepted a transfer with my employer in the insurance business. Cherie and I relocated with our son, Edmund, to Lakeland, Florida. Pregnant with our second child, Cherie drove a large U-Haul truck to Florida. We immediately looked for a congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) where we could continue our life as a young family in the faith together. We were delighted to discover St. Paul Lutheran Church located near our new apartment home. Cherie’s parents also discovered a new employment opportunity and relocated to Lakeland. Our first Sunday in worship at St. Paul was a surprising experience. Cherie had been faithfully nurtured in the small mission congregation in our hometown. St. Paul Lutheran Church was a vibrant and growing congregation with approximately six hundred people in worship attendance. Within days of our first worship experience, we received an unexpected visit from an evangelism team representing St. Paul Lutheran Church. We enjoyed pleasant conversation. The congregation embraced us as a young family. We found a church home. I continued in my season of pre-seminary spiritual growth through the study of the Word.

Pastor Wilbern Michalk was an enthusiastic evangelist for Christ. He encouraged me

toward spiritual growth through regular worship, Bible study, and Kennedy Evangelism training. One year following our relocation to Florida we returned for a visit to Keene, New Hampshire. In a brief conversation with Pastor Brusco, he asked me the second question: “What have you done about the seminary?” I answered honestly, “Nothing yet.” Pastor Brusco’s response was respectfully assertive: “I really believe that you need to pray about the pastoral ministry.”

I recall driving back to Florida with Cherie and beginning a more serious discussion about the possibility of life in Lutheran parish ministry. Cherie had consistently demonstrated the spiritual maturity of a woman well trained in the faith. Cherie was passionate about the Word of God. I became increasingly more aware of Cherie’s zeal for the Word and her openness to a life together as a family in Christ’s service. Our second year at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lakeland included more Bible study, a brief term service as an elder of the congregation, and many wonderful evangelism conversations with visitors in worship. My pre-seminary experience came to an end following a decisive prayer in the Spring of 1981. I rejected an offer for a promotion with my employer. I made the decision for the ministry. We sold our recently purchased starter home and packed our belongings. As a young couple with two small children, we headed for Fort Wayne, Indiana, to begin life as a seminary student family.

LCC Mission in Nicaragua: Theological Education as a Primary Vehicle for Mission

The Lutheran Church throughout the world needs a continuing supply of men to serve as faithful pastors in the public ministry of the Gospel. The identification and spiritual formation of candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry is critical for all confessional Lutheran churches. Dale A. Meyer, former president of Concordia Seminary, emphasized the need to embrace this challenge in place and time. Citing declining enrollment at more than half of seminaries in the United States accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), Meyer commented:

It is one-dimensional to say we need more students...I suggest we understand our challenge to be recruiting the next generation of pastors who will lead congregations in the dramatically different twenty-first century. The differences between the American culture in which my home congregation formed me and the coming environment for congregations are amazing.¹

Despite the changing cultural context, Meyer affirms the essence of congregational life will continue to be "...gathering to hear the Shepherd's voice."² One expects the seminary president to hope for more students, but Dale A. Meyer also reminds us that the salvation of souls is at stake in the call to ministry. If church members and congregations do not prayerfully join forces to encourage more men toward the call to serve, "congregations without pastors will languish and, most sadly, people will wander away from the Savior without an under-shepherd to seek them out."³

The MAP seeks to contribute to the challenging need for twenty-first century pastors to serve Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN), an autonomous confessional Lutheran Church with administrative offices in Chinandega, Nicaragua. The Holy Spirit has been powerfully at work through the missionary initiative of Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) in Nicaragua since 1996.

The core elements of Word and Sacrament ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ remain the same regardless of location and culture. Church planting efforts face unique challenges informed by the temporal and material context of each setting. The diligence and perseverance of LCC leadership in Nicaragua is noteworthy. An introduction to the context of their mission work is appropriate.

Nicaragua is geographically located in the center of the Central American region. The

¹ Dale A. Meyer, "Low Seminary Enrollments," *Concordia Journal* 43, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 12.

² Meyer, "Low Seminary Enrollments," 13.

³ Meyer, "Low Seminary Enrollments," 14.

country shares a northern border with Honduras. Costa Rica lies to the south. Nicaraguan political history begins in common historical and cultural ground with all Central America countries. Diverse indigenous people groups lived in the region for centuries prior to three hundred years of control by Spain through colonial occupation. People in Nicaragua began efforts to politically individuate from Mexico and a Central American regional federation following their declaration of independence from Spain in 1821. Tom Barry has summarized nearly two centuries of Nicaraguan political history in his work, *Central America Inside Out*. The details of Nicaraguan history exceed the scope of this paper. Excerpts from Barry's chronological history of events through 1990 are presented in the front matter of this MAP prior to the chronology of LCC mission work in Nicaragua. As Tom Barry concluded his writing in 1990, he suggested trends in the political future of Nicaragua which included:

- The end of the active war in Nicaragua would give rise to new conflicts and political factions resulting in prolonged instability.
- The inability to attract substantial foreign aid would limit development and economic recovery would continue to be elusive.
- The coalition party UNO would undergo fragmentation and face tough political and economic challenges of governing.
- The FSLN faced the task of redefining itself as a revolutionary front, a democratic opposition party, and leader of the popular movement, but the pragmatism and maturity of the FSLN would likely keep the party strong.⁴

In one way or another, all of Tom Barry's speculations have proven to be accurate. Daniel Ortega persisted as the leader of the FSLN. Following failed attempts at reelection in 1996 and 2001, Ortega was reelected president in 2006 and took office in January 2007. Ortega has retained control of the presidency through a series of constitutional reforms and the removal of

⁴ Barry, *Central America*, 351.

term limits on the presidency. Ortega's government is characterized as increasingly unilateral and repressive of political opposition. Widespread opposition to Ortega's policies culminated in public demonstrations in the spring of 2018. Independent reports suggest that more than 300 Nicaraguans were killed by police and counterdemonstrators in efforts to suppress the large public displays of discontent. Perhaps as many as 100,000 Nicaraguans have fled the country since the 2018 demonstrations. Daniel Ortega's government has established strong alliances with the governments of Cuba, Venezuela, and Russia. President Ortega is increasingly isolated from his counterparts in Central America. A statement by U.S. President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. following the presidential election held on November 7, 2021, casts a pall over the present sociopolitical context of Nicaragua.

What Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, orchestrated today was a pantomime election that was neither free nor fair, and most certainly not democratic. The arbitrary imprisonment of nearly 40 opposition figures since May, including seven potential presidential candidates, and the blocking of political parties from participation rigged the outcome well before election day.

We call on the Ortega-Murillo regime to take immediate steps to restore democracy in Nicaragua, and to immediately release those unjustly imprisoned for speaking out against abuses and clamoring for the right of Nicaraguans to vote in free and fair elections.⁵

The religious history of Nicaragua shares common ground with Mexico and most countries in Latin America. The Catholic Church dominated religious life and practice in Nicaragua during the three centuries of control by Spain. Although the Catholic Church was consistent in its opposition to the revolution in Nicaragua, it has retained strong influence over the Nicaraguan

⁵ Office of the President of the United States, The White House Government Briefing Room Statement, November 7, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/07/statement-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-on-nicaraguas-sham-elections/>.

people throughout the twentieth century. The Moravian Church sent missionaries to the Atlantic Coastal region during the time of the British protectorate. Ultimately, in 1980 the newly established government of the FSLN ratified the “Document on Religion,” which guaranteed freedom of worship and respect for all religious beliefs.⁶ The Nicaraguan government assumed a conciliatory posture with the Catholic Church and several priests were appointed to high positions within the new government. The Catholic Church gained popular influence in the context of the Sandinista revolution when Jesuit priest Father Fernando Cardenal agreed to serve as leader of the National Literacy Crusade.⁷ The Vatican opposed Father Cardenal’s willingness to serve in the government’s program citing the Code of Canon Law which prohibits priests from holding political offices. Following attempts to encourage Father Cardenal to separate from the Sandinista government, he was suspended from the priesthood in 1985. After his resignation from the Sandinista party, Father Cardenal was reinstated to the Jesuit order in 1997. He died in February 2016.

Amid new tensions, Pope John Paul II visited Nicaragua in March 1983. He celebrated an open-air mass in Managua which was attended by 700,000 people. During the Esquipulas peace process in 1987, Cardinal Obando was named to lead the National Reconciliation Commission with the goal of pursuing a cease-fire with the *contras*. The new freedom of religious practice in Nicaragua opened the door for the entrance of evangelical missionaries. By 1990 over one hundred non-Catholic denominations could be identified with some presence in Nicaragua. Pentecostalism dominates in most non-Catholic faith communities.⁸

A view of events in history under the general theme of “reformation” informs the

⁶ Barry, *Central America*, 391.

⁷ Barry, *Central America*, 391.

⁸ Barry, *Central America*, 393.

beginning of Lutheran church planting efforts in Nicaragua. The Catholic Reformation in Spain, the emergence of the Church of the Poor in Nicaragua, and the personal reformation experience of Sandor Arguello are cited for consideration.

Justo L. González offers a valuable overview in *The Story of Christianity*, where he writes, “Well before Luther’s protest, there were many who longed for an ecclesiastical reformation, and who worked toward it. This was particularly true in Spain where, under Queen Isabella and Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, the Catholic Reformation was well under way when Luther was still a young boy.”⁹ Queen Isabella had observed the poor spiritual condition of the Catholic Church and its institutions under her authority and set out to reform the convents and monasteries. Cardinal Jiménez was a scholar with particular interest in Scripture. He contributed significantly to the Spanish reformation with the publication of the *Complutensian Polyglot*, a multilingual edition of the Bible prepared by the best scholars of the day. The work in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin was finished in 1517, but not officially published until 1520. Justo González comments on the significance of this work for the Spanish Catholic Church.

Jiménez rejoiced over ‘this edition of the Bible that, at this critical time, opens the sacred sources of our religion, from which will flow a much purer theology than any derived from less direct sources.’ Such a clear affirmation of the superiority of Scripture over tradition, had it been made a few years later, would have led to accusations of ‘Lutheran heresy.’¹⁰

Ultimately the battle between Luther and the Catholic Church would come down to a doctrinal understanding of the Holy Scriptures and the implications of doctrine in the daily life of the believer. In both the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church, catechesis would become the pathway for formation in the Christian faith. Catechesis was not, therefore, unusual religious

⁹ Justo L. González, *The Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 2, *The Story of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 135.

¹⁰ González, *Reformation to the Present Day*, 137.

practice in Nicaragua.

During the decade from 1970 to 1980 many young people were attracted to *comunidades de base* (base communities) throughout rural Nicaragua. Indiana Acevedo, a young Catholic lay woman, is representative of hundreds of women who served as leaders in the movement which became known as the Church of the Poor. By 1990, Acevedo had a decade of experience living and serving in a base community. Excerpts from personal reflections on her experience offer a glimpse into the difficulty of finding a pathway of peace in faith and daily living amid a volatile national political environment.

In 1978...I joined the Sandinista...my faith motivated me in my political work with the Sandinistas and in evangelization within the Christian base communities. I've never experienced conflict between political work and doing base community work. They're different, but they're not contradictory...you can train a political activist...in six months...Forming leaders in the base communities is a much slower process. The Bible, not political analysis, is the basis for raising people's awareness. At times I and others in the base communities have had problems because people in the neighborhood see us doing political work and claim that we're not really Christians. Most people do not understand the integration of faith and politics. After the Sandinista defeat in the elections in February 1990, our people were very demoralized. Looking back, we can identify some of our mistakes...our focus was more often on the material rather than the spiritual side of defending life. This was reflected in the way we tended to choose political language rather than Biblical language...instead of reading the Bible and applying it...our plan now is to respect the process people must go through, even if it takes years.¹¹

In the aftermath of the victory by the Sandinista revolution, all the catechists who could read became literacy teachers. The Catholic hierarchy criticized the work of the base communities. Acevedo reported that they were told, "You are not part of the church. You're an arm of the Sandinistas...atheists...communists."¹² The Church of the Poor continued to work on the margins of religious life in Nicaragua as a Catholic movement with an emphasis on prayer

¹¹ Indiana Acevedo, "Seeds for a New Planting: The Church in Nicaragua," in *We Make the Road by Walking: Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean in the New Millennium*, eds. Ann Butwell, Kathy Ogle, and Scott Wright, (Washington: EPICA, 1998) 135–37.

¹² Acevedo, "Seeds for a New Planting," 139.

and biblical reflection, despite being criticized by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Acevedo concludes: “So what do we have? Only the Bible and a willingness to work and to build a Church responsive to the Gospel of Jesus.”¹³

Over the years, Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) has been blessed with mission-minded leaders that have supported the work of Lutheran missions in Nicaragua. Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan served LCC as President for twelve years (1996–2008). He was succeeded by Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee who served LCC as President for ten years (2008–2018). Additionally, Mission Executives appointed by the LCC President were instrumental in the growth and development of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua. Rev. Dr. Leonard Harms (1992–2006), Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan (2007–2009), and Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel (2010–2018) served LCC with distinction. LCC sustains a vibrant partnership with ILSN under its current leadership, Rev. Timothy Teuscher, President and Rev. Mark L. Smith, Mission Executive.

Rev. Dr. Ralph Mayan has narrated the work of the Holy Spirit through missionary servants during the first decade of LCC ministry in Nicaragua. Lutheran Church—Canada has supported church-planting ministry in Nicaragua since 1996. Key elements which influenced the growth of Lutheran ministry include: 1) sending Rev. Sandor Arguello, a Nicaraguan national who received theological training under LCC as a missionary church planter. Sandor Arguello departed Nicaragua seeking safety for his family in Canada. Through the witness of the Gospel in a LCC parish ministry, Sandor Arguello became a communicant member of the Lutheran Church—Canada and subsequently a seminary student. Rev. Sandor Arguello returned to his native country of Nicaragua as an evangelistic missionary; 2) works of mercy in response to the devastating impact of Hurricane Mitch; 3) early identification and formation of men in rural

¹³ Acevedo, “Seeds for a New Planting,” 140.

communities through personal mentoring and catechesis; and 4) development of a formal program of theological education leading to the organizing convention of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua in January 2008. Dr. Mayan's account of the origins of the Iglesia Luterana is cited below:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Eph. 3:20–21

Far More Abundantly Than All That We Ask or Think—in Mission

God richly blessed His mission carried out through Lutheran Church—Canada. One such blessing experienced, a significant development in the mission of the church, was the *establishment of theological education as the primary vehicle for international mission*. While the shift enabled the church to multiply labourers for the kingdom and proved to be cost effective and while the shift happened differently in the three areas of mission, Dr. Harms describes this shift as the natural outcome of following St. Paul's mission strategy as recorded in the book of Acts. In each of his mission journeys, St. Paul would travel from community to community sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ trusting that the Holy Spirit would work faith and bring together a community of believers. He would then, together with the community, identify labourers for the Kingdom according to the criteria described in his letters (I Timothy 3; Titus 1). These individuals would be prepared for ministry (II Timothy 2) and following preparation serve as pastors, deacons and deaconesses in their respective congregations (Acts 20:17ff). The missionary's task in those communities would then be completed and the missionary would move to a new field of mission.

To understand the movement from missionary to theological education as the *primary vehicle for Mission* in Nicaragua, one needs to briefly review the history of this mission.

Following an exploratory visit to Nicaragua in 1995 and an invitation to begin mission work in Nicaragua, Lutheran Church—Canada called Nicaragua born Pastor Sandor Arguello to serve as missionary. After some preparatory work in Winnipeg in 1997, he and his family moved taking up residence in Chinandega. Initial work was difficult. Some of those who at first were positive about the mission had moved on; others seemed to have lost interest. God however had different plans.

In 1998, Hurricane Mitch hit, and the results were devastating in the Chinandega region. Hundreds died, homes were destroyed, and a shortage of food developed. God used this disaster to create an opportunity for care and witness and at the center of this activity was Missionary Sandor Arguello. With the support of various agencies of the church and a variety of NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations) from around

the world, he was able to provide emergency care in those hurting communities. Emergency shelters were provided, food was brought in and even medical care was arranged. People soon learned that Missionary Sandor cared about them and could be trusted and with that they gave him a listening ear.

Having developed administrative skills as a regional school superintendent in Nicaragua before the revolution, Missionary Sandor put those skills to work in providing care and witness. In each of the communities in which there was need, he had the communities elect one man and one woman to serve as care providers. They would come into Chinandega to receive their allotment of emergency rations. Missionary Sandor would instruct them in a Bible lesson and send them back into their communities to care and to witness. Each week they would come and each week he would send them back and, by the power of the Spirit, communities of faith developed in Santa Patricia, Rancheria, La Joya, Potosi, El Realejo, Somotillo, El Bonete, Israel, Villa Salvadorita, El Viejo and others.

There was however only one missionary-pastor on the ground. How would these communities of faith grow having a word and sacrament ministry in their midst? Following the pattern of theological education now established in Ukraine and Thailand and with the support of the Schwan Foundation, the LCC Board for Missions and Social Ministry in cooperation with Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary (CLTS) in St. Catharines established a theological program to prepare pastors and deaconesses for the church. Students were identified in each of the communities by Missionary Sandor and the worshipping community. Many, though not all, were the original care providers identified at the very beginning.

The first theological education classes began in the fall of 1999. The classes were taught as intensive two-week courses four times a year; the instructors were selected by Dr. Roger Humann from CLTS and were held in several different retreat centres in the country. (In later years the classes were held at the Mission Centre built and dedicated in 2006). During the time when the pastoral candidates were not in class, they would serve in their respective communities as vicars under the supervision of Missionary Sandor. The deaconess students also had their internship working primarily with the women and children.

The first class was completed in 2002 with thirteen pastors being ordained and 16 deaconesses consecrated. Most of the newly ordained pastors were assigned to their respective communities of faith; several however were selected and sent out as missionaries to serve in communities not yet having a Gospel witness. My first visit to this mission field took place at this graduation and I was privileged to ordain and consecrate this class of students.

The second class began in 2004 and was completed in 2006 with seven pastors ordained and 13 deaconesses consecrated for service. Again, most were sent back into the communities of faith from which they came. What was unusual about this class was that there were three additional Nicaraguan men who were serving as missionaries in Northern Nicaragua for individual Evangelical Lutheran Church of

America (ELCA) congregations. Though aware of the confessional theological education that these candidates would receive in our program, they not only encouraged their attendance, but supported the costs of sending them.

Two additional theological education classes have been held. A third program was completed in 2009 with three pastors ordained and nine deaconesses consecrated; a fourth class was completed in 2015 with eleven pastors ordained and nine deaconesses consecrated.

The Church in Nicaragua, aware that theological education is never complete, established a program of at least two one-week intensive programs of theological education each year as well as a gathering of pastors and deaconesses for worship, study and prayer twice a month. This program continues to this very day.

Following the graduation of the first class, it became apparent that the newly formed congregations and missions together with their pastors and deaconesses wanted to take more and more responsibility for the mission and ministry in their communities and country. The child was becoming a young adult. In 2006, a committee of pastors, deaconesses and lay members of the mission with the encouragement of Lutheran Church—Canada began to lay the foundations for the establishment of a Nicaraguan Church Body and prepare a constitution for this church. This work was completed in the winter of 2007 and a founding convention of *Iglesia Luterana Sinodo de Nicaragua* was held in January of 2008. In LCC’s convention later that year, we recognized this new church as our partner in mission establishing an altar and pulpit relationship with them. Missionary Sandor Arguello’s work was now completed, and he resigned from this position in December of 2008. It was my privilege following my retirement to spend significant amounts of time in Nicaragua working with the leadership of this new church and encouraging and supporting the pastors and deaconesses in their service.¹⁴

Mission Development Through Partnerships

A statement of protocol describing the details of the relationship between Lutheran Church—Canada and Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (June 2008) affirmed the mutual partnership of both church bodies.¹⁵ ILSN currently sustains congregational ministries in Nicaragua and mission endeavors in Costa Rica. A Three-Party statement of protocol between LCC, ILSN, and LCMS (2014) affirmed the shared commitment to support and extend

¹⁴ Ralph Mayan, “Far More Abundantly Than All That We Ask or Think—in Mission.” Prepublished notes narrating history of mission work by Lutheran Church—Canada, (Winnipeg: 2021).

