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### Training Church Council Members for Their Work

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TRAINING CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS  
FOR THEIR WORK

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Practical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1952

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION  
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL . . . . .	7
III. DUTIES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL . . . . .	23
IV. NEED FOR TRAINING OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL . . . . .	31
V. METHODS OF TRAINING . . . . .	37
VI. AREAS OF TRAINING . . . . .	52
VII. OBJECTIVES OF TRAINING . . . . .	65
VIII. THE PASTOR AS LEADER IN THE TRAINING PROGRAM . . . . .	71
IX. CONCLUSION . . . . .	81
APPENDIX . . . . .	84
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	86

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Christian congregations are organized in order to carry out the work given to them by their Lord Jesus Christ.

Every congregation within the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has definite responsibilities to carry out. This work might be summed up as the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God, including the nourishment and growth of the members of the congregation, as well as the reaching out to make Christians of all people. In order to carry out this work, all congregations have set up some form of organization. They have called a pastor to be their spiritual leader and to perform the functions of the office of the ministry among them. They have also set up some form of administrative organization of their lay members.

No congregation can carry out its God-given responsibilities properly by leaving everything to its pastor. No pastor by himself can possibly do everything which is included in the work of the congregation. Nor would it be wise for him to do so. The pastor has the chief responsibility of being the minister of the Word to his congregation and to others who are in need of that Word. At the same time there are many secondary duties which frequently fall upon the shoulders of pastors today. It is entirely possible that these secondary duties may become so burdensome

as to hinder the pastor's primary work of being a servant of the Word. J. E. Herrmann points to this danger in his book The Chief Steward, where he says:

The average pastor is literally loaded down with odds and ends that smack of 'serving tables.' Like the giant in Gulliver's Travels, he is tied down by so much red tape that he cannot rise to the full stature of a prophet and pastor. He has become an executive who unlike the executives in business concerns must bury himself with the tasks of a clerk, custodian, and stenographer. Meanwhile the true purposes of his office are not fully tended to. Someone has spoken of the average pastor as a grasshopper who is always on the jump yet can never hit his true stride. As a result he becomes tense, nervous, confused . . . . The Scriptural requirements for the pastorate do not coincide with what is expected of him.<sup>1</sup>

One means of helping to alleviate the above situation would be for a congregation to call more pastors. Yet this may not be necessary and is not always the wisest solution. Another method would be to make considerable use of the lay people within the congregation to carry out a great deal of the work of the congregation. One of the basic principles that has been stressed in the Lutheran Church is that of the universal priesthood of all believers. Every Christian has the privilege and the obligation of being an active worker within the congregations to the extent of having lay officers and a church council who concern themselves to varying degrees with the work of their congregation. In recent.

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<sup>1</sup>J. E. Herrmann, The Chief Steward (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), pp. 25-26.

years there has been an increase in the amount of church work done by lay people. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod officially encouraged this movement at its convention in Milwaukee in 1950, when it passed the following resolution in regard to "The Enlistment and Training of the Laity for Church Work:"

WHEREAS, there are still vast multitudes throughout the world today who are without Christ and therefore are eternally lost; and

WHEREAS, the unchristian forces throughout the world are misleading many within and without the Church; and

WHEREAS, our present efforts seem so meager when contrasted with the tremendous opportunities for Kingdom work; and

WHEREAS, we can never hope to reach all with the Gospel through the professionally trained clergy alone; and

WHEREAS, the Lord has blessed us with spiritual and material resources to undertake greater things for Him; and

WHEREAS, Scripture emphasizes that every Christian is a priest with specific priesthood obligations; therefore be it

RESOLVED, A. That our congregations throughout Synod launch out upon an intensive effort for the enlistment and training of the laity for the Church's work, and that our laity as such be alerted and encouraged to discharge its priestly functions . . . .<sup>2</sup>

This resolution encouraged the use of all lay people in church work.

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Herrmann, op. cit., p. 77.

The scope of the present study covered only one certain group of lay people within a congregation. That one group is the church council. It is recognized that the organization and administration of congregations vary widely, and this matter will be taken up more extensively later. However, nearly every congregation has some form of official board or council with an executive function. The study concerned itself with this official group of lay leaders within the congregation. This group is extremely important in the congregation, as has been pointed out by O. L. Shelton: "Nothing is more important to a congregation than the work of the church board. Nothing augurs better for a congregation than a church board that works."<sup>3</sup> This group works together with the pastor and has a great deal to do with the effectiveness with which a congregation carries out its God-assigned responsibilities. "Other things being equal, the combined thinking and planning of the group under competent leadership should be better than the thinking and planning of one individual, no matter how wise he may be."<sup>4</sup> Thus the church council adds to the thinking of the pastor, and at the same time it assists the pastor in his work.

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<sup>3</sup>The Church Functioning Effectively (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946), p. 191.

<sup>4</sup>Paul W. Milhouse, Enlisting and Developing Church Leaders (Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947), p. 19.

Is such activity on the part of the laity Biblical?