¹⁵ See Appendix One for more detail regarding the LCC and ILSN protocol document.

confessional Lutheran ministry presence in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Costa Rica.¹⁶ The agreement substantiated the presence of LCMS missionaries, Rev. Edmund D. Auger and Deaconess Cherie L. Auger, for ministry partnership field service during the time period from September 2014 to September 2018.

Currently twenty pastors, one deacon, nineteen deaconesses, and ten instructors are active in ministry under ILSN. The 2012–2015 class included eleven vicars, fifteen deaconess interns, and four Christian education/teacher interns. Attrition has occurred among the rostered church workers. Few pastoral candidates from the second and third seminary cycles of training have persevered in the ministry. Three men representing the 2004–2006 seminary class are active. One pastor from the 2007–2009 seminary class remains active in parish ministry. The ordination of eleven pastors at the beginning of 2015 was an encouragement for ILSN. Quality candidates who satisfy the biblical criteria for service in the pastoral ministry are critical to the long-term future of ILSN in national ministry and missionary efforts in the Central American region.

Research Problem

The Lutheran Church throughout the world needs a continuing supply of men to serve as faithful pastors in the public ministry of the Gospel. The identification and spiritual formation of candidates for Word and Sacrament ministry is critical for the young national church body, Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua. The MAP seeks to address this challenge for the church in Nicaragua by making a positive contribution to the desired outcomes of new candidates for the ministry of the Gospel.

Research Question

¹⁶ See Appendix Two for more detail regarding the LCC, ILSN, and LCMS protocol document.

What were the positive factors that encouraged men to decide to study for the Office of the Ministry during the first twenty years of mission work in Nicaragua? How might field research reveal the positive factors in a way that would be helpful for the long-term future of the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua? How might the learned outcomes from the field research be useful in similar contexts?

Research Purpose

The purpose of the field research is to identify and summarize the positive factors that contributed to the affirmative decision by men in Nicaragua to study for the ministry. The field research seeks to strengthen the national church body, Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua, in its capacity to apply the learned outcomes in a way that would encourage the next generation of men toward the decision to study for the ministry. The field research contemplates the possibility that acquired learning may be useful in other similar Lutheran ministry contexts.

The leadership of ILSN, LCC, and LCMS agree that this research project is timely. The research findings will be valuable for the efforts to encourage men toward the decision for Word and Sacrament ministry in Nicaragua. Anticipated outcomes include the opportunity to grow in appreciation for the nature and importance of the pre-seminary experience in the life of the candidate for pastoral ministry. Best practices for identifying and nurturing quality candidates for ministry may be developed and further informed through the field research.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROJECT IN RECENT RESEARCH

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Ps. 119:105)

Chapter one introduced the MAP in the context of a personal story of the journey toward the ministry of the Gospel in the Lutheran Church, and through an account of the origins of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua in the contexts of Lutheran Church—Canada missions in Nicaragua and the country’s political and religious landscape. Chapter two explores reflections on the spiritual journey to the decision for ministry through a literature review. Diverse contexts of Christian tradition offer input on the factors which have influenced a positive response to God’s calling to serve in the public ministry of the Gospel.

Originality

The research problem has not been studied in the context of the Lutheran Church of Nicaragua. The MAP seeks to make discoveries that will benefit the growth and development of the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua. Research outcomes will be shared with the pastors and mission leadership of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua and Lutheran Church—Canada. The findings of this project may shed light on efforts to identify candidates for the pastoral ministry in similar settings, such as the emerging national mission in Honduras.

Literature Review

A survey of journal articles that consider the positive factors leading to the decision for ministry are typically located in discussions pertaining to the recruitment of students for seminary studies. The literature cited considers the pathway leading to the decision for ministry by men and women who reside in the United States. The research samples featured were

culturally diverse. The MAP acknowledges the different cultural and material circumstances of life between the United States and Nicaragua. Yet the journey from first contact with the church to the decision to study for the public ministry shares common ground in human experience.

Barbara G. Wheeler has reported on research based on 2009–2010 responses to two questionnaires administered by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).¹ The research findings are reported in a structure that describes the decision for ministry in terms of pathways. Pathway themes identified by Wheeler and her associates suggest a framework for the literature review that allows for referencing similar research conducted in smaller samples located in closed environments.

J. Matthew Price studied a group of 57 first and second-year students at Mount Vernon Nazarene University.² His study outcomes focus on the influence of the social dimension of the students' life as a positive factor influencing the decision for ministry.

Current trends in the decline of the decision for ministry, as indicated by diminished seminary enrollments, have inspired articles encouraging a renewed effort to nurture youth and adults toward the vocation of the ministry of the Gospel. Jeter Basden surveyed ministerial students at Baylor University.³ David Peter draws on Martin Luther to encourage recruiting men for ministry.⁴ James Baneck calls for attention to nurture boys to manhood in vocation.⁵

¹ Barbara Wheeler, "On Our Way: A Study of Students' Paths to Seminary," based on research and analysis by Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, Anthony T. Ruger, Helen M. Blier, and Melissa Wiginton, *Auburn Studies Bulletin* 17 (February 17, 2014): 1–58.

² J. Matthew Price, "Undergraduate Perceptions of Vocational Calling into Missions and Ministry," *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 1 (2013): 87–96.

³ Jeter Basden, "The Influence of Christian Parents and Christian Home on Persons Who Respond to a Call to Vocational Christian Ministry," *Family Ministry: Empowering Through Faith*, 14 no. 1 (Spring 2000): 68–71.

⁴ David Peter, "A Timely Word from Luther on Recruiting Young Men for Pastoral Ministry," *Concordia Journal* 40, no. 1 (2014): 15–19.

⁵ James Baneck, "Raise Your Boys to be Men...Even Pastors." *Reporter. Official Newspaper of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (September 2022), Pastoral Education Supplement, 3.

Pathway to the Decision for Ministry

A description of the model and scope of the research by Barbara G. Wheeler and associates validates the use of outcomes as a framework for literature review.⁶ The research design developed a sample of seminary students to interview with data gathered from two questionnaires administered by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). The Entering Student Questionnaire (ESQ) 2009 provided a base of 6,616 responses. The Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ) 2010 offered a base of 5,699 responses. In addition, data was augmented by the inclusion of responses from Auburn Center's survey of entering seminary students in 1998. Researchers appealed to the leadership of twenty-four schools to identify between five and twenty of their best students. All students selected were studying theology for ministry at the master's level. Schools were chosen with intentional diversity of size and type of institution. The research sample was diverse in other ways. Both male and female students represented a variety of race, cultural backgrounds, and religious tradition. The study notes that "a total of 261 interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed."⁷ The reported outcomes of research conducted by Barbara G. Wheeler and associates confirm my personal experience. The process leading to the decision for ministry frequently begins early in life and extends over a period of time.

The summary report by Barbara G. Wheeler on research findings is organized under the title "Pathways: How Students Get to Seminary."⁸ The research questionnaire was designed to allow the interviewees the opportunity to respond with a narrative of their journey to the decision

⁶ For a summary of the research model, see Wheeler, "On Our Way," 5–6.

⁷ Wheeler, "On Our Way," 6.

⁸ Wheeler, "On Our Way," 7.

for ministry. Outcomes are reported under five subheadings.⁹ Four of the subheadings are useful for the purposes of the MAP and include:

- Origins
- Influences | Persons
- Influences | Organizations and Programs
- Testing

A fifth subheading of the research report addresses changes that took place in the lives of the interviewees after they had begun seminary studies. Those responses lie beyond the scope of the MAP. The four outcomes reported in the four categories cited above are significant for the MAP. “On Our Way” concludes with a reflection on the pathway ahead and implications for communities and schools. For purposes of the MAP literature review, these categories offer a structure to consider other literature resources that connect to the same or similar themes in the personal journey to the decision for ministry.

Pathway—Origins

Barbara Wheeler and associates locate the origin of the pathway to ministry for most students in the nuclear family. No person has made the decision for ministry in a vacuum. Regarding seminary students, Wheeler notes that “They do not come from nowhere.”¹⁰ Most students interviewed demonstrated that they were “deeply embedded in family, community, and religious life from childhood.”¹¹ In virtually every case for students in the Wheeler research sample, the decision for the ministry was grounded in “. . . extended formation in religious value systems and enculturation in church life.”¹² Interviewees testified to the strong influence and role

⁹ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 7–53.

¹⁰ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 7.

¹¹ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 7.

¹² Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 7.

modeling of their parents. One-third of mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox students had fathers who worked in ministry or another helping profession, such as education, health care, or social work. Similarly, almost forty percent of Protestant students' mothers and two-thirds of Roman Catholic and Orthodox students' mothers in the research sample were employed in a helping profession.¹³

Difficulty and spiritual crisis in the family of origin was more frequently manifest in the lives of students from ethnic minority communities. Students who identified as African American, Hispanic, or Asian experienced challenges in the home twice as often as Anglo students. Yet, the pattern of calling toward the decision for ministry is declining among the Anglo population and growing among African American and Hispanic students. Across the spectrum of interviewees approximately ten percent of all students reported a sense of calling toward the ministry between the ages of five and thirteen.¹⁴

Evangelical Protestantism offers frequent and specific opportunities to make a “decision” to follow Christ. Several students in the Evangelical tradition identified their initial discipleship decision as the catalyst for the beginning of their pathway to ministry. Wheeler and associates discovered three identifiable patterns of embeddedness present in the childhood and adolescent lives of students who decided for the ministry: 1) Totally immersed, 2) Organizationally hooked, and 3) Enculturation.¹⁵

Totally immersed students lived almost entirely within their own denominations. Life at home, school, and extracurricular activities was seamless. Most interviewees with a strong faith life in childhood and adolescence were organizationally hooked. While they attended public

¹³ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 8.

¹⁴ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 10.

¹⁵ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 12–13.

schools, they remained well-connected to their religious practice through organized activities for children and youth. Enculturation was most frequently the experience of students who belonged to homogenous ethnic and cultural groups, such as the African American church. Rather than denominational ties, young people were bound by a set of cultural values, ideas, language, music, preaching and worship style, and iconic leaders. It was not unusual for families in the enculturated group to cross denominational and congregational boundaries in regular practice. Family of origin patterns concerning secondary education displayed a significant influence in the future decision for ministry. Nearly seventy percent of interviewees in the Wheeler study attended public high schools. Twenty-five percent of evangelical Protestant students attended Christian schools or home schooling. Fifty percent of students in the research sample who identified as Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox attended church high schools.¹⁶

Pathway—Influences | Persons

Wheeler research identified persons who had influence on the students' decision for ministry in two categories: 1) Explicit encouragers, and 2) Role models.

More than half of all students interviewed cited the encouragement they received from a teacher or mentor to pursue the ministry. For interviewees younger than thirty years at the time of the survey more than two-thirds acknowledged positive encouragement from teachers toward the ministry.¹⁷ Role models came from both contexts of family of origin and faith community. Wheeler observed “a striking number of interviewees identified their parents as role models and said that they chose the ministry as a way to live out the values implanted by their parents.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 14.

¹⁷ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 17.

¹⁸ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 16.

In the faith community, two-thirds of all survey participants cited a pastor, youth minister, chaplain, or other church worker as a strong influence in their decision for the ministry. A noteworthy positive factor for virtually all interviewees was the experience of seeing the ministry done well. Good examples of “the ministry done well” were powerful enough even to help the student overcome initial experiences of discouragement.¹⁹ Positive cultural images of ministry are increasingly scarce in our society. It is also true that negative examples from the ministry are often highlighted by the popular media and may deflect interest from the ministry in young people.

Friends and peer groups may combine the elements of encouragement and role models. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes and The Navigators were identified most frequently as organizations that offered the opportunity to belong to a group that was socially acceptable, while also allowing the student to maintain their Christian values. Leaders and mentors of these and other youth groups were critical components of their positive experience.

Research conducted by J. Matthew Price sought answers to two questions focused on the decision for ministry:

- 1) In what particular ways have Christian university students experienced their calling into ministry?
- 2) How do they perceive their experience of a divine call and personal response?²⁰

The Price research outcomes demonstrate that the strongest influences in the lives of the participants are in their social experience. In his groundbreaking study of twenty-first century high school youth in America, Chap Clark describes the significance of the cluster for adolescent

¹⁹ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 20-21.

²⁰ Price, “Undergraduate Perceptions,” 88.

development.²¹ Clark cited significant changes in social structure for young adolescents. During the twentieth century it was common for teens to belong to one or more larger social groupings or cliques. The cliques bore generic labels for membership, such as The Popular Group, The Jocks, The Nerds, Rappers, Skaters, and Losers. At the beginning of the twenty-first century a widespread feeling of abandonment by early adolescents (fourteen or fifteen years old) occasioned the emergence of the cluster.²² Clusters are almost always gender-specific small groups numbering four to six members. Active clusters rarely include more than ten youth at a time. Cluster makeup is fluid, but demonstrates a strength grounded in organizing principles. The study notes that “clusters function as a kind of family, complete with a set of respected and controlled expectations, loyalties, and values.”²³ A key factor in the formation and evolution of clusters is the need to feel safe in an increasingly negative and hostile world. Adolescence is understood as a fifteen-year psychosocial journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance. As the young person’s journey continues following high school years, clusters play an enduring role in social and spiritual development. Clark asserts that “adults who understand this will be better prepared to care for teens in ways that make a real impact.”²⁴

J. Matthew Price’s research affirms the positive influence of a healthy cluster during the first two years of university study. Students reported the first affirmation for the vocation of ministry frequently came from peers. One student shared that “...at the end of this conversation she felt inspired to turn to God for help and even asked me if I had ever thought of being a

²¹ Chap Clark and Steve Rabey, *When Kids Hurt* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 65.

²² Clark and Rabey, *When Kids Hurt*, 66.

²³ Clark and Rabey, *When Kids Hurt*, 68.

²⁴ Clark and Rabey, *When Kids Hurt*, 78.

pastor.”²⁵ Another student commented: “Some of the ways God’s calling has been confirmed in my life is just when people watch me interact with others or speak.”²⁶

Beyond the peer social cluster, participants in the Price study identified the positive influence of their experiences in the local church, organized programs, and family. Encouragement from members of the local congregation occurred most often during high school years when students were visible to the larger faith community. Several participants reported the origin of their calling to the ministry working in camp programs. One student shared the influence of his experience at camp which resulted in a change of decision regarding the direction of his university studies prior to admission.

I worked at summer camp since I was 16 and knew that working with teens would be something I would end up doing...I was convinced by my father and teachers that I would be a great engineer...the admissions counselor there could tell I wasn’t very enthused about engineering...ended up suggesting youth ministry as a major...my youth pastor said that would be perfect for me.²⁷

Participants in Price’s study acknowledged the role of interaction with their families of origin in the decision for ministry. Parents were not always initially supportive of the decision to pursue ministry as a career pathway. Students often exhibited intellectual abilities in other fields. It was not uncommon for parents to encourage their children to follow in their footsteps, in careers such as engineering or teaching. Ultimately, most parents became supportive of their young adult children as they witnessed the strong commitment to the possibility of serving in ministry.

²⁵ Price, “Undergraduate Perceptions,” 89.

²⁶ Price, “Undergraduate Perceptions,” 89.

²⁷ Price, “Undergraduate Perceptions,” 89.

Pathway—Influences | Organizations and Programs

The research of Barbara Wheeler and associates confirms the finding of the Price study on the significance of organizations and programs in the life of the young person on the pathway toward ministry. More than half of all interviewees were members of youth groups. At least twenty-five percent experienced church camp. A similar and growing number of young people are influenced by both domestic and foreign mission trips and extended cross-cultural service opportunities.²⁸

The Wheeler study identified the critical element of intentional programs for teenagers which focus particularly on the high school age group. The observations of Chap Clark in his work with high school students in California are replicated throughout our society and beyond. The disintegration of the nuclear family has left countless young people afloat in a world without direction or values. A positive experience in age-focused programs for teens frequently lead to the pursuit of Christian fellowship during the years of university study. These intentional programs become the venue where encouragement and role modeling previously cited can fill the spiritual void of the broken and wounded nuclear family.

Pathway—Testing

The final factor cited for purposes of this MAP is the impact of spiritual testing in the lives of young people on the pathway toward the decision for ministry. Not to be confused with the never-ending pressure for academic performance, spiritual testing or trials in life contributed to the decision for ministry. The testing does not necessarily take the form of a personal crisis. An authentic opportunity to sample the work of ministry through short and long-term internship experiences often influenced students in the Wheeler and Price research. A sample narrative of a

²⁸ Wheeler, “On Our Way,” 29.

forty-one-year-old male Evangelical Protestant from the Wheeler research demonstrates the significance of a cross-cultural immersion that influenced the decision for ministry.

I was the only Western white face in the African village on the outskirts of a major city. I volunteered at an indigenous hospital sponsored by a Pentecostal community. There I encountered a way of life and a faith in God and a power to love people that I'd never encountered before I met believers who had the same kind of experience like I had. And I had a kinship with it I couldn't explain. So I came back very hungry to learn the Scripture, which I didn't really learn while growing up, and to answer a host of questions that came up along with that.²⁹

The analysis of responses in the study by J. Matthew Price identified the importance of experience in volunteer ministry service that tested their sense of vocation. Price summarizes observations under the theme "Confirmation through Participation."³⁰ The presence of a faith crisis, spiritual wound, or material need was frequently the catalyst for an increased sense of vocational calling. As one student transitioned from a private Christian school to public school he resolved "from there on, I made it my goal to help kids who were hurting."³¹ Price cites a famous American educator, John Dewey. Dewey stated that education is a process of living and not preparation for future living.³² Vocational calling was especially tested through experience in ministry service by young people who were not born into Christian families.

I did not come from a Christian family, and I had very limited commitments to the church. I never really had the opportunity to work with missions...God gave me my calling at a moment when I was doubting. I volunteered to work and clean a local youth center...I was the only volunteer who showed up...This was a very epic moment. I was out of my comfort zone...it was learning servant leadership...it was an opportunity to experience the body of Christ in a different and even more real environment. After this experience I knew there was nothing else I'd rather be doing other than helping and serving others.³³

²⁹ Wheeler, "On Our Way," 37.

³⁰ Price, "Undergraduate Perceptions," 91.

³¹ Price, "Undergraduate Perceptions," 91.

³² Price, "Undergraduate Perceptions," 92.

³³ Price, "Undergraduate Perceptions," 93.

Price noted that it was often in this context of real-life ministry experience that the role of mentors emerged. The participants in the survey cited the role of a pastor or youth minister as most critical to their vocational discernment at this time. Young people in this study frequently communicated their vocational leanings to the pastor or youth minister, and then proceeded to inform their family and church members of their calling. Some students reported receiving conflicting messages from primary caregivers in their churches and families. A few students reported that Christian adults who were not serving in ministry, such as high school teachers, became mentors as they struggled with disappointments and challenges.

In the conclusion of his study, J. Matthew Price reinforces the importance of the global social context in which young people experience their vocational calling toward a decision for ministry: “It involves key relationships, social networks, participation and an interactive engagement with the God who calls in the context of these settings.”³⁴ Finally, Price strongly advocates for the presence of full-time professional youth ministers as a key factor in creating opportunities for young people to test the call to ministry.

Pathway Ahead—Words of Encouragement

Barbara Wheeler and research associates suggest five implications from the research findings that will have impact in the lives of young men and women on the pathway toward the decision for ministry.

- Schools and religious communities should not bank on enrollment increases.
- Well-planned and executed recruitment programs can help schools to sustain enrollment or stave off sharp decline.
- Recruiting the best students for the future will require long-term strategies and major investments on the part of seminaries.
- Nurturing religious leadership for the future is the joint responsibility of theological schools and religious communities.

³⁴ Price, “Undergraduate Perceptions,” 95.

- Theological faculties have a critical role to play.³⁵

During the few years which have passed since the publication of the Wheeler research, the continuing decline in seminary enrollment has inspired a renewed recruitment effort. Somewhat surprisingly, Barbara Wheeler fails to call out to the people of most significant influence in the lives of those who made the decision for ministry. Current trends in vocation call for a renewed commitment to encourage and strengthen the spiritual character of the family of origin. Jeter Basden, David Peter, and James Baneck give voice to a call for return to the place where the best students for vocational ministry are nurtured in faith and life—the family.

Jeter Basden surveyed 217 students who had chosen to study for the ministry at Baylor University.³⁶ Basden identified the top factors influencing the decision for vocational ministry as Bible study and prayer, lay ministry experience, and the influence of Christian parents and a Christian home environment. All those factors have their origin in the lives of the parents. Basden affirms four critical aspects of the parents' influence on the life of the child:

1. Christian parents are role models for living the Christian life.
2. Christian parents involve their children in the life of the ministry of the church.
3. Christian parents characteristically are open to God's direction and purpose in the life of their children.
4. Christian homes are the instruments for the transmission of spiritual values from generation to generation.³⁷

Considering the outcomes of Basden's research suggests implications for congregations and family ministries that resonate more with the biblical foundation for faith formation in the

³⁵ Wheeler, "On Our Way," 55-58.

³⁶ Basden, "Influence of Christian Parents," 68-71.

³⁷ Basden, "Influence of Christian Parents," 68-69.

family of origin (see Deut. 6:1–9).

1. Be intentional in nurturing and strengthening families.
2. Provide opportunities for families to be involved together in ministry and mission projects.
3. Encourage the sharing of spiritual journeys.³⁸

Concordia Seminary Dean of the Faculty, David Peter, observes similarities between the early Reformation and the present moment in the critical need for more pastors. Citing Martin Luther’s “A Sermon on Keeping Children in School” composed in 1530, Peter comments on the diminished flow of young men toward pastoral ministry. “Yet there is good reason to believe that the current low numbers of students in pastoral preparatory studies (both at the seminaries and in the Concordia University schools) does not bode well for the future advancement of God’s kingdom within existing congregations of the synod, let alone new mission efforts.”³⁹

Peter suggests that both an external and internal depreciation for the office of the ministry may well contribute to the decline of the vocational calling from young men. “A post-Christian and even anti-Christian culture seeks to denigrate the office of pastor. Even some congregational members demonstrate ambivalence toward the office of pastor and even dismiss the value of their shepherd...”⁴⁰

In Luther’s sermon cited by Peter, Luther assures the high value of the office of the ministry which work has both temporal and eternal consequences. Peter writes to pastors with the hope that they will carry the message of encouragement to parents and members of congregations. Curiously in both Luther’s time and the present, some parents have not

³⁸ Basden, “Influence of Christian Parents,” 70–71.

³⁹ Peter, “Timely Word from Luther,” 15.

⁴⁰ Peter, “Timely Word from Luther,” 16.

considered the decision to serve in the pastoral ministry as economically prudent. While admonition to parents may well be in order, it is the Gospel itself that offers the pathway to renewed appreciation for the public office. “There is joy and fulfillment in ministry, both for the ones sent and for those who send.”⁴¹ Peter’s encouragement tracks consistently with contemporary research and other literature and signals a need to restore both the family of origin and the church as principal loci for planting the seeds and nurturing the vocational calling toward the office of the ministry.

LCMS Executive Director of Pastoral Education, James Baneck, speaks directly to the emerging problem of gender confusion and identity as it relates to the formation of boys in the family of origin. Baneck begins his brief article by seeing an affinity between the office of the ministry (which in the LCMS is reserved for men) and masculine traits: “There are calls to action that resonate with the virility, masculinity and innate responsibilities in every man—qualities with which God created them. These calls to action appeal to the depth of man’s most inner being; calls to honor, protect, provide, guard, sacrifice and save.”⁴² Baneck argues for the ministry of the Gospel as a reality that aligns with the masculinity of Jesus. “This Office of the Holy Ministry is a manly office. It is a Christly office. It is an office of virility and masculinity, of responsibilities given by the one, true, holy God. It is an office of honor and protection; of providing and guarding; of sacrificing, loving, and saving by giving Christ to God’s people.”⁴³

Baneck is not disparaging women and their service in the ministry of the Gospel. He is affirming the office of the ministry which calls for men to exhibit in a Christlike manner the qualities which God has properly assigned to the role of men in society. Fortitude in preaching

⁴¹ Peter, “Timely Word from Luther,” 17.

⁴² Baneck, “Raise your Boys,” 3.

⁴³ Baneck, “Raise your Boys,” 3.

and defending people against the evils of this world is exhibited in the context of the cross and sacrifice. Men are encouraged to embrace the context of spiritual warfare in which the church has always existed: “It is a manly burden to fight valiantly for the Bride of Christ.”⁴⁴

The encouragement of Baneck to the readers flies in the face of secular confusion and ambiguity. He has the ministry of the Gospel as God foreordained it in clear view: “Moms and dads, pastors and church workers, congregations and schools—raise your boys to be men whom God may call into the Office of the Holy Ministry to be His valiant, humble manly servants of the Gospel.”⁴⁵ Regardless of one’s appreciation of Baneck’s theological reflections per se, his article works under the key assumption, namely, that parents as teachers in the household are an important influence in the formation of children with the dispositions for the pastoral ministry.

⁴⁴ Baneck, “Raise your Boys,” 3.

⁴⁵ Baneck, “Raise your Boys,” 3.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROJECT IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
Eph. 4:1–6

The preceding chapters have introduced the MAP. The research problem, question, and purpose have been established. The literature review has located the MAP in the context of ongoing concerns for the identification and nurture of candidates for the ministry. Chapter three lays the biblical and theological foundation for the consideration of God’s call to decide for the ministry in the context of God’s multiple callings in life.

The Personal Call of God in the Holy Scriptures

God has revealed Himself through His Word. Our God is a calling God. He calls the whole world and everything in it into existence. He calls humanity to believe in all His mighty works. He is consistent in His method of proclaiming His kingdom through human messengers. The narrative of the creation and redemption of the world through the living Word, Jesus Christ, guides His people through the wilderness of a sin-darkened and dying world.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:1–5).

The record of the divine creation of the first humans, Adam and Eve, demonstrates that God communicates with words that establish and sustain His relationship with humankind.

Having created man and woman in His own image, God informed them of their gift of vocation as stewards of the earth:

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (Gen. 1:28–31).

God’s spoken word established the boundary of His relationship with Adam. One commandment offered Adam the opportunity to respond to the Creator’s perfect love in trust and obedience: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen. 2:17).” When Eve is confronted by the serpent who speaks in the garden, she can repeat the words of the commandment. The original challenge of God’s kingdom authority over all humankind persists across the history of humanity.

Satan first plants seeds of doubt, “Did God actually say (Gen. 3:1)?” The tempter follows with blatant contradiction of God’s spoken word, “You will not surely die (Gen. 3:4).” Moved by the words of God’s enemy, Eve fell in sin and Adam followed in primal disobedience to God’s spoken word. The burden of guilt that accompanied original sin inspired their flight from God. The sound of God in the garden struck fear in the hearts of Adam and Eve. God searched for His lost children by speaking (Gen. 3:8–9, 13). He declared both the consequences of their sin and the promise of salvation through the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15).

The New Testament declares the fulfillment of the promise made to Adam and Eve. The eternal Son of the Father took human flesh upon Himself in the incarnation. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary. In His humiliation, He took the form of the Servant even

unto death, offering the perfect and complete sacrifice of atonement for the sin of all humanity. He was born of a woman to redeem us from the law and make us sons of God by faith in Him (Gal. 4:4–5). Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus is the new Adam who reverses the consequences of the first Adam’s sin on the human race: “For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17).”

In the Old Testament, God called His people to Himself through the prophets. In the New Testament, God calls us to Himself through His Son: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Heb. 1:1–2).” The God who has reconciled us to Himself in Christ has given us “the ministry of reconciliation...entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18–19).” God is reconciling sinners to Himself until the end of time through the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The unified narrative of the Holy Scriptures affirms God’s method of calling men as His messengers to declare His purposes to lost humanity through the ministry of His Word: How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?...So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom. 10:14, 17).

This chapter of the MAP further explores the nature of God’s unique calling of men to the public ministry of the Gospel. The history of the Lutheran Church is grounded in the Reformation initiative to restore the speaking and hearing of God’s Word as the essence of His work in the world. God calls men to serve in the ministry of His Word.

God does not call men in a vacuum. God called men as prophets and apostles. The Holy Scriptures cite elements that point to a man's station in life at the time of his calling. They are identified in relationship to their earthly fathers (family of origin) and vocations. God called Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, a priest in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (Jer. 1:1-4). God called Ezekiel, the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the Chebar canal (Ez. 1:1-3). Jesus called two fisherman brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew (Matt. 4:18). Jesus called two other fisherman brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21). Jesus called Matthew, a tax collector (Matt. 9:9). God is intentional. All His kingdom purposes are at work in the men He calls. The Holy Spirit is able to perfect the faith qualities nurtured in family and the skills acquired in vocation for the purpose of extending the kingdom of His grace and glory on earth.

After the resurrection of Jesus, the calling activity of God continues in the proclamation of the Gospel. Men are incorporated into Christ's death and resurrection in Holy Baptism. The unique vocational calling to serve in ministry is hidden in the call to new life, the rebirth in the sacrament. God's immediate calling transitioned to mediating calling through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God in every place where the Holy Spirit worked to plant the true Church.

St. Paul points the New Testament church to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of

doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love (Eph. 4:4–7, 11–16).

A research project which seeks to evaluate the positive factors affecting the decision for the ministry in twenty-first century Central America will acknowledge its foundation in the historic events and individuals whose names are recorded in Holy Scripture. Lutherans affirm that men are called to serve in the ministry of God's Word built upon the foundation of the prophets and the evangelists. Although academic requirements are not cited in the Holy Scriptures, clear passages of the New Testament describe the qualities of character that would be evident in men who qualify for service in the public ministry of the Gospel.

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:1–7).

These qualities may not initially be apparent in the man called by God to serve. The same spiritual qualities may, however, be nurtured along the pathway toward the decision to study for the ministry.

The Doctrine of the Call in Lutheran Theology

From the early years of the Reformation era, Lutheran theology has affirmed the biblical and practical foundation for ecclesiastical order. Article V of the Augsburg Confession states:

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces

faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit, when we so believe.

Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works.¹

The ministry of the Gospel is served by men who have heard God calling them to this vocation through the Church. Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states without reservation:

Concerning church government, it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper call.²

In ecclesiastical practice the “proper call” described in Augsburg Confession XIV is extended to the man who has been trained and certified as a legitimate candidate for the call by the church to serve in the public ministry. For the purposes of this MAP, the divine call to the pastoral office as understood and practiced in the ILSN, LCC, and LCMS is not in consideration. This MAP seeks to identify the positive factors that contributed to the decision to study for the ministry. The experience of men in the field research project is properly located in conversation best described as a vocational leaning toward ministry. The growing interest of the prospective student for ministry speaks of the work of God through the word of the Gospel. It is not however, to be confused with the suggestion of an “inward call” to ministry as understood and practiced in some evangelical traditions.

David J. Peter offers a comprehensive overview regarding the “inward call” in his article “A Lutheran Perspective on the Inward Call to the Ministry.”³ Peter acknowledges the pervasive view within the Christian church that candidates for the ministry should experience a divine

¹ Augsburg Confession V.1–4, in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 40.

² AC XIV in Kolb and Wengert, 46.

³ David J. Peter, “A Lutheran Perspective on the Inward Call to the Ministry,” *Concordia Journal* 12, no. 4 (July 1986): 121–29.

inner call apart from the external or mediated call of the church. The affirmation of the existence of an “inward call” is present even in some Lutheran contexts. Peter seeks to answer several questions for the well-being of both prospective students for ministry and the church. He asks, “What is meant by experiencing ‘God’s inner call?’ Is the concept of an inward call to the ministry a valid one theologically? Does the Bible speak of such a call, and does the church recognize its legitimacy and necessity?”⁴

After considering several statistical studies of candidates for ordination and seminary students, Peter concludes: “It is clear that the perceived experience of a direct, special, inward call from God to enter the ministry is widespread, even among LCMS ministerial students.”⁵ Peter proceeds in methodical fashion to consider the definition and history of the “inward call” and the biblical and Lutheran confessional understanding of the immediate and mediate calls. Peter concludes that the concept of the “inward call” is foreign to historic Lutheran theology. Furthermore, applying the principles of Lutheran theology, the inner call falls under the category of the immediate call from God: “But the Bible does not promise or require God’s direct calling for entrance into the ministry, nor even for entrance into preparation for the ministry.”⁶ The concept of the “inward call” lacks solid foundation in the Bible. Furthermore, the continued insistence upon an “inward call” as a requirement for ministry is fraught with danger based on its very subjective nature. What one sincerely believes to be the leading of the Holy Spirit might be self-delusion. The pursuit of ministry based on the inward call may well not be in the best interests of the man or the church. The rejection of the concept of an “inward call” toward ministry allows a man to live under God’s grace in the pursuit of His will for the possibility of

⁴ Peter, “Lutheran Perspective,” 121.

⁵ Peter, “Lutheran Perspective,” 122.

⁶ Peter, “Lutheran Perspective,” 125.

vocation in the ministry of the Gospel as one of many possible God-pleasing vocations in life.

Peter directs the reader back to a biblical understanding of criteria and motivation for ministry. The qualifications described by St. Paul in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 and the desire to serve in the ministry provide an adequate foundation for exploring the pastoral ministry. The pathway forward for a man on a vocational journey by God’s leading can include the potential for spiritual growth into the biblical qualifications for ministry through mentoring and the study of God’s word. Overall, the process of discerning the specific call to serve in ministry takes place within the broader calling to love God and serve neighbors in estates such as family, marriage, and church. Chapter three presents further discussion on a Lutheran theology of vocation.

Historical Context

Christianity in Nicaragua is strongly influenced by Marian Catholicism. A statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary stands inside the government Central Office for Immigration in the capital city, Managua. Mary is referred to as “La Madre de la Patria” (mother of the country). A hierarchal view of vocation endures in the Catholic Church and prevails in Nicaraguan Catholicism. In the popular imagination, when people think of the office of the ministry in Latin America, they typically do not think of the laity, but of the priests (Span. “sacerdotes” or “padres”). Since Vatican II, there has been a resurgence of the role of the laity as leaven in society, as the people of God sent into the world to exercise their apostolate in all areas of life. Yet, there is still a strong sense of the Catholic Church as an ordered society structured in connection with the hierarchy of the clergy.

The office of the ministry is located within the sacramental life of the Church. The Catholic Church teaches that Christ established seven sacraments to nourish the Christian during all states of life:

Christ instituted the sacraments of the new law. There are seven: Baptism, Confirmation (or Chrismation), the Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.⁷

The calling to the public ministry of the Gospel in the Catholic Church is located more specifically in the sacrament of Holy Orders. The definition of Holy Orders sets the vocation apart from the other diverse stations in life. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains:

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate.⁸

All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to “the affairs of the Lord,” they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God.⁹

The Catechism's subjective language, which speaks of a consecration to the public ministry “with undivided heart” (Span. “totalmente al Señor”) and of those men who “give themselves entirely to God and to men” (Span. “se entregan enteramente a Dios y a los hombres”), sets the calling to ministry apart from all other stations in life. The sacrament of Holy Orders leaves an indelible mark upon the candidate.¹⁰ The Lutheran view of the ministry can be framed within

⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter *CCC*] VI 1577-1580 accessed December 3, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P4X.HTM.

⁸ *CCC* 6.1536.

⁹ “Todos los ministros ordenados de la Iglesia latina, exceptuados los diáconos permanentes, son ordinariamente elegidos entre hombres creyentes que viven como célibes y que tienen la voluntad de guardar el celibato ‘por el Reino de los cielos’ (Mt 19,12). Llamados a consagrarse totalmente al Señor y a sus ‘cosas’ (cf 1 Co 7,32), se entregan enteramente a Dios y a los hombres. El celibato es un signo de esta vida nueva al servicio de la cual es consagrado el ministro de la Iglesia; aceptado con un corazón alegre, anuncia de modo radiante el Reino de Dios.” *Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica* #1579, https://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism_sp/index_sp.html.

¹⁰ Cf. *CCC* VII.1581–83.

God's care of His creation through various vocations or callings in life. The Lutheran Church asserts the possibility that a man, among other callings, can be called by God to serve in the public ministry of the Gospel. The ministry of the Gospel is a vocation among vocations. Although the office of the ministry does not give to the minister an indelible mark, it is an office specifically established by God for the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Luther On Vocation

The decision for the ministry is properly located in God's calling, also known as vocation (Latin *vocare*, which means to call). The decision for ministry in a Lutheran context is informed by Martin Luther's Reformation thought and applicable to Lutheran ministry contexts, including the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua.

Martin Luther turned the conversation on vocation toward the essence of what it means to be human, created and called by God for His good purposes in all areas of life. Luther's teaching on vocation flows from a pastoral concern for teaching the duties of life that flow from faith in Christ. Luther did not originally intend to write so extensively on Christian faith and life. He expressed this sentiment at the beginning of his theological career: "I wish to warn everyone who reads this book not to harm himself and become irritated by its simple German language or its unadorned and unassuming words...no book except the Bible and St. Augustine has come to my attention from which I have learned more about God, Christ, man, and all things."¹¹

Luther preferred fewer human writings and more study of the Holy Scriptures. He did not want his writings to be an obstacle to the study of the Scriptures. Luther became increasingly

¹¹ Martin Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of A German Theology," in *Career of the Reformer I*, ed. Helmut Lehman, vol. 31, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress), 75.

more aware of the dire need for spiritual renewal in the Church. After a season of parish visitation, Luther described his motivation to author resources for instruction in the faith.

The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version. Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments! As a result they live like simple cattle or irrational pigs and, despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom.¹²

Luther recognized the overwhelming need to teach the Word of God to the common people of his native land. He wrote extensively on the impact of the Gospel in the lives of common people. Five hundred years before surveys were conducted of seminary students, Luther understood that the best pathway toward future service in the office of the ministry would begin in the Christian home where the faith was taught by the head of the household.

As a scholar, Martin Luther was prepared for the work of teaching the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. In his university studies, he acquired proficiency in biblical languages and knowledge of the works of the early church fathers. Luther was fervent in the study of the Word and prayer. Martin Luther affirmed three legs under the stool of theology, three interrelated realities through which God forms theologians—*oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*. Prayer, meditation, and testing in the faith is the life course of every follower of Jesus. Luther became aware of the need to equip the ordinary saints for life in the world. He observed the practical obstacles of his day for teaching the faith. Only the clergy possessed the Word of God in Latin. Luther set himself to the task of translating the Holy Scriptures into the language of the people.

¹² SC The Preface 1–3 in Kolb and Wengert, 347–48.

He wanted everyone to have access to the message of salvation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luther understood that God had committed Himself to work through His Word. Through the Word of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit would create and sustain faith in the hearts of humankind. God would extend His vocational calling to His people at each station in life through His living word.

Luther's teaching on vocation differed from the meaning of the word in the religious context of sixteenth century Germany. Like in some sectors of Nicaraguan society today, the common people in Luther's day associated "vocation" with a special form of holiness that only priests or people in religious orders possessed. Is it possible that the Christian vocation extends beyond the clergy and the cloister? Luther responded with an emphatic yes! He concluded that God calls all of humanity to diverse stations in life. Luther affirmed that vocation, God's calling, could be discerned in all of life's stations, including church, family, and civic life. All vocations are holy because God has established them through His Word.