It is, as can be shown from several Biblical sources. First of all, I Peter 2:5 says: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Secondly, in the Old Testament Moses was advised by his father-in-law Jethro to appoint "able men, such as fear God"<sup>5</sup> to assist him in judging the Israelites. This Moses did with evident success. The third instance, which furnishes the most pertinent example, is that given in Acts. When the Grecians complained that their widows were being neglected, the disciples said, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." Therefore, they suggested that seven men out of the congregation be selected to tend to these temporal affairs, while the disciples would give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."<sup>6</sup> This plan was used by the disciples in meeting the same situation which congregations today face. For that reason it is wise for congregations today to make good use of the laymen whom they select as their leaders.

It was the purpose of this study to examine and consider the training of church council members for their work. The study was concerned first with the organization of the

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<sup>5</sup>Exodus 18: 13-27.

<sup>6</sup>Acts 6: 1-6.



church council and the duties of its members. Then it considered the need for training this group of men, followed by the methods, areas, and objectives of such training. Finally, the study looked at the pastor as the trainer or leader of his church council.

Some of the churches which have varied tremendously from one Christian congregation to another. This is true also of Lutheran congregations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. This became evident from printed descriptions of various organizational systems and from personal visits to a number of congregations made in connection with the present study. It furthermore seemed apparent that there was no particular desirability for a standard form of organization. While this uniformity is lacking, the need for an effective organization remains. The following quotation exemplifies this need:

No institution can succeed beyond the effectiveness of its organization. The church has a most important and varied task. It must meet the responsibilities placed upon it if it is to win the co-operation of its membership and do its work in the community and in the world. The church must be prepared to minister to people as individuals and as masses, to present suitable programs for the various age groups, to give guidance in the complicated problems of modern society, and to meet the heart hunger of humanity for worship, fellowship, and worthfulness. It must inspire people to undergird its program with financial support and to recognize themselves as partners with God in this enterprise. All of this must be done, in most cases, with leadership that is voluntary and only partially trained. People will be happy in rendering this voluntary service when the organization in which they function is harmonious, effective, and accomplishing worthy results. They will give themselves to study and training if their task has definiteness and significance, and if they feel a

## CHAPTER II

### ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

The form of organization of congregations and of church councils within congregations varies tremendously from one Christian congregation to another. This is true also of Lutheran congregations of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. This became evident from printed descriptions of various organizational systems and from personal visits to a number of congregations made in connection with the present study. It furthermore seemed apparent that there was no particular desirability for a standard form of organization. While this uniformity is lacking, the need for an effective organization remains. The following quotation exemplifies this need:

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sense of achievement commensurate with the time and effort expended.<sup>1</sup>

In order to have such an effective organization, it is generally agreed that there must be a unified church board or council. For example, Shelton says that although there are various types of officers on the board, the board should function as a unit.<sup>2</sup> Andrew Blackwood substantiates this opinion, saying:

[The unified church board] calls for a centralized authority, with as much diversity of function as local needs require. The stress falls on the teamwork of the everlasting whole.<sup>3</sup>

While this unified type of board seems to be most desirable, it is not universally used. Blackwood mentions that some congregations have two or three boards: a spiritual board; a financial board; and a board for the distribution of money for relief of the needy.<sup>4</sup>

To elaborate somewhat on a few of the forms of organization in use, several examples will here be given. To show the general congregational plan of organization in the Missouri Synod, an illustration by J. E. Herrmann serves well. He shows the congregation as supreme, under which is

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<sup>1</sup>O. L. Shelton, The Church Functioning Effectively (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Pastoral Leadership (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), pp. 65-66.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-71.

the voters' assembly, beneath which the church council operates. Responsible to the church council are the Board of Elders, Board of Education, Stewardship Committee, Mission Committee, Board of Finance, and Board of Trustees. All of these, together with the various agencies, as the Walther League, Ladies' Aid Society, etc., have representatives on the congregational Planning Council.<sup>5</sup> It might be noted here that the committees vary from one congregation to another, and that the presence of a Planning Council is not very general.

Coming to the church council itself, one fairly small congregation has this arrangement: The council consists of the elective officers, the chairmen of the various boards or committees, and the elders. There is one elder for each twenty-five voting members or fraction thereof.<sup>6</sup> This arrangement seems to be the most effective form of organization for the church council with one exception. In order to assure a sufficient number of elders to carry out an effective plan of visitation, as will be outlined in detail later, it would appear to be more advisable to have one elder for each twenty-five communicant members, or fraction

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<sup>5</sup>The Chief Steward (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>"Constitution and By-Laws of Glendale Lutheran Church" (Glendale, Mo.: mimeographed, 1951). This congregation has 252 communicant members.

thereof. The advantage of this general plan is that it brings together into one board all of the congregational committees and at the same time includes all of the elders. The importance of this latter point will be shown later. Under this arrangement any member of the council is permitted to bring up and discuss any matter of business, whether or not it concerns his own committee. The matter is then referred to the appropriate committee. While this arrangement seems ideal in a small congregation, there is a danger that in a very large congregation the large number of elders may make the council too large for effective discussion, since a congregation with 1,500 communicant members would have 60 elders.

Another system of organization, suggested by Shelton, includes the trustees, elders, deacons, and deaconesses on the official board.<sup>7</sup> George V. Moore, in his book Better Church Leaders, includes these same four groups plus a representative of each congregational organization.<sup>8</sup> It is to be noted here that these plans allow a place for women and young people on the church council. As far as is known to the writer, this is never the case in congregations of the Missouri Synod, and for that reason no further mention of this practice need be made. It is felt that managing the

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<sup>7</sup>Op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>8</sup>St. Louis, Mo.: The Bethany Press, 1950, p. 82.

congregation is a function of the men only. Of course, women and young people may have a place on the Planning Council referred to above.

One large congregation in Fort Wayne, Indiana, has its church council consisting of the elders, elected deacons, Finance Board, and School Board. Since the congregation has approximately 1,500 communicant members, there is need for many deacons to serve as contact men to the congregation. The six elders serve as leaders over the deacons. There are 26 elected deacons on the church council, plus 40 appointed deacons who on some occasions are invited to attend the council meetings. Such an arrangement might be necessary in a large congregation, so that the council is not too large to be effective. However, there is a disadvantage in that not all the deacons are members of the council.<sup>9</sup>

While too large a council might hinder the effectiveness of its work by impairing the mutual exchange of group ideas, this is not necessarily so. On the other hand, the council should be large enough to carry on its work adequately and to assure true democratic representation by removing any suspicion of a dictatorship.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Concordia Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Information received from personal contact.

<sup>10</sup>Shelton, op. cit., p. 34.

In regard to the specific offices that constitute the church council, a few things might be added. The congregational officers are those officers who are elected by the Voters' Assembly. These officers are not always included on the church council, but it would seem wise for them to be on the council. For a unified administration, the men who are the leaders of the congregation as a whole could be valuable members of the council.

The place of the pastor in the council has not as yet been touched upon. It might go without saying that he is always a member of the council. Whether or not he should be chairman of the council will be discussed later. Regardless of this, he should be the leader of the council. Shelton points out that "he is the executive of the church." He should attend every board meeting and be an ex officio member of all committees. His training fits him for leadership and assistance in all areas of church activity. "The comradeship of the minister and the church board should be intimate, wholehearted, and vital."<sup>11</sup>

Some congregations make a distinction between the elders and the deacons. Others use only the term elders, and still others use only the term deacons. The name itself is insignificant, since the Holy Scriptures nowhere indicate that one name or the other must be used. Throughout this

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<sup>11</sup>Shelton, op. cit., p. 196.

report the writer shall use the term "elders" exclusively to refer to those laymen who are selected out of the congregation to look after the spiritual welfare of the congregation. The importance of this office of the elders is alleged by John H. C. Fritz in his Pastoral Theology, where he proposes that in the apostolic church, according to John Gerhard, there were two kinds of presbyters, or elders. Some elders, namely the pastors and teachers, were charged with the ministry of the Word. The others dealt with church life.<sup>12</sup> This opinion is based on I Tim. 5:17 - "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine." We today call only the lay leaders "elders," but it is significant that Paul calls them by the same name as the pastors. One man who perhaps more than any other person in the Missouri Synod has recognized the value and the capabilities of elders, and has put them to effective use, is Erdman W. Frenk. He writes:

The congregation is convinced that of the various lay offices none so radically and vitally affects the character of the church as that of the elder. He, of all the church officers, stands closest to the pastor in the care of souls and the promotion of the spiritual life of the congregation. For this reason the congregation exercises particular care in the selection of its elders. Nothing but the best of the manhood of

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<sup>12</sup>St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945, p. 309.



the congregation will do. It's the pick of the crop and not the windfall.<sup>13</sup>

The trustees are another group present, or at least represented, on most church councils. Their prime duty is set forth by Shelton, who declares, "The office of trustee fulfills a legal requirement in most states. Trustees are the officers who take title to the property and effect legal transactions."<sup>14</sup> Trustees frequently are also entrusted with the physical care of the congregation's property, with insurance, with keeping the legal documents, etc.

Other groups who are frequently represented in whole or in part on the church council are the Board for Parish Education, the Financial Board, and other standing committees, as committees on membership, evangelism, world relations, worship, and stewardship.

There is no agreement as to who should be the officers of the church council. Many church workers feel that the pastor ought to be the chairman of this council. Others maintain that the pastor should not serve as chairman, but should simply be one of the members. The constitution of Glendale Lutheran Church, Glendale, Mo. expressly states that the council shall organize by electing its own officers. While no absolute decision can be reached as to which is

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<sup>13</sup>"Our Elders Made 3,800 Calls Last Year," Today, IV (October, 1949), pp. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup>Op. cit., p. 33.

preferable, it seems to be clearly in line with principles of good leadership that the pastor as leader should not serve as chairman. Then there would be less danger of the pastor's appearing as a dictator or "boss" of the congregation, and the council would function more freely as a group taking an active part in the affairs of the congregation. The pastor as a member of the group would still be able to exercise guidance and leadership in the meetings. These principles of leadership will be discussed more fully in the final section of this report.