Martin Luther discovered the true meaning of vocation in his study of the Word of God. Luther grew to understand that Christian vocation consists in living by God's grace through faith, regardless of one's profession or station in life. Additionally, life under the Gospel is not lived apart from the world, but rather God has placed His people in the world for the well-being of their neighbor. Having arrived at a biblical understanding of vocation, abundant writings flowed from Luther's pen. The term vocation took on a new and fuller meaning for Luther. He contemplated the meaning of vocation to include:

1. the stations of life to which God had called His people by the power of the Gospel,
2. the external occupation of a person,
3. occasionally the preaching of the Gospel.

In every case the word vocation embraced the merger between external station and internal

living faith. Luther's writings dedicated to vocation and the Christian family are useful in parish ministry. We live in a world that has depreciated the holy estate of matrimony. The trend was already in place during Luther's lifetime. In 1529 Luther wrote: "This is also the way things are now going in the world, as everyone complains. Both young and old are altogether wild and unruly; they have no sense of modesty or honor; they do nothing unless driven by blows; and they defame and disparage one another behind their backs in any way they can."¹³

Luther concluded that the devil was at work destroying the good that God intended to do through the vocations present in Christian families. "But here again the devil rules in the world; children forget their parents, as we all forget God. No one thinks about how God feeds, guards, and protects us and how many blessings of body and soul He gives us."¹⁴ One easily notes similarities between sixteenth-century Germany and twenty-first century daily life in Nicaragua. The world continues to be infirm with the incurable spiritual disease of sin. The Gospel has been therapeutic across the ages.

In his work, *Faith Active in Love*, George W. Forell acknowledges that the world appreciated the posting of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses as critical for the Reformation of the Church. However, people failed to appreciate that for Martin Luther this was an expression of the "feeling of social responsibility of the young professor."¹⁵ Subsequently, Luther could not think of vocation apart from the purposeful work of God in the world. Vocation could not serve God, if it did not help to meet the needs of the neighbor. In His baptism, Jesus answered the call from His Father to live and die for our salvation and the blessing of life eternal. In Holy Baptism, Jesus' disciples are called by the same Father to live in the world in Christlike service to

¹³ LC I.123 in Kolb and Wengert, 403.

¹⁴ LC I.128 in Kolb and Wengert, 404.

¹⁵ George W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1954), 11.

neighbors. Through His Spirit working in and through us, God does His work in the world through personal relationships, extending His reach through family into the communities in which His people live by faith.

Vocation places human persons under God, who uses them as instruments of His life-sustaining work in a world under great distress. A distinguished voice on Luther and vocation, Gustaf Wingren, describes the human person as one who always lives in relationship to His Creator and whose life in the world always unfolds in the context of a spiritual battle.

“An anthropology that first describes man and subsequently discusses his relationship with God, is for Luther an absurdity. There is no such thing as a human being that is truly alone, that is not placed between God and the devil...man is the object of the battle between God and Satan.”¹⁶ Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed also places the human creature in the context of a relationship of dependence to the Creator who has given him all things to preserve and protect his life, and whose duty is to serve, thank, and praise God for His gifts.

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties...God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him.¹⁷

Contemporary scholars have affirmed the work of Forrell and Wingren and have enhanced appreciation for Martin Luther’s thought on vocation. Among them, Gene Edward Veith, Jr., Robert Benne, and Charles Arand merit further attention.

Inspired by Gustaf Wingren’s book, which he received from a friend, Gene Edward Veith,

¹⁶ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), 163.

¹⁷ SC II.2 in Kolb and Wengert, 354.

Jr. calls for a return to the biblical foundation of vocation in his book, *God at Work*.¹⁸ Veith asserts that a renewed understanding of our callings in life offers a response to the decline of Christian behavior and the witness of the saving faith in society. Veith proposes that existentialism in the postmodern era essentially disposed of the concept of objective truth and relegated God to the mind of the individual. “Remarkably, Christians went along with this worldview. Even while many rejected the atheism of modernity, they cooperated in driving God underground. Faith became reduced to a subjective experience, and Christian morality became a matter of personal behavior, rather than a social necessity.”¹⁹ Veith suggests that decline in Christian behavior was the result of the long-term erosion of a basic theological principle.

“I suspect that one reason Christians capitulated so completely to the new God-forsaken vision of the universe is that well before modernity, they had lost the understanding that God works through means.”²⁰ In response to the spirit of the times, a proper understanding of God’s callings in life renews the significance of our presence in the twenty-first century workplace.

Veith writes:

Christian and non-Christian may labor side by side in the same job...but work that is done in faith has a different significance than work that is done in unbelief. The doctrine of vocation helps Christians see the ordinary labors of life to be charged with new meaning...seeing that their work is not saving them, but that they are resting in the grace of God, who in turn works through their labors to love and serve their neighbors.²¹

Lutheran ethicist Robert Benne affirms God’s identity as Creator as the starting point for all conversations about vocation.

¹⁸ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *God at Work* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002).

¹⁹ Veith, *God at Work*, 27.

²⁰ Veith, *God at Work*, 28.

²¹ Veith, *God at Work*, 61.

From a Christian point of view, we are immersed in God...God is the sustainer of the microcosmic processes that run the cosmos—the quarks, electrons, protons, and neutrons. He is the orderer that assures their persisting patterns.²²

Benne also speaks to the redeemed origin of human vocations in the person and work of Jesus Christ: “God makes possible at-one-ment, atonement. He makes a new covenant with us through Christ’s work.”²³ In answering the divine call from the Father to save the world, “Christ is both our and God’s representative in God’s struggle to overcome that which separates us from him. Sin, death, and the devil are defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ.”²⁴ In the proclamation of the Gospel, “the unique vocation of Jesus as the Christ is discerned.”²⁵ The doctrine of justification asserts that God has done the work of our salvation for us. The forgiveness of sins and life eternal by faith in Christ is a gift from the Father who was pleased with the work of His Son. Benne asserts that, on account of God’s grace in Christ, we strive in our vocations despite our failings. His forgiveness renews us in the exercise of our callings.

Further, the trusting reception of God’s grace in Christ conditions our will to do God’s work in the world...We will fail in our intentions to be obedient because sin is never fully overcome in us, but nevertheless we strive. Each day we are driven back to the grace of God to forgive our failures and to recharge our devotion to his will...The Spirit of God works to bring our experience of life and Christian meaning together. We are Spirit-led to hear God’s call and do his will.²⁶

Following Luther, Robert Benne affirms the various contexts in which this grace-based understanding of vocation is actualized. “The structures of family, state, economy, church, and education are grounded finally in God’s preserving and directing will. Some theologians have called these structures “the orders of creation,” others the “orders of preservation.” I will call

²² Robert Benne, *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 23.

²³ Benne, *Ordinary Saints*, 30.

²⁴ Benne, *Ordinary Saints*, 30.

²⁵ Benne, *Ordinary Saints*, 30.

²⁶ Benne, *Ordinary Saints*, 41–42.

them “our places of responsibility.”²⁷ In these diverse arenas of life, God works through the ordinary saints to re-create and sustain his world: “Work becomes a Christian calling. It glorifies and pleases God.”²⁸

Arand, Nestigen, and Kolb locate the origin of Luther’s thought in his intentional efforts to restore catechesis to its proper place in the life of the church: “The goal of catechesis is to live out the Christian life in devotion to God and in one’s callings for the neighbor.”²⁹ Luther recognized that Christians are called to love God and their neighbor in every aspect of their daily lives. Luther’s Large and Small catechisms encouraged a new way of thinking about vocation. “The Small Catechism calls the walks of life that constitute normal human life “holy orders,” transforming the language of medieval appreciation for the monastic way of life into the designation for all God-structured activities.”³⁰

Martin Luther viewed human life taking place in three “walks of life,” or “estates.” Luther found holy activities uniquely located in home, society at large, and the church. The inclusion of “Household Charts” in the earliest versions of Luther’s catechisms demonstrates his view that God had given offices or responsibilities to all people. Only believers recognize that such offices are given for the purpose of serving God by serving others. The inclusion of the Table of Duties in the most recent versions of the Small Catechism affirms the enduring appreciation for Luther’s view of life in the world for the Christian. Luther understands callings as the ongoing task of

grasping what it means to be human...truly human when they fear, love, and trust in the one who made, redeemed, and sanctifies them. They fulfill their humanity in relationship to one another and God’s earth through the actions and attitudes of love

²⁷ Benne, *Ordinary Saints*, 63.

²⁸ Benne, *Ordinary Saints*, 171.

²⁹ Charles P. Arand, James A. Nestingen, and Robert Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions: History and Theology of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 83.

³⁰ Arand, Nestingen, and Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 84.

that meet God's expectations for their exercise of the responsibilities attached by him to humanness.³¹

Ultimately, the decision for ministry will be experienced in the broader context of the whole life of any man who already has vocations in life but also senses God's calling in the direction of serving Him and His people through Word and Sacrament ministry. The MAP focuses on the positive factors that influence the decision for ministry. The remainder of Chapter Three cites further samples of Luther's catechetical thought on vocation with special reference to God's calling in Holy Baptism and in Holy Matrimony. The course of the human experience under God's grace ordinarily begins with initiation in the Christian faith through Holy Baptism and is lived out through relationships such as those between husband and wife and parents and children. The endurance of God's kingdom work in our midst, including His calling of men to discern a call to the public ministry of the Gospel, depends on a strong affirmation of His Holy Spirit's work through the means of grace and through stations in life such as marriage and the family.

Vocation and Holy Baptism

Luther found it difficult to imagine any person who could deny the existence of God based on the testimony of the natural order in creation. Luther observed the miracle of the unique difference between humanity and all the rest of creation. He also readily admitted that the natural knowledge of God was not sufficient to establish a saving relationship with Him. Luther believed in the clear testimony of the Holy Scriptures. Humankind was broken in sin and separated from God (Ps. 51:5, Rom. 5:12).

At the beginning of his career there was little discussion about Baptism. Luther affirmed

³¹ Arand, Nestingen, and Kolb, *The Lutheran Confessions*, 85.

the biblical foundation for Baptism. Luther found purpose in teaching the meaning of the sacrament. He vehemently opposed Anabaptist theology and practice as anti-biblical and non-Christian, particularly because of its denial of infant Baptism. Luther was offended by the suggestion that humans had any part in their own conversion to the saving faith. The Holy Spirit alone calls sinners to faith through the Gospel. “I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith.”³² The benefits of God calling His children through water and the Word of the Gospel endure for a lifetime. The Catholic Church in Nicaragua has sustained the practice of the sacrament of Baptism. The incursion of other religious groups in Nicaragua has eroded the meaning and value of new life in Christ through Holy Baptism.

Martin Luther acknowledged that any relationship between God and man would only be possible by God’s initiative. God is at work in Holy Baptism. Baptism is God’s first calling to humankind. All vocation finds its origin in the new life God gives in the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Luther describes the ongoing significance of Holy Baptism for the life of the Christian.

It signifies that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever...“We were buried with Christ through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, are to walk in a new life.”³³

Luther rejoiced in the discovery of God’s grace in Holy Baptism. This first calling from God informs all of God’s continuing work in and through the believer’s vocations in life. Luther summarizes the transcendent impact of the sacrament and the promises God delivers through it.

³² SC Third Article 6 in Kolb and Wengert, 355.

³³ SC, Fourth 12–14 in Kolb and Wengert, 360.

In baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her life. Christians always have enough to do to believe firmly what baptism promises and brings—victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God’s grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts. In short, the blessings of baptism are so boundless that if our timid nature considers them, it may well doubt whether they could all be true...Now, here in baptism there is brought, free of charge, to every person’s door just such a treasure and medicine that swallows up death and keeps all people alive.³⁴

Vocation and Family

Martin Luther grew in his appreciation of Holy Matrimony through the study of God’s Word and his personal experience. Luther viewed marriage as a vocation, a calling by God to the unique and intimate relationship between a man and a woman. Through Holy Matrimony God intended by His divine plan to populate the earth with His children. The children of God would in turn bring glory to Him in faith and service to their neighbor. Luther explained the meaning of the sixth commandment, “You are not to commit adultery,” as God’s boundary to defend this holy estate.

However, because this commandment is directed specifically toward marriage as a walk of life and gives occasion to speak of it, you should carefully note, first, how highly God honors and praises this walk of life, endorsing and protecting it by His commandment...He has established it before all others as the first of all institutions, and He created man and woman differently (as is evident) not for indecency but to be true to each other, to be fruitful, to beget children, and to nurture and bring them up to the glory of God.³⁵

The world has failed to appreciate the blessed simplicity of God’s plan. Baptized children of God—male and female—were intended to be united in Holy Matrimony especially for the purpose of procreation, that is, the birth of the next generation of God’s baptized children. Luther understood and taught that God’s purposes would be at work in the family of faith to shape and form a generation who would love Him and show mercy to their neighbors.

³⁴ LC IV.41–43 in Kolb and Wengert, 461–62.

³⁵ LC I.206–207 in Kolb and Wengert, 414.

Married life is no matter for jest or idle curiosity, but it is a glorious institution and an object of God's serious concern. For it is of utmost importance to Him that persons be brought up to serve the world, to promote knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, and to fight against wickedness and the devil.³⁶

Luther's appreciation of marriage and family as the primary locus for the faith formation of children and youth inspired his catechetical writings. The Small Catechism delivered the basic teachings of the Christian faith to the head of the household in a simple and practical form. If marriage is the first institution established by God, it makes complete sense that Christian education would be the primary responsibility of the parents. God intended for the faith to be taught by both word and deed. The vocations of Christian father and mother, including their roles in teaching the faith to their children, are enacted in close quarters through the stations of marriage and the family. With high regard for marriage and family, Luther took a critical stance on the insistence of celibacy for those who served in the public ministry of the Gospel. Luther viewed this restriction as an obstacle to Christian vocation.

They had neither the authority nor the right to forbid marriage and burden the divine estate of priests with perpetual celibacy. Instead, they acted like anti-Christian, tyrannical, wicked scoundrels and thereby gave occasion for all kinds of horrible, abominable, and countless sins of unchastity, in which they are still mired... Therefore, we are unwilling to consent to their miserable celibacy, nor will we tolerate it. We want marriage to be free, as God ordered and instituted it.³⁷

Luther affirmed the relationship between parents and their children as the living and learning paradigm for our relationship with God. In his explanation of the meaning of the fourth commandment, "You are to honor your father and mother," Luther acknowledged parenting as a vocation of the highest order.

God has given this walk of life, fatherhood and motherhood, a special position of honor, higher than that of any other walk of life under it. Not only has He commanded us to love parents but to honor them. In regard to brothers, sisters, and

³⁶ LC I.208 in Kolb and Wengert, 414.

³⁷ SA III 11.1, 3 in Kolb and Wengert, 324.

neighbors in general, He commands nothing higher than that we love them. But He distinguishes father and mother above all other persons on earth, and places them next to Himself.³⁸

Luther sees the relationship between parents and children as the context in which love and care for others is put into practice and perfected during the lifetime of both parties. In baptismal faith children are nurtured and cared for by their parents in childhood and adolescence. Children in turn learn how to treat others in godly behavior toward their parents. Luther teaches that the fourth commandment calls children to “esteem them (parents) above all things and to value them as the most precious treasure on earth—not to speak discourteously to them, to criticize them—but also to honor them by your actions—serving them, helping them, and caring for them when they are old, sick, feeble, or poor.”³⁹ Through the loving and mutually supportive relationships in family, God sustains His kingdom work in the world. Wherever men and women are faithful to marriage vows and fulfill their responsibilities to teach and nurture their children in the faith, it is reasonable to expect that some young men will be called to the vocation of ministry. Yet there are no perfect families. Lutheran catechesis brings the clarity of God’s word into broken families in a broken world. Above all, the Gospel is powerful to forgive sins, heal spiritual wounds, and call redeemed men from all walks of life to the vocation of ministry.

The Lutheran view of vocation, especially in relation to God’s care of His creation, the power it draws from Baptism, and its expression through the state of marriage and the family, sets the stage for consideration of the faith journey of ten men who made the decision to study for the public ministry.

³⁸ LC, I.105 in Kolb and Wengert, 400–01.

³⁹ LC, I.109–111 in Kolb and Wengert, 401.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.” Col. 1:9–12

The previous chapters provided the foundation for the MAP. Chapter one introduced the project in the context of the field research. The history of Lutheran mission work in Nicaragua during a period of twenty years by Lutheran Church—Canada affirms theological education as the primary vehicle for mission in Nicaragua. The history of global mission work acknowledges the need for a continual source of men who are called to the public ministry of the Gospel. The MAP recognizes the challenges facing the national church, Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua. Chapter two discusses the pathway to the decision for ministry in diverse Christian traditions through the literature review. Chapter three considers a biblical foundation for a vocational calling to the pastoral ministry with emphasis on Luther’s writings on Christian vocation.

Chapter four describes the approach to the field research which seeks to answer the basic questions: What are the positive factors that led men to make a decision to study for the ministry in Nicaragua? How might field research reveal the positive factors in a way that would be helpful for the long-term future of the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua?

The design of the field research was influenced by the work of Allen Henry Nauss.¹ Nauss

¹ Allen Henry Nauss, “A Study of Factors Influencing Recruitment of Students for Ministerial Study at Concordia Seminary.” Unpublished. *Concordia Seminary Studies*, July 1971.

conducted research on the student body at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois in 1966 and 1971. His paper delivered in July 1971 titled “A Study of Factors Influencing Recruitment of Students For Ministerial Study At Concordia Seminary” inspired the design of field research for the MAP. Even though the context of Nauss’s work was different from Nicaragua in the twenty-first century, the construct of his research was helpful. Nauss developed a research questionnaire and invited the participation of all 313 seminary students registered for the winter quarter of the 1969–70 school year at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. The questionnaire was administered at the time of registration. A total of 308 students (98%) completed all or substantial parts of the questionnaire.

Nauss was interested in the journey which began with “First Thought of the Ministry” and concluded with “Final Decision for the Ministry.” The research questionnaire identified twenty-four potential persons and/or factors that might have contributed to the “First Thought” about the ministry. Ultimately, 70% of the responses focused on only four sources for first thought of the ministry: home pastor, parents, spiritual self-evaluation, and involvement in church work.²

In the introduction to the summary of his research findings Nauss cited a journal article by C. Douglass Lewis concerning the role of seminaries in student recruitment. Although the article was written fifty years ago, I found inspiration for my research in questions posed concerning the pre-seminary journey.

The person who decides on the ministry as a career has been influenced at a number of points by a variety of individuals and programs. Even though we do have some knowledge of what the major influential components are, we need to know more about their relative value, how we coordinate the various components, and who makes the components work at various levels.³

² Nauss, “A Study of Factors,” 11.

³ C. Douglass Lewis, “The Role of Seminaries in Recruitment,” *Theological Education* 4 (Summer 1969): 326.

I asked how I could discover the major influences in the decision for ministry by men who belonged to the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua. The description of the research design is followed by the narration of the implementation and completion of the field research.

Research Design

I determined to develop a research questionnaire that would guide the field research interview of the men in the sample. Research experience in the health and social science arenas among the Hispanic population in the United States has demonstrated the limitations associated with numerically formatted questionnaires. Karen T. D'Alonzo reported the difficulties associated with efforts to collect health data from Spanish-speaking persons.⁴ The simple translation of English language instruments into the Spanish language often resulted in confusion and inaccurate data. The average participant with lower literacy levels was not able to navigate the research questions using the traditional Likert scales. Researchers were encouraged to simplify the options for numerical responses and allow for personal narrative whenever possible.

I determined that a field research questionnaire which would allow the participants to tell their own story was best suited for the purposes of the MAP. I submitted a first draft in English of the questionnaire to Concordia Seminary St. Louis faculty. I was encouraged to revise the number of questions and focus on the content. The revised questionnaire was approved for field research. I translated the questionnaire into the Spanish language for use in the field research interview. The English and Spanish versions of the questionnaire are included in Appendices Five and Six of the MAP.