The next important matter to consider in the organization of the church council is the election of men to the council. Since the work to be done by this group is so extremely important, it is essential that careful thought be given to a wise selection of men. Shelton supports this view thus:

Nothing really great or significant ever happens in the life of a congregation that is not planned, prayed over, and worked for. If the church is important, it deserves hard work by the best people in it.<sup>15</sup>

One thing that must be remembered in making such a wise selection is the importance of prayer. The need for such divine assistance is shown explicitly in the following quotation from Paul Milhouse:

We need to pray over the matter of enlisting leaders for the specific tasks in our local churches. Too

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<sup>15</sup>Op. cit., p. 191.

often we have acted as if God had nothing to do with selecting the leaders for his work. The church is his institution. Christian work is his work. We must seek his counsel in selecting leaders!<sup>16</sup>

As to the method of selecting these church leaders, it is generally agreed that a nominating committee should be employed. That this is not always done can be seen from the fact that at least one church leader recently advocated that the council itself should make nominations to fill vacancies on the council.<sup>17</sup> In either case, of course, the congregation can make additional nominations from the floor before an election. However, only a nominating committee can be effective in assuring a wise choice of personnel for the council. Shelton gives a good description of the manner in which this committee should operate. This committee should be representative of the congregation. It could function all year, but should function at least three months before an election. It should elect its own officers, and its tenure of office should be decided by the congregation. Members' terms should expire in alternating years.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the pastor should always be a member of this committee.<sup>19</sup> As executive of the congregation he should

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<sup>16</sup>Op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>17</sup>Paul J. Hoh, Parish Practice (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1944), p. 39.

<sup>18</sup>Shelton, op. cit., p. 31ff.

<sup>19</sup>Eugene Dinsmore Dolloff, A Crowded Church Through Modern Methods (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), p. 27.

know the requirements of each office and also the abilities of the congregation's members. One congregation in Michigan has a system which meets the conditions outlined by these men and which has worked efficiently. The nominating committee is made up of one elder and one trustee whose terms are not expiring, three men from the congregation at large, and the pastor. Under this arrangement the two council members would know the qualifications needed for the positions to be filled, but still, as a minority, they would not be able to enforce a self-perpetuation of the council.<sup>20</sup>

This nominating committee should concern itself with selecting men who are qualified to fill the vacant positions on the council, as well as the other vacant church offices. One qualification that is essential is spirituality. Dolloff points out that no matter how great a person's ability, he cannot "achieve great and lasting things for God unless he is under the domination of Christ's spirit."<sup>21</sup> In this connection the nominating committee should consider the Biblical requirements for church leaders, as given in Acts 6:3 and I Tim. 3:1off. It is further necessary that men be nominated who have the ability to serve in the specific office for which they are selected. Here again Dolloff makes a valuable contribution; he maintains that "officers

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<sup>20</sup>St. Paul Lutheran Church, Flint, Mich.

<sup>21</sup>Op. cit., p. 28.

often become discouraged and then disgruntled by trying to fill positions for which they have few qualifications."<sup>22</sup> Thus he shows that careless work by the nominating committee can cause much hindrance in the effective working of the congregation during the following years.

Whom should the nominating committee select? The general practice is to select older men who have been long-standing members of the congregation. However, it is widely held today that the church leadership should be representative of the church as a whole.<sup>23</sup> It has been suggested that there should be about one-third older members, one-third middle-aged members, and one-third younger members.<sup>24</sup> Qualifications for good officers might also be found in comparatively new members, and if this is the case the men should be used.<sup>25</sup> Under such a system all of the people of the congregation will feel that they are represented on the official board of the church, and at the same time a more thorough presentation and airing of ideas will be assured in the council meetings. Weldon Crossland suggests a list of questions to be used as a guideline by nominating committees

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>23</sup>Leonard Spangenberg. Minding Your Church's Business (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1942), pp. 11-12.

<sup>24</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>25</sup>Dolloff, op. cit., p. 30.

in carrying out their work, and the list is worthy of quoting:

Are the official positions of the church concentrated in the hands of too few members or are they widely distributed?

Do a few laymen dominate the committees and life of the church?

Are the officials older or younger than the average for our community?

What percentage of the officials are in their thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies?

What new or younger men and women should be added to the officinary and its committees?

What positions are now unfilled?

What new committees or positions should be created?

What are the qualities of character and personality needed for the several church positions?

Could not many of the committees be enlarged to include new and younger members?

Should not an assistant or an associate be appointed as vice-chairman of each committee, to serve in case of the illness, removal, or death of the chairman?<sup>26</sup>

By following such a guideline, a nominating committee would be aided in effectively choosing men who would help the Church to move forward in its work.

When persons have once been nominated to positions of church leadership, they must be contacted, and assurance must be received that they are willing to serve. Either the nominating committee or the pastor might make these contacts. Persons may refuse to accept such a position for the following reasons. Either they lack confidence in themselves, they are indifferent, they lack consecration, they have a

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<sup>26</sup>A Planned Program for the Church Year (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 77.

misunderstanding of the task itself, or they have never been told about the task.<sup>27</sup> Yet with the proper approach it is generally possible to induce an individual to accept the position for which he has been chosen. This approach must be made from a distinctly Christian angle. The person must be led to see his complete task as a service to Christ and His Church.<sup>28</sup> In some cases it might even be necessary and wise to ask the person to think of his service as a cross, something which is difficult and unwelcome, but which is done out of love for his Savior.<sup>29</sup> Yet it is best to have the person think of his service as something which he enjoys doing as a service to his Lord.