I was provided with a template to secure informed consent from the research participants.

⁴ Karen T. D'Alonzo, "Evaluation and Revision of Questionnaires for Use among Low-Literacy Immigrant Latinos," *Rev Lat Am Enfermagem* 19, no. 5 (September–October 2011): 1255–64.

The template was modified to address the specific circumstances of the field research. The Informed Consent Form in English was translated into Spanish for presentation to the participants. The English and Spanish versions of the Informed Consent are included in Appendices Three and Four of the MAP. The Informed Consent acknowledged the intent to make an audio recording of the research interview. The participants were assured that their identity and responses would be covered by a commitment to confidentiality. The approval of the research instruments was followed by the selection of the sample of the population.

Population Sampling

At the time of the field research twenty-four men were serving Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua as pastors. Additionally, I became aware of a few men who decided for the ministry, but later decided not to serve as pastors. All the men in the research sample were active members of local congregations. Ten men was considered a substantial sample of the population to be studied. I wanted to interview men who were representative of the history of the Lutheran ministry in Nicaragua from its origin. This was a realistic goal for the sample given the length of the missionary endeavor in Nicaragua begun by Lutheran Church—Canada in 1997. Men who accepted the invitation to consider the decision for ministry were trained through a succession of four seminary cycles. I was intentional in selecting research participants who represented all four study cycles.

Table 1: MAP FIELD RESEARCH SAMPLE

Participant Number	Age at Research Interview	Civil Status at Interview	Age at First Contact with Lutheran Church
1	39	Married	21
2	36	Married	18
3	47	Married	29
4	37	Married	19
5	43	Married	36
6	43	Single	25
7	38	Married	20
8	50	Married	45
9	51	Married	40
10	33	Single	22
Total Research Participants = 10	Average age at the time of the research interview = 42 yrs.	Eight men were married, and two men were single at the time of the research interview.	Average age at first contact with Lutheran Church = 26 yrs. Six men had first contact with Lutheran Church under age 25. Four men had first contact with Lutheran Church over age 26.

Implementation

Implementation of the field research began with an announcement to the pastors of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua of the research project. The pastors were aware of my study in the Doctor of Ministry program. I received a positive response to the explanation of the purpose of the field research. All pastors declared their willingness to participate in the field research interview. I expressed my gratitude and informed that a sample of ten men was determined as appropriate for the scope of the research. Guided by the summary report of the seminary study cycles, I extended invitations to the ten men who would populate the sample for research. All the men who were invited agreed to participate in the interview.

The field research interviews were conducted in the time period October 18–November 4, 2016. Nine of the interviews were conducted at the Lutheran Mission Center in Chinandega, Nicaragua. The tenth interview was conducted at the mission congregation in Comayaguela, Honduras.

All the field research interviews were conducted in the Spanish language. The interview process was guided by the following steps:

1. Personal introduction
2. Opening prayer
3. Review of the research problem and purpose statement
4. Explanation and execution of the Informed Consent Form
5. Reminder of the audio recording of the interview
6. Dialogue of questions and responses guided by the Research Questionnaire
7. Expression of gratitude for participation in the field research
8. Closing Prayer

All the field research interviews lasted at least one hour. No interview exceeded one hour and 30 minutes. During the interview I made written notes of responses to the research questions. After the completion of the interviews, I produced Spanish transcripts for the interview. From the Spanish transcripts I gathered all the qualitative data which informs the presentation and analysis of data in Chapter Five of the MAP.

Research Methodology

The Action Research method was determined appropriate for the MAP field research. Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson provide a comprehensive guide for the Action Research Dissertation. Action Research is both a reflective and participatory process. The authors offer a working definition of the research method.

Action research is oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation. The idea is that changes occur within the setting or within the participants and researchers themselves.

Action research is best done in collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem under investigation.¹

Citing the work of Kemmis and McTaggart,² Kerr and Anderson highlight aspects of Action Research that were well-suited for the field research of the problem in Nicaragua. Action research seeks to capitalize on the interrelationship between individuals and their environment. The participants embrace the opportunity to work on themselves examining the relationship between knowledge and practice. Action Research encourages the participants to contest current worldviews. Ultimately, Action Research seeks to transform both theory and practice, which are viewed as mutually dependent upon one another.

¹ Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2015), 4.

² Herr and Anderson, *Action Research*, 17–18.

I was confident that the answers to the research questions were located in their life experience. I considered my personal relationship with the men in the research sample an asset for efforts to secure responses to the questions. I had been acquainted with several of the participants for years before arriving in Nicaragua as a field missionary under the auspices of the protocol agreement.³ I enjoy a trusting relationship with the men in the sample which allowed them to speak openly and honestly in the context of the field research. At the time of the implementation of the research, I had shared three years of active ministry with the men in the sample. Our relationship was grounded in mutual experience as servants in the public ministry of the Gospel. We shared a love for Christ and the Gospel. Together we were seeking the best possible outcomes for the well-being of the ministry of the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua.

Action Research methodology allowed me the opportunity to develop a practical response to the principle MAP question. I am interested in learnings that will positively impact the long-term goal of encouraging more men to consider God's calling to the Word and Sacrament ministry of Christ's Gospel. I entertained the possibility that my research findings would further inform my understanding on this topic of personal interest. My openness to learning, together with the good will of the participants validated the Action Research methodology as most suitable for the MAP.

In implementing the research methodology, I was interested in the qualitative information that would become available to me through the interview process. I am a social person. I have enjoyed the social environment of daily life in Latin America. My experiences in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Cuba, and Puerto Rico share common ground. All people have a story to tell. Their experiences fit into one of two

³ For more detail regarding the protocol agreement see Appendix Two.

optional narratives. People who do not know God's word are compelled to create their own explanation for origin and purpose in life.

The apostle John describes the narrative of our origin in Divine love and mercy through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:12–13)".

In carrying out the field research, I wanted to listen to the story of the participants. These men were my brothers in Christ, but I wanted to learn more about them from the interviews. An important aspect of the Action Research method is Participatory Evaluation. The outcomes of the field research will be delivered to the pastors and deaconesses of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua by means of a virtual powerpoint presentation.

Assumptions, Limitations and Role of Researcher

I assumed the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the inspired Word of God and the only authority for faith and life of the Christian. I assumed that all the research participants shared my view of the Holy Scriptures. I further assumed the Lutheran Confessions as articulated in the Book of Concord to be a clear and correct exposition of the Word of God. I assumed that the participants had an awareness of the Lutheran Confessions. Additionally, I assumed that the participants embraced my assertion of the clarity of the Lutheran Confessions, while acknowledging diverse levels of knowledge regarding the historical documents.

I assumed that the field research would be conducted in a confessional Lutheran theological context where all participants agreed on the foundational principles for the practice of Word and Sacrament Ministry. I further assumed that all field research, especially the personal interviews, would be conducted in the Spanish language. I was confident of my language skills

and cultural experience to conduct the field research with integrity, accuracy, and cultural propriety.

For the purposes of the MAP, I acknowledge some limitations associated with my field research. The participants in the field research interview were aware of the topic of my research. The participants were not informed of the interview questions prior to the interview. Given the lapse of time in their life experience associated with the research questions, the participants might not have recalled some details associated with their responses. It is possible that a follow-up interview might have given the participants an opportunity to add additional content to their responses. I am satisfied that I acquired sufficient response to the interview questions to make summary observations and conclusions regarding the research.

I value my friendship in Christ with the participants. My friendship with the men in the research sample did not adversely influence the interview experience. I prepared the participants for an authentic research interview which was conducted with a formal agreement for confidentiality. I was pleased with the interview experience from which I gained the qualitative data necessary to make observations and offer conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE DATA

“It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:3–4

The evangelist Luke affirms the value of investigation in the prologue of his account of the life of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and Savior of His people. We live in humility and gratitude for the diligence of the evangelist guided by the Holy Spirit. Luke’s narrative of the life of the early Church in Acts of the Apostles further demonstrates the powerful work of the Spirit at work in the lives of believers.

The previous chapters of the MAP have described the process which led to the research project design culminating in the field research interview of the participants. Chapter five offers the summary of responses to the Field Research Questionnaire (Appendices Five and Six). The Research Questionnaire proved effective in gathering qualitative data for evaluation. Titles have been assigned to the summary responses to the Field Research Questionnaire based on key concepts addressed in the questions. Chapter five reports research findings under the following headings:

1. Origins
2. First Contact
3. Faith Community
4. Lutheran Catechesis
5. Vocational Calling
6. Persons of Influence
7. Suggestions for the Future

The summary findings from the research interviews are reported in two parts. Part One of the data analyses reports the common ground among the participants of factors that influenced their decision for the ministry. Responses that were shared by fifty percent or more of the participants are included in the summary of each question. Part Two of the data analyses reports the discovery of two generations of men in the sample for field research. The characteristics of each generation are described, and summary responses are shared for each generation.

Data Analyses

Part One—Common Ground

Prior to your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what was your experience in the Christian faith? How did your experience in the Christian faith influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

All the participants were born into Catholic families. A sample of responses from

“My family was very devoted to the Virgin Mary. We frequently attended the processions and recited prayers to Mary.”

“I remember a large image of the *Corazon de Jesús* (Heart of Jesus) in our home. We often prayed in front of the image.”

“My grandmother was a devout Catholic woman. She raised me under the Catholic Catechism. She taught me the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the *Ave María* (Hail Mary).”

“We were very devoted to the Virgin Mary and attended Mass regularly.”

“My mother and brothers participated in the Catholic Church. I made First Communion and Confirmation in the parish. At age 17, I was appointed as the representative of the Catholic Church in my community.”

“Every year we celebrated the feast day of the patron saint.”

“I studied with the Jesuits and wanted to pursue the priesthood.”

“As a young boy, I assisted the priest in my community. All my life was Catholic.”

“I remember Catholic prayer, but we did not go to Mass.”

In addition to dominant Catholic faith practice, all the participants reported family poverty and economic difficulty in childhood and adolescence. All the participants recall widespread adversity associated with the impact of Hurricane Mitch on their communities. Ninety percent of the participants (all Nicaraguans) reported the adverse impact of civil war on their communities. Seventy percent of the participants reported personal and family trauma associated with the serious illness or death of a family member. Spiritual darkness and depression were manifest in the lives of some participants in the study.

“My brother and I had a violent physical fight. Before we could reconcile, my brother was killed in a traffic accident. I remember carrying a heavy burden of guilt. My life declined with excessive use of alcohol.”

“At age 17 years I was married. After six months, the marriage ended in divorce. I remember being very ashamed and depressed when my marriage failed.”

First Contact

At the time of your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what were the circumstances of your personal faith life? What person or persons were helpful in leading you to the Lutheran Church and how did they influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

Seventy percent of the participants reported that their first contact with the Lutheran Church was the Lutheran Church—Canada Missionary Pastor, Rev. Sandor Arguello. Pastor Sandor’s friendly and compassionate personality was a positive image for the Lutheran Church in several communities where he was facilitating relief efforts following Hurricane Mitch. One participant summarized the thoughts of several men. “Pastor Sandor brought the Word of God and hope to our community following the hurricane.”

Faith Community

After your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what was your experience as a member of the worshipping community? How did your experience influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

Sixty percent of the participants reported that the local Lutheran pastor of the first generation and the emerging mission congregation was the second most influential positive factor in the decision for ministry.

Lutheran Catechesis

What was your experience in Lutheran Confirmation instruction? How did your experience in Confirmation instruction influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

All the participants reported Lutheran Catechesis as a life-changing experience. All participants affirmed the blessing of clear distinction between Law and Gospel in the word of God. The first generation of men received catechetical instruction simultaneously with theological modules. Sixty percent of the participants completed Confirmation instruction prior to the formal beginning of theological study.

Vocational Calling

At the time of your first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor, what personal faith experience influenced your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor? How would you describe your sense of God's calling you to become a Lutheran pastor? How did any particular words of Holy Scripture influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

All of the participants regarded the study of the Bible as a turning point in their personal

spiritual life. The participants regarded a radical change in their spiritual life from a cultic tradition-based religious practice to a Christ-centered faith grounded in God's self-revelation in the Holy Scriptures. All the participants viewed their decision for the ministry in the context of a spiritual journey that embraced diverse callings in life. Sixty percent of the participants were positively influenced by the narrative of Jesus' calling of the disciples recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Fifty percent of the participants reported positive spiritual experiences which affirmed their decision for ministry including dreams and an overwhelming sense of God's presence in the worship life of the church, especially the Sacrament of the Altar.

Persons of Influence

What people were influential in your personal faith life? How did any person object to your first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor? How did their objection influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

All the participants reported that a Lutheran pastor was the most influential person in their decision for ministry. All the men reported that family members were supportive and encouraging of their decision for the ministry, including spouses, parents, children, sibling, and extended family members. Eighty percent of the participants reported that friends in their peer group in the fellowship of the growing church were positive influences in their lives and their decision for ministry.

Part Two—Discovery of Two Generations

Upon further analysis of responses to the data acquired in response to the Research Questionnaire, it became apparent that two generations of men existed within the Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua at the time of the field research. The characteristics of each generation are demonstrated in the responses to field research questions. A summary of the characteristics of

each generation follows:

First Generation

- The Missionary Pastor, Rev. Sandor Arguello, was the only Lutheran clergy present in Nicaragua.
- The work of the Lutheran Church began with mission outreach in communities in the Chinandega, Nicaragua area. The initial emphasis was evangelism and an invitation to study the Word of God. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, the mercy ministry expanded the engagement of the Lutheran Mission. The Mission acquired an identity of compassion. The witness of the Gospel embraced the tangible witness of God's unconditional love in Christ in word and deed.
- No Lutheran congregations existed during the formation of the first generation of Lutheran pastors.
- The locus for the catechesis of men was the Lutheran Mission Center located in Chinandega. The missionary church planter, Rev. Sandor Arguello, served as catechist. Catechesis continued during the modules of the Seminary cycle in the first generation of church work. The rite of Confirmation was offered to the first generation of men upon completion of seven seminary modules. The decision to study for the office of public ministry constituted a commitment to continue theological studies toward completion of the seminary training program.
- In the research sample, four men represent the first generation of men who made the decision to study for the ministry in Nicaragua. Three men belong to the seminary class of 2002. One man who studied in the first cycle of the seminary was included in the

seminary class of 2006. His responses to field research demonstrated that he properly belongs to the first generation of men who became pastors.

Second Generation

- The second generation of Lutheran pastoral formation coincides with the beginning of public ministry by the first generation of men who completed the seminary training program.
- Evangelism, the study of God's Word, and mercy ministry became enduring characteristics of the Lutheran ministry of the Gospel in several communities.
- Lutheran missions experienced growth and began to organize as congregations under the leadership of the first generation of Lutheran pastors.
- The locus for catechesis for men under the span of care of the first generation of pastors moved toward the emerging mission congregations. The local pastor embraced his role as catechist within his own community. The rite of Confirmation was celebrated prior to the formal decision to study for the office of public ministry.
- In the research sample, six men belong to the second generation of men who became Lutheran pastors in Nicaragua. These men are representatives of seminary cycles which were completed in 2006, 2009, and 2015. One man in the research sample represents missionary church planting efforts in the country of Honduras. A portion of his experience replicates the experience of men in the first generation of Lutheran pastors. Most of his experience is characteristic of the second generation of pastors.

The presentation and evaluation of data for each generation of pastors consists of a

summary of responses to questions 1–6 of the Field Research Questionnaire.¹ The responses to question 7 have been summarized for both generations. The presentation and evaluation of data follows. Titles have been assigned to the summary responses of questions 1–6 based on key concepts addressed in the questions. The presentation reports research findings under the following headings:

Origins

1. Prior to your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what was your experience in the Christian faith? How did your experience in the Christian faith influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

First Generation

All the four men in the first generation of pastors reported the origin of their Christian faith in devout Catholic families. The men identified their family context as rural poor. Each of the men reported Baptism as infants and participation in instruction for First Communion. Three of the four men recalled the formal experience of Confirmation in the Catholic Church. All of the men reported the common practice of prayer to the saints and the veneration of the Virgin Mary. Festivals and processions dedicated to the Virgin were common practice in the community. The men also noted the celebration of a day dedicated to the patron saint of the community. Images of the Virgin Mary were displayed in the homes of all men in the first generation. Votive candles accompanied the presence of Mary's image in the family home.

Two of the men reported the influence of a formal connection to the Catholic Church. The father of one man served as “delegado” or lay representative for the Catholic Church in the

¹ For detailed information regarding the Research Questionnaires see Appendices Five and Six.

community of origin. One of the men also served as “delegado” at the age of 17 years old.

Delegados of the Catholic Church were granted the authority to teach the catechism to children and adults. In the frequent absence of the parish priests, the delegados served as lay preachers.

Only one man reported awareness of other religions in his community during his childhood and adolescence. Jehovah Witnesses and Pentecostals were regarded as marginal religious movements within the community. The man and his family experienced direct contact with members of the Baptist church who had sponsored a medical servant event in the community. Evangelical Christianity became attractive to the family for the emphasis placed on the study of God’s word in the Bible.

Two of the four men in the first generation reported incidents of personal illness and illness of a family member as significant for faith formation. One man reported a significant faith crisis as the result of the accidental death of a sibling.

Second Generation

All the six men in the second generation of the research sample were born into Catholic families. Four of the six men identified as rural poor. One man was born into a poor family in a large urban setting. Descriptions of devotion to Mary and prayer to the saints in the practice of the faith were consistent with the first generation of men in the research sample. Five of the six men recalled details of catechetical instruction as Catholic children. The Ten Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer were familiar to the men who had received instruction in the faith. One man did not receive any formal instruction in Catholic doctrine. He recalled a Catholic prayer that his mother taught him. His mother was described as devout, but did not attend Mass.

Three of the six men attended Catholic school during their childhood. Four of the six men

in the second generation reported an intentional effort to encourage and train them for service in the church. One of the three men studied in a school staffed by Jesuits. He was formally encouraged to pursue the priesthood.

Three of the six men in the second generation reported serious personal illness as an important factor in their faith experience as a child or adolescent. The men recall making fervent prayer to God for physical healing. One man experienced a significant faith crisis associated with the illness and death of a sibling.

First Contact

2. At the time of your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what were the circumstances of your personal faith life? What person or persons were helpful in leading you to the Lutheran Church and how did they influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

First Generation

The first contact for the four men in the first generation of pastors was marked by their personal introduction to Rev. Sandor Arguello, the church planting missionary for Lutheran Church—Canada. Three of the men made acquaintance with Pastor Sandor as he shared relief efforts in their communities during the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. One man was introduced to Pastor Sandor by a friend from his community. His friend also became a member of the first generation of Lutheran pastors. His friend was not, however, a participant in the field research.

All four of the men in the sample became students in the emerging study group which began the first cycle of seminary studies in the Nicaraguan mission. Pastor Sandor distinguished himself as a man of the Word of God. He demonstrated considerable patience and understanding as a teacher of the Word. One of the men reported how Pastor Sandor challenged his personal

beliefs and practices regarding the Virgin Mary. Pastor Sandor sent the man home with the assignment to defend the beliefs about Mary from the Scriptures. Following extensive conversation with family members, elders of the Catholic Church, and the parish priest, the man determined that Pastor Sandor's presentation was entirely accurate according to the Holy Scriptures. Two of the men in the sample were active laymen in the Catholic Church. During the early days of the first seminary cycle, Pastor Sandor explained the common ground in the orthodox faith between the Lutheran teachings and Catholic doctrine. Pastor Sandor was encouraging to the men, while at the same time assertive regarding the clarity of the Gospel.

One of the men was serving as a delegado or deacon in the Catholic Church at the time of first contact with the Lutheran Church. When the parish priest discovered that the man was studying the Lutheran Church, he was expelled from his participation in parish ministry. Another man had only been baptized in the Catholic Church. He was lacking instruction for First Communion and Confirmation. Pastor Sandor mentored the man through the study of Luther's Small Catechism. During the season of the first seminary cycle, the man completed initial instruction and celebrated a First Communion and Confirmation in the Lutheran Church.