In regard to the election itself, this will of course be done by the congregation in the Voters' Assembly. Paul Hoh points out that by this election the council members are called to their offices just as truly as the pastor is called to his.<sup>30</sup> Following the election the pastor should personally visit the newly elected council members and congratulate them, at the same time discussing their work with them and pointing out its importance in the overall picture of the work of the church.<sup>31</sup> There is great value in

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<sup>27</sup>Milhouse, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

<sup>28</sup>Crossland, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>29</sup>Blackwood, op. cit., p. 263.

<sup>30</sup>Op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

inducting the newly elected officers into their offices in a public service. This will help them to understand their responsibility, and it will impress the importance of their position on themselves as well as upon the other members of the congregation. At this time the officers might be asked to make a vow of loyalty to their pastor, their church, and their God by accepting their position and promising to carry out its duties to the best of their abilities.<sup>32</sup>

One remaining matter concerning the election is the advisability of limiting the tenure of office under a rotating plan. Such a plan makes it necessary for an officer to step out of office, usually after one or two consecutive terms of two or three years each. After being out of office for a year he may be re-elected. Consideration of this plan is important because it can have a great deal to do with the effective operation of the council and with the proper use of the talents available within a congregation. The opinion of pastors and church leaders varies widely concerning the advisability of such a plan. The plan does seem to be gaining more extensive use. The opinions on both sides are summed up in the following quotation from Weldon Crossland:

Advantages claimed are that it gets rid of those who do their work poorly; that it works more laymen into the tasks of the church; that it introduces new ideas into committees and organizations; and that it prevents two or three men from 'holding all the offices.'

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<sup>32</sup>Dolloff, op. cit., p. 30.



[Disadvantages are] that able men with their talents and experiences are automatically dropped; that chairmen must give up their leadership just when they are beginning to be really valuable; that certain areas of church life require a longer tenure of office for real efficiency; that the limiting of the term of office is artificial and arbitrary, based on the calendar rather than on the quality of the work done; that some of the finest leaders are difficult to re-enlist, pleading 'I have served my time,'; that the minister is required to train each year new leaders for one third of the official committees and organizations of the church; and that there is a strong tendency for a committee or board to have no continuing, long-range policy.<sup>33</sup>

With such arguments on both sides of the question it is impossible to decide on one method that would fit every situation. It appears that the rotating plan is preferable where it can be worked effectively. However, it certainly will not be advisable in every situation.

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<sup>33</sup>op. cit., pp. 85-86.

## CHAPTER III

### DUTIES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

The areas covered under the duties of the church council include practically the entire area of work of the Christian congregation. The only area which might be excluded from the actual duty of the council would be the office of the public ministry, for which service a pastor has been called. However, even this area of the congregation's activity does come under the general supervision of the council, and the council is responsible to see that it is carried out adequately. A common division of duties of the council is the division into spiritual areas, carried out by the elders, and concern with the physical aspects of the congregations, carried out by the trustees. Such a division appears to be not entirely adequate, since all phases of the congregation's activity must be approached from a spiritual viewpoint. It is the thought of the writer that the entire church council should be concerned with the entire work of the congregation, although it is inevitable that specific tasks will fall upon one or the other of the various groups of officers. For the sake of this report, the duties of the council are divided into three areas, namely direct assistance to the pastor in his spiritual work, care for the physical affairs of the congregation, and service as contact men to the congregational members.

In the area of assisting the pastor in his work, the church council will be generally concerned with the overall building and growth of the church of Jesus Christ. Everything that is the concern of a Christian and of a Christian congregation is also a concern of the church council, for it has been entrusted with the leadership of the congregation. "The congregational constitution holds [officers] responsible to the congregation, and not to the pastor, for their actions."<sup>1</sup> This general oversight by the congregational officers is further pointed out by O. L. Shelton, who writes:

Officers are chosen to do a work, not to fill a position. The only way the office can be filled creditably is by doing the work in such a way that it brings honor to the office and to the church.

One common task was recognized, namely, the spiritual culture and progress of the church. Nothing that has to do with the church can be set apart and called temporal.

Minister, elder, deacon, and deaconess have a common task - that of giving their utmost to the upbuilding of the church of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

In carrying out this overall program of the church, the council does have specific duties assigned to it. Since Scripture nowhere gives a detailed outline of the duties of lay officers, it is impossible to set up a comprehensive list of such duties that applies in every congregation.

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<sup>1</sup>J. E. Herrmann, The Chief Steward (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>The Church Functioning Effectively (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946), pp. 29-30.