The summary of all responses to the question of first contact with the Lutheran Church demonstrates the overwhelming influence of Rev. Sandor Arguello on the men who developed as the first generation of Lutheran pastors. One man cited Pastor Sandor's name ten times in the process of giving response to the question. Pastor Sandor was highly respected for his balanced approach to the ministry of the Gospel. In the strong tradition of Lutheran pastoral theology Rev. Sandor Arguello demonstrated theological acumen and a compassionate heart grounded in the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

Second Generation

In the second generation of men, the first contact with the Lutheran Church was made by the local missionary pastor. After the completion of the first seminary cycle, the graduates were assigned to continue outreach work in their own communities. The man who had been trained for ministry resided in his community. The presence of a Lutheran pastor in the community heralded the expansion of the Lutheran ministry in Nicaragua. Five of the six men in the second generation made first acquaintance with the Lutheran Church through a local pastor. Three different local pastors were mentioned by name in the research responses. In the first generation, the personality and gifts of the missionary pastor seemingly attracted men to Bible study and service. In the second generation, men tended to be drawn toward the ministry more directly through the theological content of the preaching and teaching by the local pastor.

The first contact of one man who lived in Honduras resembled the experience of the first generation. A sister had relocated to the United States and joined the Lutheran Church through marriage. She strongly encouraged the leadership of LCMS World Mission to investigate new mission opportunity in Honduras. The LCMS Director of Missions for Latin America planned a mission exploration trip to Honduras. He invited an active LCMS missionary in the region to accompany the exploratory venture. The Honduran national who made the decision to study for the ministry made first contact with the LCMS Mission Executive and an expat foreign missionary Lutheran pastor. There was no active confessional Lutheran ministry in the Honduras capital city at the time.

Faith Community

3. After your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what was your experience as a member of the worshipping community? How did your experience influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

First Generation

In the first generation, the experience of the Christian faith in community was nurtured in two settings. The Lutheran Mission Center in Chinandega was established by Lutheran Church—Canada in a rented facility as the place from which mission and outreach was coordinated in the region. The missionary church planter, Rev. Sandor Arguello, served as director of the Mission Center. The Mission Center served as a place of first contact with the Lutheran Church. Training of the first generation of men was located at the Mission Center. Mercy ministry, evangelism, and devotional Bible study was descriptive of the Lutheran presence in communities around the Chinandega area. All the men in the first generation expressed their appreciation for the community experience associated with their gatherings for the study of the Word and theology. The first experiences in Lutheran worship for the first generation of men took place at the Mission Center. As the men of the first generation grew in Christian friendship and fellowship with one another, the seeds of vocational calling were planted in their growing concern for their physical neighbors in the villages where they resided to share the blessing of faith community.

Second Generation

In the second generation, communities of faith began to emerge in the diverse locations where mercy ministry and evangelism had gathered people in the study of the Word of God. Devotional prayer services were conducted in the communities as the precursor to Word and

Sacrament ministry following the first generation of local catechesis. Four of the six men in the second generation were drawn to the Lutheran church as participants in the young faith community where they lived. Two of the six men in the second generation of the research sample did not have access to local faith communities in the early days of their contact with the Lutheran Church. In the second generation, the significance of the Lutheran Mission Center as a place for local worship, theological training, and mission coordination inspired the search for a location to actualize a broad vision to establish a national Lutheran ministry presence in Nicaragua. The Mission Center was constructed and became the base for local and national ministry. The cycles of seminary education have been delivered on the campus of the Lutheran Mission Center in Chinandega.

Throughout all its history the Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua has enjoyed the experience of faith community lived out in local community and national presence. Furthermore, the frequent visitation by partner church clergy, church workers, and laity has nurtured a truly global sense of the body of Christ for members of the Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua.

Lutheran Catechesis

4. What was your experience in Lutheran Confirmation instruction? How did your experience in Confirmation instruction influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

First Generation

The first generation of men received catechetical instruction during the first seven modules of seminary instruction. All four men in the research sample were prepared to celebrate the Rite of Lutheran Confirmation in this manner. A few Confirmed Lutherans existed among the population of people being served in the mission stations, but congregations were not

established. Rev. Sandor Arguello was the principal Catechist for the first generation of men.

The protracted process of teaching the basic doctrines of the Lutheran confessional faith resulted in many blessings for the students. In addition to basic instruction in Luther's Small Catechism, the men were also participating in seminary modules which considered diverse aspects of the faith in a significantly deeper manner than traditional Confirmation instruction. All the men in the first generation acknowledged a familiarity with some of the teaching of the faith from their Catholic origins. Three of the four men made specific reference to the depth of study regarding the Sacrament of the Altar. Their personal growth in knowledge of the biblical foundation of the Sacrament of the Altar contributed substantially to their appreciation for the means of grace. All four of the men commented on the enhanced spiritual experience and greater sense of community that flowed from the Sacrament of the Altar.

Second Generation

In the second generation, four of the six men in the research sample received Confirmation instruction from a local pastor serving in their community of origin. The average duration of the catechetical instruction leading to the rite of Confirmation was six months. Two of the four men instructed by local pastors received their Confirmation instruction with their spouses. Both students commented on the positive impact of catechesis on their life together in marriage and family.

Two of the six men received Confirmation instruction during the seminary modules in a fashion like the first generation. These men were identified as potential candidates for the ministry, however there was no Lutheran ministry active in their community of origin. The same two students considered Pastor Sandor Arguello as their catechist, yet also benefitted from the seminary instruction in a fashion like the first generation of men.

The student from Honduras in the second generation received his Confirmation instruction and celebrated the Rite of Confirmation during an extended stay at a Lutheran Congregation in Panama. The same student was also the recipient of mentoring from an LCMS missionary pastor for a two-year period of his seminary studies at an evangelical seminary in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Aspects of his catechetical experience are like the experience of the first generation of men in Nicaragua.

Vocational Calling

5. At the time of your first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor, what personal faith experience influenced your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor? How would you describe your sense of God's calling you to become a Lutheran pastor? How did any particular words of Holy Scripture influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

First Generation

My preliminary thoughts for the design of the Ministry Applied Project anticipated an evaluation of the "pre-seminary" experience of men serving the Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua. I assumed that students had made the decision for ministry prior to the beginning of theological studies. The MAP research outcomes demonstrate that most men in both the first and second generation did not decide for ministry until they were substantially involved in theological formation. It is accurate to describe the journey into theological studies as the pathway for vocational calling toward the public ministry of the Gospel.

In the first generation of men, Pastor Sandor Arguello informed the students of a critical moment which would call for their vocational decision to be trained to serve the church as pastors. All four of the men in the first-generation recall responding to this question during the

seventh module of instruction in the first cycle of seminary theological formation. During theological study, the men had acquired an understanding of the role of pastor in Word and Sacrament ministry. Additionally, Pastor Sandor and the various seminary professors had contributed to the development of the Lutheran understanding of Christian vocation grounded in God's call upon His children in the Gospel. The biblical criteria for men who aspired to the office of the public ministry were presented to the men. All four of the men perceived the call to personal spiritual growth and a godly lifestyle.

I am not aware of the content of Pastor Arguello's presentation to the men. Research responses indicate that Pastor Arguello's instruction and encouragement had a profound impact on the four men in the first generation. Pastor Arguello invited particular attention to the vocational calling of Christian marriage and family. Two of the four men in the first generation were living in common law relationships with their spouses. The men were encouraged to seek Holy Matrimony in the church. A Lutheran understanding of vocation located the decision for ministry in the larger context of daily life. Men in the first generation were blessed by the opportunity to embrace a new perspective on existing relationships considering God's call upon them in Holy Baptism. All four of the men reported their personal spiritual growth in this regard as a significant factor in their decision for the ministry.

Second Generation

None of the six men in the second generation began their post-Confirmation theological studies with a decision for the public ministry. All the men in the second generation acknowledged some indescribable sense of God drawing them closer to Him through the study of His word. Men of the second generation were invited to consider the Lutheran understanding of vocation during the time of their Confirmation instruction. In keeping with the pattern of the first

generation, all men were encouraged to reject cohabitation and embrace Christian marriage as an estate instituted by God. A clear understanding of the distinction between Law and Gospel in the Holy Scriptures enhanced the spiritual life of the six men.

Diverse personal experiences in the second generation of the research sample contributed to the sense that God was calling each of them to a special purpose in life:

- One man described his fear of speaking in public.

“I was always afraid to speak in public. I didn’t have a very large vocabulary or any confidence to share even a brief message. Although I had interest in the church, I was afraid that I could never function well as a pastor. I heard other pastors. They could always speak well. A deaconess once encouraged me. She said, “It’s not your words—but the word of God that has power.” One time Pastor Sandor invited me to share a brief devotional message during our chapel devotions. I was very nervous. I remember preaching about the mission of the church. Afterwards, Pastor Sandor told me I had shared a good Lutheran message. I was surprised when fellow students congratulated me. I realized it wasn’t me, but God at work in me.”

- One man recalled a time during his adolescence when he became gravely ill.

“According to my parents, I was always a sickly child. I stopped attending the Catholic Church because I was never well enough to go with my family. When I was fourteen years old, I became gravely ill. A doctor told my parents that he could not do anything for me. They prayed desperately to God for my healing. After several days, I sat up in bed one morning and felt well. I was convinced that God had saved me. I went to the church praying and crying in gratitude that God had given me a new opportunity to live.”

- One man reflected on the consistent feeling of peace he received in worship.

“My family was very poor, and life always seemed difficult. We were always worried about things. I remember how much I loved my experience of worshiping God in the little Lutheran chapel in my village. I never failed to feel God’s peace when we were praying and singing. I remember walking home in the dark thinking that God might be calling me to study His word to serve in the church.”

- One man acknowledged a spiritual struggle with God following the death of his brother.

“When I was a young man, God healed me from a chronic illness. A few years later my brother became very ill. I thought it was the same illness and I prayed to God for my brother’s healing. The pastor in our community visited my brother frequently and always read God’s word and prayed with him. My brother’s health declined and one

day not long after the pastor's visit, he died. I felt angry with God and confused. God healed me. Why didn't He do the same for my brother? The Lutheran pastor who ministered to my brother at bedside repeated my brother's dying words – "¡Yo vivo para Cristo!" ("I live for Christ!") Thanks to the pastor's encouragement, I realized that God had indeed saved my brother for all eternity!"

- One man reflected on his personal journey in recovery from alcoholism.

"As a young man I became an alcoholic, and I lived in alcoholism for many years. My family prayed for me, but I never changed. When I first started to listen to the pastor's sermons in my village, I began to meditate on God's word. I realized that other men had died from alcohol, and I was still alive. I talked to the pastor. He told me that God had protected me from greater harm countless times in the past. He told me that God had a greater purpose for my life. I began to pray about what God wanted me to do in my life. I stopped drinking and I never went back to alcohol."

- One man realized that he was delighted with the opportunity to help others.

"I had no experience with church when I was child or teenager. My mother was a single parent and she worked hard to take care of me and my brothers and sisters. I can't explain why, but I always felt good helping my mother. After a while I discovered that I like to help other people also. I began to sense that God was calling me to live a life that would be helpful to others in moments of spiritual, as well as physical need. This was probably the beginning of my pathway to ministry."

Persons of Influence

6. What persons were influential in your personal faith life? How did any person object to your first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor? How did their objection influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

First Generation

In the first generation of men who made the decision to study for the ministry, Rev. Sandor Arguello was regarded by all men as a person of significant influence. Since the Lutheran Church was relatively unknown in the communities of origin, men and their families depended on the personal testimony and encouragement of Pastor Sandor. As theological training unfolded in the first seminary cycle, the visiting professors also became significant for men of the first generation. The professors were appreciated for their depth of understanding of the Word of

God, friendly personalities, and enduring patience with the men in academic work.

The families of the men in the first generation were supportive of the study of God's word. Parents and other family members offered consistent support for the men as they began seminary study. No man experienced opposition to his decision to study for the ministry from family members. The summary absence of objection to participation in Bible study and movement toward the Lutheran Church was surprising in research findings. The departure from Catholicism has been regarded as an act of abandonment of the religious tradition of the family of origin. However, research interview responses indicate that family members were pleased with the personal growth in faith and character that men were experiencing under the influence of God's word taught by the Lutheran pastor. Parents and siblings in the family of origin came to believe that God was doing a new good work in their families through the men called by the Gospel.

One man did experience personal opposition from the parish priest of the Catholic Church in his community of origin. All men of the first generation considered the mutual encouragement received from their peer group of students as influential in their respective decision to study for the ministry.

Second Generation

With the growth and expansion of the Lutheran ministry in Nicaragua, the second generation of men enjoyed a broader level of support in their decision to study for the ministry. The missionary church planter, Rev. Sandor Arguello, continued to be a person of significant influence. The local pastor, members of the first generation of trained servants of the Gospel, became influential in the personal faith formation of the men in the second generation. The emergence of mission congregations resulted in family members and friends from within the community responding favorably to the possibility of a man making the decision to study for the

ministry. An expanding circle of acquaintance with seminary professors and pastors from Lutheran Church—Canada and partner churches offered a broader view of diverse personalities serving in the ministry of the Gospel.

Whole families joined the church in the second generation. It became more likely that family members would be a source of positive influence on men considering the decision for ministry. Even some men whose families remained Catholic received encouragement from parents, grandparents, and siblings. The Lutheran Church was seen in a very positive light by those who had witnessed the compassionate ministry in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch.

The local pastor grew significantly as a person of influence in the second generation. He served as an example of the Lutheran confessional faith lived out in family and community. In several cases, the local pastor encouraged the men in the congregation to become involved in ministry as assistants in the worship and pastoral care life of the congregation. The shared fellowship among men who were prayerfully considering the decision for ministry became evident as positive influence in the second generation.

Most men in the second generation reported very little objection to their decision for ministry in the Lutheran Church. Some men reported opposition by the local Catholic priest to the presence of Lutheran ministry in the community. Men in the second generation did become aware of gossip and false accusations against the Lutheran Church in their community. This occasional criticism did implicitly fall on the men considering the decision for ministry, but ultimately did not dissuade them from God's vocational calling to serve Christ in their community.

Suggestions for the Future

7. What are your suggestions for improving the pre-seminary experience for the man who has first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor?

The suggestions for the improvement of positive factors in the decision for ministry are cohesive between both generations in the research project. Summary suggestions for encouragement to the man who has first thoughts of Lutheran ministry follow:

- All men affirmed the importance of the relationship with the local pastor. They suggested the local pastor engage in formal mentoring relationships with men in their congregation. Trust as a core value is regarded as critical to the ministry experience. A formal mentoring relationship offers the potential candidate a view of the role of the parish pastor.
- All men affirmed the importance of Bible study in the life of men in the local church. It is widely appreciated that the best candidates for ministry are men identified for their love for the Word of God.
- Regular worship and participation in the Sacrament of the Altar are critical to the faith formation of men in the congregation. Lutheran men acknowledged the teaching of the orthodox faith through the liturgy of the church. Men who are considering the decision for ministry are distinguished as men of prayer who live in daily repentance.
- All men in the research project insisted on the value of Catechesis prior to the beginning of formal theological studies.
- Eighty percent of the participants in the research suggested a required period of active membership in a Lutheran congregation of 1–2 years prior to the decision for ministry. It is agreed that men need to understand the spiritual needs of their community of origin. It

was suggested that men be trained in their ability to witness Christ and the Gospel to their peers in the community.

- Eighty percent of the participants affirmed the work of the Holy Spirit as the power at work in a man's life in the decision for ministry.
- Fifty percent of the participants identified the personal qualities of humility, service, friendship, and hospitality as being desirable in men who consider the decision for ministry.

Finally, it is noteworthy to report that not all men who decided to study for the ministry accepted the call to serve in the public ministry of the Gospel. The personal decision to decline ordination was not viewed as a failure. An effective program of theological formation allows for vocational discovery. All the men in the research sample who made the decision to study for the ministry became faithful servants in the ministry of the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Phil. 1:3-6

Each generation of the Church is blessed to learn from the past. St. Paul reminds us that God has been at work through His people. The church enjoys the promise of His enduring presence in Word and sacrament ministry. New understanding gained from experience can be applied to the best practices for ministry with a view for the future. No man decided for the ministry in solitude. Lutheran Reformation theology considers the calling of God to ministry in the context of vocations. The positive factors which influenced the decision for the ministry by men in the Lutheran Church of Nicaragua are consistent with the life of the church in diverse cultures. The qualitative data acquired from field research demonstrated patterns of positive influence that were present in the experience of the men in the research sample. The message of salvation has been shared and nurtured through relationships. Three relational contexts emerge as the most significant sources of positive influence on the man who decided for the ministry: 1) relationship with a pastor, 2) relationships in family of origin, and 3) relationships in the faith community. Summary remarks highlight the opportunities in each context to offer encouragement to the man who has first thoughts of the ministry of the Gospel.

Relationship With a Pastor

The presence of Confessional Lutheran congregations and pastors in Nicaragua is a result of the mission zeal of the calling and sending church, Lutheran Church—Canada. The missionary pastor, Rev. Sandor Arguello, was trained, ordained, called, and sent to Nicaragua in

response to the words of Jesus, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...(Matt. 28:18)”. Nicaragua belongs to the span of God’s reach by the power of the Holy Spirit when Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses “...to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Pastor Sandor was uniquely equipped as a native Nicaraguan to begin outreach in the rural communities around Chinandega. The first generation of men who made the decision for ministry in Nicaragua heard the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ from Pastor Sandor. Pastor Sandor was known to men in his role as evangelist. His faithful witness to salvation by God’s grace alone through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8–9) is recalled by all who knew him. Rev. Arguello was articulate and confident in the biblical foundation of his personal faith. He was “...not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16)”. Pastor Sandor’s first role in ministry as evangelist opened the door for relationship building with the men he encountered during his early visits to communities in material and spiritual need.

The MAP research outcomes demonstrate the importance for the present generation of Lutheran pastors in Nicaragua to embrace their role as evangelists, catechists, and mentors. Although, much has changed during the past twenty years in Nicaragua, the teaching of the Catholic Church maintains a strong influence on society. The presence of numerous other religious entities representing both Christian and non-Christian teachings has contributed to spiritual chaos and confusion in society. The pastor-evangelist-catechist-mentor will continue to have opportunities to bear witness to Jesus Christ and the message of salvation with the Lutheran clarity of law and gospel distinction. Lutheran pastors in Nicaragua are well equipped with a biblical foundation regarding the person and the work of Jesus. They will be a “light in the darkness (1 John 2:8)” for many.

The role of pastor as teacher (catechist) naturally follows the first contact with men who

decided for the ministry. Field research interviews revealed consistent delight in the hearts and minds of men who were invited to participate in the first modules taught in the “Seminario.” During the first generation, catechesis was completed simultaneously with the modules of the training program. Pastor Sandor demonstrated the strength of his theological training in his capacity to teach his students everything that Jesus had commanded (Matt. 28:20). In his role as pastor-catechist, Pastor Sandor was able to open the Word of God to men with modest academic backgrounds. Pastor Sandor employed Luther’s Small Catechism as the primary resource for teaching the basics of the Christian faith. The tradition of Lutheran catechesis was established as a hallmark of Evangelical Lutheran ministry in Nicaragua.

Lutheran pastors in Nicaragua are encouraged to follow the pattern of sound teaching in relationship with men in their respective faith communities. The MAP research responses demonstrated that catechesis was a trust building endeavor in the relationship with the pastor. Trust in the pastor enabled him to actualize his role as shepherd and counselor. Pastoral care is comprehended in the role of pastor as mentor.