Theodore Graebner asserts that the duties of elders are not divinely prescribed. Rather they consist in whatever duties are prescribed by the congregation.<sup>3</sup> Yet there are certain duties which have been generally prescribed by congregations in their constitutions and by-laws. J. M. Weidenschilling lists some of these in the following sentence:

The main officers are usually a board of elders, who assist the pastor with the spiritual work of the congregation, visit the sick, the lax members, the unchurched; admonish those who are not living as Christians; keep order in the church services.<sup>4</sup>

One such specific duty is to provide opportunity for worship and to preserve good order in the services.<sup>5</sup> This is generally the work of the elders. Of course, the worship itself is led and ordinarily planned by the pastor, though the elders can be used to assist with official acts, to serve as witnesses for such acts;<sup>6</sup> to assist the pastor at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar, and in other ways. They may look after the church furnishings and appointments, although this may be done by a ladies' group. They may serve as ushers, although this is frequently done

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<sup>3</sup>Handbook for Congregational Officers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>Our Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 105.

<sup>5</sup>"Rules and Regulations for the Church Council" of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Mo., quoted in John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), 1945, p. 367.

by a separate group of men or youth. Erdman L. Frank, of St. Peter's Church, Joliet, Ill., has his elders rotate on duty as ushers. Since these men are well trained as spiritual workers, their contact with the members is very valuable, and they aid in the smooth operation of the service.<sup>7</sup> Much could be written about the duties of ushers, but it shall suffice here to say that they are to make the service as worshipful as possible and to assist the pastor in making the necessary contacts with the people.

Another duty of the church council is to assist the pastor in providing and supervising an adequate educational program. This work is ordinarily assigned to a board for parish education, which functions as a part of the council or as a group operating under the council. Still the responsibility for this phase of work and an interest in it remains with the entire council.

Still other duties may be present in various congregations, such as assisting the pastor in the areas of membership and evangelism.<sup>8</sup> In general it can be said that the council should take over as much of the organizational work and handling of details as possible, leaving the pastor a sufficient amount of time to handle adequately the work which only he can do.

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<sup>6</sup>Erdman L. Frank, "Our Elders Made 3,800 Calls Last Year," Today, IV (October, 1949), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-8.

One other way in which the council directly assists the pastor is to serve as a spiritual check on the pastor or any other full-time called worker in the church. If he should become guilty of teaching false doctrine or of committing any gross sin by which he gives public offense, it is the duty of the council to take the initial steps in admonishing him.<sup>9</sup>

The second general area of duties of the church council is that of looking after the physical affairs of the congregation. One such duty is to look after the property, which is definitely a responsibility of the church officers.<sup>10</sup> Ordinarily this work is entrusted to the trustees or to a separate committee in charge of property. Here again the entire council retains the responsibility of the work. Specific duties included here are keeping the property in repair, seeing that it is adequately insured, seeing that the property is adequate for the needs of the congregation and making plans for future needs.

The council also has the responsibility of raising and administering the congregation's finances. Those who are most closely connected with this work are the financial secretary, the treasurer, and the financial committee. Yet it is recognized that this area must receive the attention

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<sup>9</sup>Fritz, op. cit., p. 366.

<sup>10</sup>George V. Moore, Better Church Leaders (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1950), p. 97.

and support of all the leaders of the church if the church's program is to be carried out effectively. Some pastors take more of an active part in this work than others, but the work always remains one of the duties of the council.

The organization of the congregation is another responsibility of the council. The church officers are responsible for the type of church organization, and they should continually analyze and improve it.<sup>11</sup>

The third area of duties of the church council is that of serving as contact men to the congregational members. This duty is not universally recognized, but in some congregations it is developed to a high degree of efficiency.<sup>12</sup> It is one way in which some of the less tangible duties of the council members can be exercised for the benefit of the entire congregation. According to the pattern of organization mentioned above,<sup>13</sup> it is the elders who have this specific duty of serving as contact men to the congregation. This is why it was felt that all the elders should, if possible, be members of the church council.

As contact men the elders will keep the congregation informed as to church matters. This matter of keeping the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>12</sup>St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Joliet, Ill., is a good example. Concordia Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., has similar system.

<sup>13</sup>Supra, p. 6.

members informed about the program and working of the church is vital for sustaining the interest of the entire membership in the work of the church and for keeping them active in that work. It must be emphasized that this imparting of information and contact in general is not to deal only with the financial affairs of the congregation. It must include also every phase of spiritual life and activity. The manner in which the elders contact the members is the following: Each elder is assigned to a district of ten to twenty-five families. One of the congregations mentioned above<sup>14</sup> uses the latter figure, but the former seems to be more advisable, since the elder will be able to give more attention to each family when the number of families under his attention is smaller.

It is a duty of the elders to concern themselves with the spiritual welfare of the individual members. This will include not only assisting the pastor in difficult cases of admonition,<sup>15</sup> but it will also include taking a positive approach toward the spirituality of the people. Under the system proposed here, each elder would have this concern particularly for the families within his own district.

It is a duty of all church council members to lead the

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<sup>14</sup>Frenk, op. cit., p. 5ff. In this congregation the elders are required to visit each of their families at least four times a year.

<sup>15</sup>Fritz, op. cit., p. 367.



congregation in spiritual growth. These men have been selected for their spiritual qualifications, and they should continue to set an example for the congregation in their Christian faith and living. This will include their church and communion attendance,<sup>16</sup> their giving, and so forth. They will then use their contact with the other members to lead them in growth in these same areas.