The pastor is called to serve the whole faith community as a shepherd under Christ. In this role the pastor strengthens his relationship with men by offering pastoral care and counsel. The experience of men in the research sample demonstrated that catechesis results in opportunities to apply the word of God to real circumstances in the lives of the men. Personal testimony of men in the research sample reported spiritual experiences of healing, encouragement, and personal growth during the process of studying the basic teachings of the faith in the Catechism. The clear distinction between the law of God and the Gospel resulted in the spiritual healing of conflicted relationships. Some questions and concerns from catechetical students may be addressed in the group setting. Yet, the pastor also discerns the opening for private conversation. Men in the first-

and second-generation student cohorts acknowledged the blessings received from intentional pastoral care. The growth of the trusting and caring relationship between the pastor and men of the congregation plants seeds that contribute positively to the first thoughts for the ministry.

The pastor serves as a role model for the men of the congregation. The men in the research sample acknowledged the positive influence of the missionary or congregational pastor as he lived his life in view of the community. The biblical criteria for the man who would seek to serve as a spiritual leader in the faith community has been cited. The apostle Paul affirmed the important character traits necessary for the man who would serve in the ministry of the Gospel.

If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it (Titus 1:6–9).

The integrity for men who serve as pastors is not limited to qualification for the pastoral vocation. The living testimony of the pastor sets an example for men in the congregation who desire a godly life in relationship within their family system. The family is regarded as the primary faith community for the man who is called by God to the vocation of ministry.

The missional pastor embraces the biblical description of criteria for service in the ministry as the continuing responsibility to his own family. Perseverance in a grace-based ethic for the pastor will result in an attractive model to follow for men who are being nurtured in the congregation with the potential to serve in ministry.

Relationships in Family of Origin

Research outcomes demonstrate the positive influence of members of the family origin for the man who decides for the ministry. God places the responsibility for faith formation of

children and youth on parents.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deut. 6:5–9).

Wherever the Word of God has not been taught in society, missionary work begins with teaching the basics of family life in the Christian faith. The first generation of church planting often discovers the spiritual influence of women in the family. St. Paul described the origin of saving faith in the life of Timothy. “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well (2 Tim. 1:5).”

As the biblical faith is taught and nurtured in the whole family, men are encouraged to assume their proper role as spiritual leaders. Some men in the research sample were blessed with faithful fathers. In the first generation of the research sample, pious fathers were typically adherents of the Catholic faith. In Nicaragua the presence of other religious groups was acknowledged, but not substantially influential on the faith life of the family. The emerging presence of the evangelical movement opened the door for new spiritual influences in the life of the nuclear family. Lutheran missionary efforts in Nicaragua cited in the introduction to the MAP clearly resulted in the presence of the Gospel in rural communities where word and deed ministry was established through tangible acts of mercy.

The Lutheran pastor in Nicaragua who has embraced his role as spiritual leader of his family will encourage men in the faith community to follow his example. Fathers who believe the Gospel and fulfill their roles as spiritual leaders offer positive encouragement to their sons

with respect to first thoughts for the ministry. Christian families value the opportunity to speak to their children concerning God's call upon them to live in the faith. Parents do well to encourage the public ministry of the Gospel as one of the vocational possibilities for the young men in the household.

Relationships in Faith Community

All the research participants affirmed the preferred context for the decision for ministry in the congregation. The faith community offers the best opportunity for a man to observe and serve in the ministry of the Gospel. Men in the research sample encouraged significant time in local church membership as a requirement for formal admission into the seminary training program. Lutheran Christianity values the journey in faith that begins with identity in Holy Baptism. Our first experience of God who calls us to unique vocations in life is through the call to new life in Christ in Baptism. As the history of the church unfolds in each place throughout the world children are born into the community of faith and welcomed into the family of God. Relationships that are shaped and informed by the catechetical experience in the local church allow for a young man to grow in fellowship with God and others.

A man who first appreciates his role as brother and fellow servant in the local congregation becomes a good listener to God's unique calling toward the vocation of ministry. The servant relationship within the faith community gives opportunity to members of the local congregation to affirm gifts and qualities in the man that are characteristic of the biblical requirements for candidates for the pastoral office. Literature research has demonstrated that some Christian congregations have enthusiastically embraced their identity as churches that send men into the office of the ministry. Member congregations of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua are blessed to encourage men to consider the call of God to serve in the ministry of the Gospel.

Final Thoughts and A New Beginning

The completion of the MAP represents the final requirement for the Doctor of Ministry. The coursework and seminars have been completed over several years. Every aspect of the Doctor of Ministry program has blessed me on my continuing personal journey in the Christian faith in the context of my callings in life as husband, father, grandfather, and missionary pastor. I have been the recipient of God's abundant grace shared with me by my beloved spouse, my children, family members, Christian friends in the church, and the academic community of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. I could not have imagined the emerging sense of joy to discover that our journey in ministry service has not yet come to an end.

A developing and growing ministry partnership between confessional Honduran Lutheran Christians, LCMS Office of International Mission LAC Region, members of the LCMS Honduras FORO, and Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua is seeking the guidance of God's Holy Spirit toward the establishment of a vital national Word and Sacrament ministry. The summary research outcomes from the MAP are applicable to the development of a culture of Gospel ministry that will encourage outreach to men through catechesis, the study of God's Word, worship, and acts of mercy toward neighbors. Jesus knows every detail of the present reality in Honduras and invites us to follow Him on the continuing journey in faith.

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matt. 9:35–38)

APPENDIX ONE

PROTOCOL AGREEMENT: ILSN AND LUTHERAN CHURCH—CANADA

PROTOCOL AGREEMENT between LUTHERAN CHURCH—CANADA and IGLESIA
LUTERANA SINODO de NICARAGUA

The Basis of Our Partnership

Thankful to God for the blessings that He has bestowed upon the mission in Nicaragua through the proclamation of the Gospel, Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) and the Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN) joyfully enter into a formal partnership as two separate yet interdependent bodies. We gratefully acknowledge that this partnership is rooted in the Holy Scripture which has produced a common bond of faith, doctrine and fellowship. Neither of us takes this bond lightly, confessing together in agreement with and accepting without reservation, as we do:

The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice; and

All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther and the Formula of Concord.

Our Confession is an unconditional commitment to the Holy Scripture as the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God and to the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church as a correct exposition of the Word of God.

We therefore confess boldly and zealously that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour, the Son of God and the Son of Man. There is no salvation apart from Him. Our common faith and confession is focused on God's atoning work in His Son, Jesus Christ, and is clearly stated in the doctrine of justification by grace through faith without works. It is commitment to this article of faith as revealed in the Holy Scripture that binds us together and forms the basis of our

partnership.

The Goal of Our Partnership

Based on this common confession of faith, our partnership has the goal of fulfilling the mission Christ has given to His church, namely, You shall be My Witnesses...to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8), so that “every tongue may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11). This goal shall be our chief endeavor. To this end, we pledge to work in partnership, utilizing the resources God gives to each of our church bodies.

The Objectives of Our Partnership

In our efforts to fulfill Christ's commission, we will seek to cooperate in:

World mission outreach, so that we may apply God-given talents to planning and utilizing resources to bring the Gospel to the whole world;

4. Activities of theological education, to provide an adequate supply of needed full-time church workers;
5. Efforts which address the needs of specialized ministries, to develop a growing church;
6. Programs of nurture, to help our respective members grow to mature manhood (Ephesians 4,13) in their faith in Christ;
7. Programs which enable our respective members to put their faith into action, to demonstrate genuine love and concern for all needs and conditions of people; and
8. Mass media and literature projects, to support both mission outreach and nurture in cooperation with the auxiliaries and affiliates of our respective church bodies; and
9. Other programs that will enhance the mission of the church and the proclamation of the Gospel.

THEREFORE, in order that our goal and objectives may be pursued with all zeal and carried out in Christian harmony, peace and joy, and in good order and decency, we agree to the following:

1. **Mutual Altar and Pulpit Fellowship.** We declare ourselves to be in altar and pulpit

fellowship with each other. Consequently, communicant members of member congregations of either church body may freely participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion as administered at a congregation of the other church body. In addition, the ordained ministers of each church body may freely be invited by a congregation or other appropriate entity of the other church body to lead or participate in the worship services, to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, and otherwise to engage in all activities as fully as such ministers would in the congregations and other entities associated with their own church bodies. Such invitations and requests will be reviewed by the appropriate Synodical presidents for their approval.

2. **Mutual Prayer.** We also pledge to hold each other up before God in prayer and intercession.
3. **Our Interdependence.** Recognizing our interdependence and aware of the immediate needs of ILSN, LCC through its Mission¹, will carry out agreed to functions and responsibilities on behalf of ILSN. Such an arrangement will continue until ILSN, through its convention, determines to take up these functions and responsibilities or Lutheran Church—Canada is no longer in a position to carry them out. A listing of these agreed to functions and responsibilities are noted as addendums to this document.
4. **Working Relationship.** For the sake of good order, official relations between the ILSN and LCC shall be expressed through the respective presidents. Working relationships between the two church bodies may be established by policy or agreement.
5. **Fellowship with Other Church Bodies.** We deeply respect the fellowship and partnership we have with each other in Christ. We therefore agree that each of us will consult with the other before entering into fellowship or partnership with another church body or church federation. We also agree, however, that each of us is finally responsible to the Lord of the church for decisions taken in this matter.
6. **Amendments to the Protocol Document.** This Protocol Document may be modified by our mutual agreement as determined from time to time by our respective Synods. Any modification will become the subject of a written amendment signed by both Synods.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will both bless and guide our joint efforts in meeting the challenges placed before us by the Lord, and which are summarized in this document. God helping us, we pledge our best efforts in meeting the goal and objectives of our partnership.

¹ LCC Missionary Services incorporated in Nicaragua together with LCC Mission Staff in Nicaragua.

June 2008

Lutheran Church—Canada

By _____

Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua

By _____

ADDENDUMS

Recognizing our interdependence and aware of the immediate needs of a young church, Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) and Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN) agree to the following addendums outlining various duties and responsibilities that Lutheran Church—Canada will carry out on behalf of ILSN. Such an arrangement will continue until such time that the ILSN in convention agrees to assume full responsibility or Lutheran Church—Canada is no longer able to carry out these agreed to responsibilities. These addendums will be reviewed prior to each ILSN Convention.

1. LCC through its mission¹ will assist the new church in the setting up and carrying out of the administrative duties of ILSN under the direction of the Board of Directors of the ILSN. Administrative functions will include a roster of congregations, roster of pastors, deacons and deaconesses, accounting, Synod records and minutes etc.
2. LCC through its mission will work with the ILSN in the development of financial resources to provide stipends to the church workers of ILSN. LCC is committed to assisting ILSN in order that equitable stipends can be paid to the church workers of ILSN.
3. By mutual agreement the LCC Missionary Services will continue to retain interest in the properties of the congregations of ILSN until such time as the ILSN in convention requests that we turn the entire title to the Synod or congregation.
4. LCC through its mission will continue to coordinate and administer volunteer mission opportunities in consultation with ILSN.
5. LCC through its mission will continue to oversee the theological and continuing education program of the new Synod and will strive to enhance these necessary programs of the church.
6. While the development of new missions in Nicaragua is the primary responsibility of ILSN, Lutheran Church—Canada through its mission will oversee this important work in cooperation with the leadership of ILSN.
7. Lutheran Church—Canada through its mission will work closely with ILSN in the continued development of social ministry projects in and through the congregations and missions of ILSN.
8. LCC through its mission will work in partnership with ILCN as it expands its mission in bringing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to the countries of Honduras and Costa Rica.

¹ Wherever the term “mission” is used, it is to be understood as above.

APPENDIX TWO

THREE PARTY PROTOCOL AGREEMENT

Among Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC), Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN)
And The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)
September 2014–September 2018

The Basis of Our Partnership

We thank God for our shared history in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We affirm the blessing of altar and pulpit fellowship which exists between The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Lutheran Church—Canada.

Furthermore, we gratefully acknowledge that our partnership in mission is rooted in the Word of God which has produced a common bond of faith, doctrine, practice, and fellowship. We rejoice in making a bold confession of our agreement and accept without reservation:

- a) The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice; and
- b) All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, including: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

Our shared confession is an unconditional commitment to the Holy Scripture as the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God and to the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church as a correct exposition of the Word of God.

We boldly confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, proclaimed by the Holy Scripture as the Son of God and the Son of Man. There is no salvation apart from Him (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). Our common faith is centered in the atoning work of God in Jesus Christ, His Son, and is clearly stated in the doctrine of justification by grace through faith without works. (Ephesians 2:8–9, AC IV). Our commitment to this central article of faith binds us together and forms the basis for our partnership in mission.

The Goal of Our Partnership

Based on our common confession of faith, our partnership seeks to respond to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who has called, gathered, enabled, and equipped His Church for mission. Prior to His ascension to heaven Jesus gave His Church the great Commission in saying:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. " (Matthew 28:18–20 ESV)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8 ESV)

We are likewise convinced by the words of the Savior that this missionary endeavor is both extensive and enduring.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14)

Compelled by the voice of our Lord, we pledge to work in partnership, utilizing the human and material resources that God gives to each of our church bodies.

Recognition of an Established Confessional Lutheran Church in Nicaragua

God has been faithful to the people of Nicaragua through the missionary efforts of Lutheran Church—Canada, their first missionary, Rev. Sandor Argüello, Nicaraguan pastors and deaconesses trained in the seminary organized and served by LCC pastors and professors, and numerous participants in ministry servant events. We recognize and celebrate the establishment of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN) which took place at the organizing convention, January 11–12, 2008. We pledge fervent prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ, members and servant leaders of Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua, as they look forward with great joy to the celebration of the Cuarta Convención (Fourth Convention) de la Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua, January 8–10, 2014, in Chinandega, Nicaragua.

In addition, we recognize the PROTOCOL AGREEMENT between LUTHERAN CHURCH—CANADA and IGLESIA LUTERANA SÍNODO de NICARAGUA.² We are committed to respect and honour the working relationship between Lutheran Church—Canada and Iglesia Luterana Sinodo de Nicaragua.

The purpose of this Three-Party Protocol Agreement is to assist Iglesia Luterana Sinodo de Nicaragua in carrying out its missionary endeavours within the national borders of Nicaragua and beyond to the neighbouring countries of Honduras and Costa Rica. All human and material resources for the support of this mission work are offered in a context of prayer, the study of God's Word, discussion, strategic planning, and agreement of all three parties.

All parties to this Protocol Agreement are committed to mutual comfort and consolation

² PROTOCOL AGREEMENT between LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA and IGLESIA LUTERANA SÍNODO de NICARAGUA was executed June 2008 and describes the working partnership between the two church bodies. A copy of this document is available from Lutheran Church—Canada. Contact: Rev. Leonardo Neitzel, Lutheran Church—Canada Missions and Social Ministry Services.

(2 Corinthians 1:3–5) to the end that a powerful witness will be given to unity in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:3–6) and appreciation for the diversity of spiritual gifts among God's people.(1 Corinthians 12:4–7, Ephesians 4:11–13)

Proposal for LCMS Partner Missionary Presence in Central America

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod shares both history and a current passion for the ministry of the Gospel in Honduras, Central America. LCMS missionaries sustained a confessional Lutheran Word and Sacrament ministry presence in Honduras for a period of more than thirty years during the 20th century. LCMS partnership and presence in Honduras ended in the late 1980's when national pastors in Honduras broke fellowship with LCMS over important doctrinal and practical issues.

Missionary interest in Honduras was rekindled with an exploratory visit to Tegucigalpa and La Esperanza, Honduras in October 2007 by LCMS Regional Director for Latin America, Rev. Dr. Jorge Groh, Rev. Edmund Auger (LCMS Cayman Islands), Rev. Jonathan Rathjen (Trinity Lutheran Church, Auburn, Nebraska), and other interested persons.

Iglesia Luterana Sinodo de Nicaragua was established in January 2008. ILSN identified Honduras and Costa Rica as intentional mission fields. ILSN sent the first Nicaraguan missionary, Pastor Douglas Aguilar to Olanchito, Honduras in 2008. In recognition of ILSN regional mission initiative, it was determined that LCMS would seek appropriate ways to support this new effort in lieu of re-opening Honduras as an LCMS mission field.

Since October 2009, Rev. Edmund Auger has served as pastoral mentor for Tulio César Meza, a native Honduran who resides in Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras. Tulio is a member of the current class of pastoral and deaconess candidates preparing for graduation and placement from ILSN seminary in January 2014. Rev. Edmund and Cherie Auger facilitated a marriage enrichment retreat in Nicaragua for church worker couples, November 2012.

With a desire to expand its partnership with LCC and ILSN in mission, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, through the Office of International Mission and Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rev. Ted Krey, proposes the placement of a career missionary couple, pastor and deaconess in Central America. The LCMS missionaries would serve to support and strengthen the capacities of the ILSN missionary pastors and deaconesses to carry out the primary work of church planting and the establishment of new confessional Lutheran congregations in the mission fields. In addition, the partnership may allow for the placement of additional missionary personnel including vicars and deaconess interns.

Details of position description, procedures, finances, timeline, and joint work will be developed through shared consultation with Rev. Dr. Leonardo Neitzel, Lutheran Church—Canada Missions and Social Ministry Services, Rev. Ted Krey, LCMS LAC Regional Director, LCMS Office of International Mission, and Rev. Marvin Donaire, President of ILSN, and the called Regional Mission Overseer and deaconess.

Preliminary considerations for the partnership

- Primary Responsibilities

Regional Mission Overseer

The Regional Mission Overseer is an ordained pastor of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He has cross-cultural ministry experience and possesses skills that will support the ministry partnership in the following areas:

1. Serve as the team leader for all present and future LCMS missionary personnel assigned to the partnership.
2. Assist the partnership by: a) supervising vicars and student interns, and b) mentoring established pastors in the performance of missionary and pastoral service.
3. In partnership with the deaconess, he will offer pastoral care, spiritual encouragement, and counseling to church worker couples and families through individual visitation and counsel, as well as, planned workshops, seminars, and retreats for couples and families.
4. Assist the partnership by facilitating the development of the FORO which gathers congregations and individuals who desire to be supportive of church planting efforts on the mission fields.
5. May assist the partnership in developing strategic plans for the expansion of the ministry on ILSN mission fields.
6. On behalf and under the supervision and guidance of LCC's Committee on Missions and Social Ministry Services (CMSMS), carry on the general logistic planning and local administration of a theological education program, mission and social ministry budget, project proposals and administration of projects in development.
7. Revise and submit the yearly budget for LCC's mission in Central America by beginning of December each year.
8. Draft mission project proposals which are priority for LCC's missions in that region and present them for approval by ILSN and LCC.
9. Supervise LCC missions and social ministry projects in that region under the guidance of the CMSMS and LCC's Mission executive.
10. Recommend actions from the CMSMS on LCC's regional missions in whatever applicable matter.
11. In consultation with LCC's mission manager at the Mission Centre in Chinandega, coordinate and orient to work of the local mission staff.
12. Present written reports twice a year or when requested by the CMSMS (January & September). Copies of these reports are forwarded to LCC and LCMS World Mission Regional Director.
13. Percentage of time allocation for work of the Regional Mission Overseer in the countries in Central America will be decided during the first year of this Protocol.
14. Due to the bulk of time and work done in Nicaragua it may be that the Regional Mission Overseer establishes residence in Nicaragua, rather than Honduras.

Regional Deaconess

The deaconess is a commissioned minister of religion of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Deaconesses are women who witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ through works of mercy, spiritual care, and teaching the Christian faith. The deaconess has cross-cultural ministry experience and possesses skills that will support the ministry partnership in the following areas:

1. The deaconess will assist congregations in the assessment of community needs and the development of mercy projects which witness the unconditional love of God in Jesus Christ to a broken world.
2. The deaconess may assist pastors and deaconesses in developing plans for catechesis in the local congregation. The deaconess may assist pastors and deaconesses in developing programs of spiritual care for women, through formal consultation with and within the guidelines of the ILSN and LCC.
3. The deaconess will offer consolation and encouragement to ILSN deaconesses and pastors' spouses currently serving on the mission fields.
4. In partnership with the Regional Mission Overseer, the deaconess will offer diaconal care, spiritual encouragement, and counseling to church worker couples and families of ILSN through individual visitation and counsel, as well as, planned workshops, seminars, and retreats for couples and families.
5. Administration of the Parish Nurse program under the CMSMS' guidelines and consultation/agreement with the ILSN. (This is a new program to be implemented in 2014–15).