Because of this contact with the congregational members, the council members will be in a good position to discuss matters that are to be presented to the congregation<sup>17</sup> and to advise on them. This also is one of their duties. In fact, it is frequently regarded as their chief duty.

One other task which might be a duty of the church council is that of planning the program of the congregation to meet its own needs and also the needs of the world around it. According to the system proposed by the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod this work should be the function of a separate Planning Council,<sup>18</sup> and for that reason it will not be discussed here in detail. Yet such planning is a responsibility of the church council, and if there is no planning council the church council, with the pastor, should give attention to it.

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<sup>16</sup>Frenk, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>17</sup>Fritz, op. cit., p. 366.

<sup>18</sup>Herrmann, op. cit., p. 69.

## CHAPTER IV

### NEED FOR TRAINING OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL

Church council members are to be leaders in the program of the Christian congregation. The fact that these men must be leaders has been shown in the previous chapters, where the duties of these men were set forth. Truly an honor has been placed upon these men by their election to the offices which they hold, but at the same time they have been charged with a great responsibility. Because they are church officers they have automatically become leaders. They will lead the members and the affairs of the congregation, either for better or for worse. This is a serious responsibility for laymen to bear. Yet it is good for laymen to have this responsibility, because they can become very effective leaders and do much valuable work for the upbuilding of God's Kingdom. The important position held by these men as leaders is brought out in the following quotation from Weldon Crossland:

The minister and laymen of every church will do well to remember that Jesus chose twelve laymen as his disciples. He called them from their tasks in the workaday world that they might proclaim and create with him strategy in training and commissioning laymen as leaders in the church.

The chief problem in any church is its leadership.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A Planned Program for the Church Year (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 74.

Leadership in a church is not enough. For a congregation to carry out its work effectively, its leadership must be good. We can see the need for such good leadership first of all in the spiritual laxity that is evident among many groups of Christians today. J. E. Herrmann writes that

Only forty percent of our people are in God's house on Sunday morning. One-third of our communicant membership goes to the Lord's table relatively often. About one-fourth of our children receive a thorough course of religious training in Christian day schools. Only one in ten attends a Bible Class. Family devotions are no longer the rule in the average home.

And what is the result? The growing list of members who are spiritual delinquents is disturbingly large . . . . Church membership has for many become more of a session than an obsession.<sup>2</sup>

Such a situation calls for good lay leaders, who will join with the pastor in facing the situation earnestly and in working diligently to improve the situation, under God's support and guidance. Only good leaders will be able to help the pastor and support his work of building up a higher level of spirituality. Poor leaders who are indifferent or openly antagonistic can bring the most brilliant pastor down to the level of discouragement. On the other hand, good leaders can inspire even a mediocre pastor to superior attainment.<sup>3</sup> With such good leaders a congregation will surely move forward in its spiritual growth. Since "no

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<sup>2</sup>The Chief Steward (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Eugene Dinsmore Dolloff, A Crowded Church Through Modern Methods (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), p. 25.

church rises higher than its leadership,"<sup>4</sup> it is vitally important to have good leadership that can plan and carry out an effective church program.

In order for a congregation to have such good leaders, it is necessary that its leaders be trained. Simply because a man has been elected to an office in a congregation does not guarantee that he is a good leader.<sup>5</sup> Even if he is the type of person who seems to be a natural leader, this is not sufficient to make him an effective church leader, who can plan and direct the activities of a Christian congregation in accord with its God-given goals. He may not even have a good understanding of what those goals are. Paul W. Milhouse illustrates this idea pointedly:

If we have to depend entirely upon the natural-born leader, the work of the church will never be done very effectively. The fact that an individual is a leader by natural inclination is no guarantee that he will lead the group in the best way or toward the best goals. Constructive and efficient church leadership can be assured only by training those who are to lead. Imagine what would happen if an army staffed its organization with men who seemed to be natural leaders, but who had never been disciplined to army life and work. What would happen to an industry that entrusted its expensive machinery and processes to men who were not trained for their work? The church can no more depend upon untrained leaders than these other groups and expect the best work to be done.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>J. L. Shelton, The Church Functioning Effectively (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946), p. 106.

<sup>5</sup>Herrmann, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>6</sup>Enlisting and Developing Church Leaders (Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947), p. 41.

It is further true that men who are elected to positions of church leadership frequently desire training. According to George V. Moore, in his book Better Church Leaders,<sup>7</sup> every true leader has a natural ambition to be a better church officer. The American Lutheran published an article written by a layman who is a church council member, in which this layman stated that although pastors and teachers spend many years training for their professions, although Sunday school teachers are trained in special classes, and although young people are sent to special summer training schools, church officers must learn about their work only through experience. He asserts that the work of the Church is highly specialized, and that he and other laymen would benefit greatly from training in such matters as the Church Extension Fund, the Synodical and District organization, the Mission Program of our Church, the Synodical schools, and in many other similar areas.<sup>8</sup> Without a doubt there are many other church leaders who realize the gravity of their offices, who feel incompetent fulfilling the obligations of their offices, and who sincerely desire helpful training so that they might be of greater service to God through their service in their congregation.