Procedures and Finances

With respect to employment procedures and financial support for missionary service, the Regional Mission Overseer and deaconess are subject to the guidelines for career missionary service established by the LCMS Office of International Mission. The Regional Mission Overseer and deaconess serve on the mission field under the supervision of the LCMS LAC Regional Director.

Time Duration of the Protocol and Timeline for Implementation

- The time duration of the present Protocol is four years from its implementation, which is September 2014–September 2018, with yearly evaluation between the parties. • Pastor designated for new assignment effective January 1, 2014. Deaconess is called and begins new assignment with missionary orientation effective February 1, 2014. • January 8–10, 2014: Pastor attends ILSN Convention, Chinandega, Nicaragua,
- January 23–26, 2014: Pastor and Deaconess attend ILSN Seminary graduation and placement, Chinandega, Nicaragua,


- January 27–February 2, 2014: Pastor and Deaconess make initial site visit, Choluteca and Tegucigalpa, Honduras,
- February 3–14, 2014: Missionary Orientation, St. Louis, MO
- February–May 2014: Mission and FORO Development (Gathering prayer and financial support for missionary presence in Honduras)
- May 19–30, 2014: Deaconess Seminar and Graduation / Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
- June 2014: D. Min. study / Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO
- July-September 2014: Move to mission field and installation.
- Term of service: 4 years

Joint Work

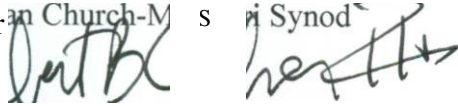
The Regional Mission Overseer and Deaconess are available for consultation with Lutheran Church—Canada and Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua by mutual agreement for date and location to discuss and develop the details of this strategic mission partnership. Ministry progress reports will be shared with all partners on a regular basis.


We pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and bless our joint efforts to carry out the mission work set before us in the harvest fields of Nicaragua, Honduras, and Costa Rica. We commit ourselves to diligence in prayer and service toward the completion of the goals and objectives of our partnership.

Date:

~~Lutheran Church Canada~~

 Lutheran Church Canada
 Por
 Rev. Leo do Neitz
 Assistant to the President for Missions and Social Ministry Services


 Rev. Ted Krey - Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
 LAC Regional Director Por

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
 Por 
 Rev. Albert Collver-Asistant to the President LC-MS

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
 Por 
 Rev. Edmund Auger & Marie L. Auger - Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Cayman Islands

Por 
Rev. ~~Marvin Donaire - ESN - Presidente - Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua~~



Contacts

Rev. Leonardo Neitzel - Lutheran Church—Canada
Assistant to the President for Missions and Social Ministry Services
Missions@Lutheranchurch.ca

Rev. Ted Krey – The Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod LAC Regional Director
tkrey@hotmail.com

Rev. Marvin Donaire - President - Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua
donairemarvin@yahoo.com

Licenciado Robert Jose Zepeda - Lutheran Church—Canada Mission Manager in Nicaragua
rojzopedab@yahoo.com

Rev. Edmund Auger & Cherie L. Auger – The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Cayman
Islands ecauger@yahoo.com

APPENDIX THREE

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project title: Positive Factors Related to the Decision to Study for the Office of the Ministry by Men of the Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua (Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua / Lutheran Church—Canada)

Researcher: Edmund D. Auger

Email Address and Telephone Number: ecauger@yahoo.com
(817) 653-2115 USA
505 7791 3528 Nicaragua

Research Supervisor: Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.

Email Address: sanchezl@csl.edu

You are invited to be part of a research study. The researcher is a student at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri as part of the Doctor of Ministry program. The information in this form is provided to help you decide if you want to participate in the research study. This form describes what you will have to do during the study and the risks and benefits of the study.

If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the researcher. Do not sign this form unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT?

This study seeks to identify the factors associated with recruitment and the pre-seminary spiritual formation of candidates for the pastoral ministry in Nicaragua, Central America. A series of questions invites the participants to reflect and share a narrative from their pre-seminary experience in personal faith life and membership in the Lutheran mission or congregation.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THE STUDY?

You are invited to participate in the study because you belong to the total population of men who have entered the theological seminary program of the Lutheran Church Nicaraguan Synod. It is not necessary that you be active in pastoral ministry to participate in the study. The study focuses on people and events which were contributing factors toward the decision to become a Lutheran pastor through theological formation.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY?

Ten men will be invited to participate in the study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researcher is a career missionary of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod serving under the auspices of a Three-Party Protocol Agreement between Lutheran Church—Canada, Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua, and Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

There is no cost associated with participation in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to participate in this study, your participation will require about two hours of your personal time. You will be invited to respond to a series of questions in an interview environment. Only the researcher and participant will be present during the interview.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in this study and sign the informed consent form, you will be asked to respond by:

- sharing personal information such as your age, family status, and place of domicile.
- answering a series of open questions regarding your pre-seminary experience in Nicaragua.
- voluntarily offering additional comments and information that you believe may contribute positively to the pre-seminary experience of future students for the pastoral ministry in Nicaragua.

While you are in the study, you will be expected to:

- follow the simple instructions you are given by the researcher.
- inform the researcher if you want to terminate your participation in the study at any time.

WILL I BE RECORDED?

The interview will be audio recorded. The researcher will use the audiotape to produce a written transcript of your responses for the purpose of interpreting and summarizing the information received in the interview.

The researcher will only use the recordings of you for the purposes you read about in this form. They will not use the recordings for any other reasons without your permission unless you sign another consent form. The recordings will be kept for seven years, and they will be kept confidential. The recordings will be destroyed after seven years.

WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?

Being in this study is not intended to help you, but it may be pleasant to recall people and events in your pre-seminary experience.

ARE THERE RISKS TO ME IF I AM IN THIS STUDY?

I do not anticipate any risks to you as a participant in this study. Please be reminded that you may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable.

WILL I RECEIVE COMPENSATION FOR THIS STUDY?

You will not receive compensation for participating in the study.

DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can decide not to be in the study, and you can change your mind about being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you. If you want to stop being in the study, tell the researcher.

The researcher can remove you from the study at any time. This could happen if:

- The researcher believes it is best for you to stop being in the study.
- You do not follow directions about the study.

WHO WILL USE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT MY BEING IN THIS STUDY?

Any information you provide in this study that could identify you such as your name, age, or other personal information will be kept confidential. You will not be personally identified in any written reports or publications that result from this research.

The researcher will keep the information you provide in a password protected file in his personal computer. Only the researcher, research supervisor, and Concordia Seminary faculty committee will have access to this information. Only the researcher will have access to the tape-recorded interviews.

Limits of Privacy (Confidentiality)

The researcher can assure you that he will keep everything you tell him for the study private. Yet there are times where the researcher cannot keep things confidential. The researcher cannot keep things private confidential when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused,

- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else.

There are laws that require many professionals to act if they think a person might harm themselves or another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe.

Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS STUDY?

You can ask questions about the study at any time. You can call the researcher if you have any concerns or complaints. You should call the researcher at the phone number listed on page 1 of this form if you have questions about anything related to this study.

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study. The researcher has talked with me about this study. The researcher has answered all my questions. I voluntarily agree to be in this study. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related information as described above.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I attest that the participant named above had adequate time to consider this information, an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

DO YOU AGREE TO BE AUDIOTAPED IN THIS STUDY?

I voluntarily agree to let the researcher audiotape me for this study. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX FOUR

FORMULARIO CONSENTIMIENTO

Título del Estudio: Factores Positivos Relacionados con la Decisión Estudiar para el Oficio del Ministerio por hombres de la Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (Lutheran Church—Canada)

Investigador: Revdo. Edmund D. Auger

Correo electrónico y número de teléfono ecauger@yahoo.com
(817) 653-2115 USA
505 7791 3528 Nicaragua

Supervisor del Proyecto: Dr. Leopoldo A. Sánchez M.

Correo electrónico: sanchezl@csl.edu

Hermano en Cristo:

Ud. está invitado a participar en una investigación del campo de la obra pastoral. El investigador es estudiante del programa de Doctorado en Ministerio ofrecido por el Seminario Concordia, St. Louis, Missouri, USA. La información contenida en este formulario es ofrecida para ayudarle a tomar decisión en cuanto a su participación en la investigación. Este formulario le ofrece una descripción de lo que su participación requiere y a la vez expone los riesgos y beneficios del estudio.

Si Ud. tiene alguna pregunta o duda sobre este formulario, favor de preguntar al investigador. No tiene obligación de firmar si tiene alguna duda en cuanto a su participación. La decisión de participar es suya.

¿DE QUE SE TRATA ESTA INVESTIGACION?

Este estudio busca identificar los factores relacionados con la identificación y formación espiritual de candidatos para el ministerio pastoral en Nicaragua, Centroamérica. Una serie de preguntas invita al participante a reflexionar y compartir una narrativa de su experiencia personal en la fe y convivencia como miembro de una congregación o misión Luterana Nicaragüense antes de su entrada al seminario.

¿PORQUE ME HA INVITADO A MI A PARTICIPAR EN EL ESTUDIO?

Ud. está invitado a participar porque Ud. pertenece a la población de hombres quienes han entrado al programa de educación teológica en Nicaragua bajo los auspicios de la Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua y Lutheran Church—Canada. No es necesario o requisito que Ud. esté activo en el ministerio pastoral actualmente para participar en el estudio.

El estudio se enfoca en las personas y eventos durante el periodo de tiempo de “pre-seminario”

que fueron factores contribuyentes a la decisión de formarse como pastor Luterano mediante la educación teológica formal del seminario.

¿CUANTAS PERSONAS VAN A PARTICIPAR EN LA INVESTIGACION?

Un total de diez hombres están invitados a participar en el estudio. Ellos son representantes de las cuatro promociones del Seminario Teológico Reforma que se llevaron a cabo en 2002, 2006, 2009, y 2015.

¿QUIEN ESTA HACIENDO LA INVESTIGACION?

El investigador, Revdo. Edmund Auger, es un pastor misionero de la Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Missouri sirviendo en el campo misional bajo los auspicios del Protocolo Tripartito de Lutheran Church—Canada, Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua, y Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod firmado en el mes de mayo 2014.

¿HAY ALGUN COSTO PARA PARTICIPAR EN EL ESTUDIO?

No hay ningún costo al participante en el estudio.

¿CUANTO TIEMPO DURA EL ESTUDIO?

Si Ud. decide participar en el estudio, se requerirán aproximadamente dos horas de su tiempo. El estudio consta de invitar sus respuestas a una serie de preguntas en el contexto de una entrevista. Únicamente Ud. y el investigador estarán presentes durante la entrevista.

¿QUE VA A PASAR DURANTE EL ESTUDIO?

Si Ud. acuerda participar en el estudio y firma el formulario de consentimiento, se le va a pedir respuestas a preguntas sobre:

- su identidad personal, como su edad, estado civil, familia y lugar de domicilio.
- su experiencia de “pre-seminario” en cuanto a personas y eventos en Nicaragua.
- cualquier comentario adicional que Ud. cree podría contribuir de una manera positiva a la experiencia de “pre-seminario de estudiantes futuros para el ministerio pastoral en Nicaragua.

Mientras Ud. participe en el estudio, se espera su colaboración:

- de seguir las instrucciones del investigador.
- de informar al investigador si Ud. quiere terminar su participación en el estudio en cualquier momento.

¿SERA GRABADA MI PARTICIPACION?

Sí, la entrevista será grabada. El investigador utilizará la grabación de la entrevista para producir una narración redactada en forma escrita de la entrevista. Esa narración será indispensable en la evaluación de las respuestas y los resultados del estudio.

El investigador utilizará la grabación únicamente para los propósitos del estudio. No se va a utilizar la grabación para otro propósito sin el consentimiento del participante. La grabación será guardada durante siete años y luego será destruida.

¿ME AYUDARA MI PARTICIPAR EN EL ESTUDIO?

Su participación en el estudio no tiene el propósito de ayudarle a Ud. Sin embargo puede ser una experiencia agradable recordar a personas y eventos en su vida antes de entrar al seminario que influenciaron su decisión de querer ser pastor Luterano.

¿HAY ALGUN RIESGO EN TORNO A MI PARTICIPACION EN EL ESTUDIO?

No se espera ningún riesgo en torno a su participación en el estudio. Recuerde que Ud. puede terminar su participación en el estudio en cualquier momento.

¿RECIBIRE ALGUNA COMPENSACION POR MI PARTICIPACION EN EL ESTUDIO?

No.

¿TENGO QUE PARTICIPAR POR FUERZA EN EL ESTUDIO?

No. Su participación en el estudio es completamente voluntaria. Puede decidir a participar y cambiar decisión en cualquier momento. Si quiere terminar hay que decírselo al investigador. El investigador puede retirarle de la investigación si:

- él llega a creer que su participación le puede causar algún daño personal.
- si Ud. no sigue las instrucciones relacionadas con el estudio.

¿Quién UTILIZARA Y COMPARTIRA LA INFORMACION DE MI PARTICIPACION EN EL ESTUDIO?

La información que Ud. ofrece en este estudio tal como su identidad personal, edad, estado civil, etc. será guardada de forma confidencial. Ud. no será identificado en ningún informe escrito o reporte escrito a base de su entrevista.

El investigador guardará la información compartida en un archivo protegido por clave en su computadora personal. Únicamente el investigador, su supervisor, y el comité de la facultad del Seminario Concordia puede tener acceso a la información. Únicamente el investigador puede tener acceso a la grabación de la entrevista.

LIMITES DE CONFIANZA

En términos generales el investigador le asegura la privacidad del estudio. Sin embargo hay circunstancias que contradicen la privacidad y confianza.

El investigador no puede guardar confidencialidad cuando:

- el investigador aprende que algún niño o adulto vulnerable ha sido víctima del abuso.
- el investigador aprende que alguna persona está contemplando algún hecho que resultará en una herida personal, tal como la amenaza de suicidio.
- el investigador aprende que alguna persona está contemplando herir a otra persona.

En todo caso el investigador seguirá leyes y recomendaciones con el fin de asegurar que toda persona sea tratada con respeto y seguridad personal. Favor de preguntar si tiene alguna duda o pregunta previa a su participación en el estudio.

¿CON QUIEN PUEDO HABLAR DE ESTE ESTUDIO?

Ud. puede preguntar del estudio en cualquier momento. Ud. puede llamar al investigador con sus inquietudes o quejas. El investigador está a su alcance por el número de teléfono indicado en la primera página de este formulario.

¿QUIERE UD. PARTICIPAR EN ESTE ESTUDIO?

Sí, he leído el formulario y recibido la orientación al estudio. Estoy dispuesto a participar voluntariamente en este estudio. Doy mi permiso para el uso de la información adquirida por la investigación en su debida forma según los propósitos y fines de la investigación.

Mi firma no implica la pérdida de mis derechos legales como participante en el estudio. Recibiré una copia firmada del formulario de consentimiento para mis archivos personales.

Nombre del Participante

Firma del Participante

Fecha

Doy fe que el participante nombrado ha tenido suficiente tiempo para considerar la información contenida en este formulario. Además ha tenido la oportunidad de preguntar y voluntariamente acordar de su participación en el estudio.

Nombre del Investigador

Firma del Investigador

Fecha

¿ESTA DE ACUERDO CON SER GRABADO EN ESTE ESTUDIO?

Sí, estoy de acuerdo con ser grabado en este estudio. Doy permiso para el uso de la información adquirida en el estudio según los propósitos descritos en este formulario.

Nombre del Participante

Firma de Participante

Fecha

APPENDIX FIVE

FIELD RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Edmund D. Auger
Concordia Seminary St. Louis
Doctor of Ministry Program
October 20, 2016

PROJECT Title: Positive Factors Related to the Decision to Study for the Office of the Ministry by Men of the Lutheran Synod of Nicaragua (Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua / Lutheran Church—Canada)

Field Research Questionnaire

Date of Interview: ___/___/___

Place of Interview: _____

Time of Interview: _____

Personal Information

Name: _____

Date of birth: ___/___/___

Home address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Civil status: single married widow divorced

Are you currently active in pastoral ministry? Yes No

The following questions pertain to the pre-seminary experience of the research participant:

1. Prior to your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what was your experience in the Christian faith? How did your experience in the Christian faith influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

2. At the time of your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what were the circumstances of your personal faith life? What person or persons were helpful in leading you to the Lutheran Church and how did they influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

3. After your first contact with the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, what was your experience as a member of the worshiping community? How did your experience influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

4. What was your experience in Lutheran Confirmation instruction? How did your experience in Confirmation instruction influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

5. At the time of your first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor, what personal faith experience influenced your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor? How would you describe your sense of God's calling you to become a Lutheran pastor? How did any particular words of Holy Scripture influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

6. What persons were influential in your personal faith life? How did any person object to your first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor? How did their objection influence your future decision to become a Lutheran pastor?

7. What are your suggestions for improving the pre-seminary experience for the man who has first thoughts of becoming a Lutheran pastor?

Your personal identity will be protected in this research project.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX SIX

CUESTIONARIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Edmund D. Auger
Concordia Seminary St. Louis
Doctor of Ministry Program
October 20, 2016

Título del Estudio: Factores Positivos Relacionados con la Decisión Estudiar para el Oficio del Ministerio por hombres de la Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (Lutheran Church—Canada)

Cuestionario de Investigación

Fecha de la entrevista: ___/___/___

Lugar de la entrevista: _____

Hora de la entrevista: _____

Datos Personales:

Nombre: _____

Fecha de nacimiento: ___/___/___

Lugar de domicilio: _____

Número de teléfono: _____

Correo electrónico: _____

Estado civil: O soltero O casado O viudo O divorciado

¿Está Ud. actualmente activo en el ministerio pastoral? O Sí O No

Las siguientes preguntas se refieren a la experiencia de la persona entrevistada durante el tiempo antes de entrar en el seminario:

1. ¿Antes de su primer contacto con la Iglesia Luterana en Nicaragua, cuál fue su experiencia

religiosa en su familia de origen? ¿Qué influencia tuvo su experiencia familiar religiosa en su futura decisión de ser pastor Luterano?

2. ¿En el momento de su primer contacto con la Iglesia Luterana en Nicaragua, cuál fue la circunstancia de su vida personal? ¿Qué persona o personas tuvieron importancia en su contacto con la Iglesia Luterana y que influencia tuvieron ellos en su futura decisión de ser pastor Luterano?

3. ¿Después de su contacto con la Iglesia Luterana en Nicaragua, cuál fue su experiencia como miembro de la misión o congregación? ¿Qué influencia tuvo su experiencia en su futura decisión de ser pastor Luterano?

4. ¿Cómo fue su experiencia en la Confirmación Luterana? ¿Qué influencia tuvo su experiencia en la Confirmación en su futura decisión de ser pastor Luterano?

5. ¿Cuándo tuvo sus primeros pensamientos de ser pastor Luterano, tuvo alguna experiencia espiritual? ¿Qué sentido tuvo Ud. del llamado de Dios para servir como pastor Luterano? ¿Hay algún texto bíblico que tuvo influencia en su decisión de ser pastor Luterano?

6. ¿Qué personas tuvieron influencia en su vida espiritual y su decisión de ser pastor Luterano? ¿Había alguna persona opuesta a su decisión de ser pastor Luterano? ¿Cómo enfrentó Ud. esa oposición a su decisión de ser pastor Luterano?

7. ¿Qué sugerencias tiene Ud. para ayudar al hombre que está pensando en ser pastor Luterano?

Su identidad será guardada en esta investigación.

Gracias por su participación.

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