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<sup>7</sup>St. Louis, Mo.: The Bethany Press, 1950, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>Fred A. Schurmann, "We Pause to Wonder," The American Lutheran (January, 1952), p. 8ff.

Lack of training of leaders may be disastrous to the program of a church because it facilitates a careless attitude toward the spiritual work of the church. Since leaders are not specifically trained in the spiritual phases of the church's work, it is only natural that they will not regard these areas as a part of their responsibility. It is more likely that they will continue to recognize their part in the physical concerns of the congregation and will concentrate more and more on these matters, particularly on the financial matters. If the spiritual emphases are overlooked, then it will be increasingly difficult to raise the needed finances to carry out the work of the church. This will bring about still more attention to the finances and draw attention away from the spiritual work, and thus a vicious circle is created. This is the danger involved in the absence of a training program for church officers.

A program of training for church council members is further valuable in that it leads to a unity of mind and of effort in the operation of the congregation. As a pastor trains the men who are the leaders in his congregation, he and they will gradually become more fully agreed in their plans, in their goals, and in their methods of procedure. This unity will then extend to the other members of the congregation, as the church council carries out its contacts with the members and leads them in spiritual growth. Weldon Crossland points to an instance of a congregation where this

unity in spiritual growth has been brought about through a careful training of the lay leaders by the pastor. He writes:

The . . . church is outstanding in the community because of its excellent preaching, its superior church school, its growing groups, and its broad service at home and abroad. The open secret of its help and growing influence is to be found in the close partnership of pastor and people. They share as they co-operatively plan the work of their church. This minister spends four or five hours each week advising and inspiring his lay leaders. He makes it a cardinal principle of his ministry to do no administrative work for which he can find or train a competent layman. Because his laymen carry the administrative load, he finds ample time for sermon preparation, reading, community activities, and those pastoral functions which he alone can perform.<sup>9</sup>

This certainly illustrates the need for a careful use and training of the lay leaders in a congregation if the pastor is to be able to concentrate on his primary work and if the congregation is to exert a united effort in successfully meeting its responsibilities to its own members and to the community around it.

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<sup>9</sup>Op. cit., p. 75.

## CHAPTER V

### METHODS OF TRAINING

There are numerous methods by which members of a church council can be trained for their work as leaders in the church. It is presumed here that in general the pastor is the one to carry out the training of his council members. Certainly he is the one who is responsible for that training. This chapter shall not concern itself with the qualifications of the pastor or with the specific educational and psychological techniques which he may employ in training his leaders. Here, rather, the presentation shall endeavor to direct attention to the various educational situations and opportunities which a pastor might employ in his training program. The methods to be discussed here are divided into the areas of informal training situations, partially formal situations, and formal settings of training and study. It must be recognized that no one pastor will want to employ all of the methods to be discussed here. This is meant rather to be a fairly thorough sampling of methods that can be used in conducting an effective training program.

Informal training situations are no doubt the most commonly used methods of instruction. Perhaps it would be safe to say that every pastor trains his council members to some extent through informal methods, possibly without either party thinking about the training that is in process. Some



men who are very much in favor of training church leaders think it is extremely dangerous to have any formal instruction, since laymen frequently resent an inference that they need to be taught.<sup>1</sup> For that reason they favor informal methods of training. J. E. Herrmann writes:

Why not carry through a gradual program of training which does not even bear the label? Vary the program. Above all, don't preach. Carry on much of the training by the discussion method. Use many illustrations; cite practical examples. Make frequent use of the visual aids now available. Charts and graphs may be used very effectively.<sup>2</sup>

This quotation shows what is meant by informal training, although the latter part of it includes methods which would certainly be included also in a formal study program.

One specific method of informal training could be carried on easily during the regular business meetings of the council. This would be to bring out and discuss the principles involved as problems and other matters arise in the normal conduct of business. This is not always done, for basic principles can be either brushed aside or else taken for granted and passed over without notice. Whether or not the pastor is chairman of the meeting he can make use of these opportunities for discussing basic Christian ideals that must be considered before reaching a final

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<sup>1</sup>This opinion was given by J. E. Herrmann in a personal interview.

<sup>2</sup>The Chief Steward (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), p. 85.

decision on the matter at hand. By such mutual discussion the council members will come to realize the importance of considering these same principles in the situations which they face, particularly in their contact with the other members of their congregation.

Another manner in which a pastor will train his leaders is through his private conversation with individual members of the council. A pastor can use such chance conversation in useless banter, or he can make use of it for beneficial discussion of matters pertaining to the affairs of the church and of God. Frequently a layman will welcome such spiritual centered discussion, but he will hesitate to initiate it if the pastor does not. Particularly in the case of new officers the pastor should show interest in the work of the officer, encourage him in his position, and offer personal help and guidance. This will be of great help to such new officers.<sup>3</sup>

Men can be trained for church leadership also through a system of apprenticeship. New leaders or potential leaders who work under the guidance of, or together with, experienced leaders will receive valuable experience for their own work.<sup>4</sup> St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Joliet,

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<sup>3</sup>Paul W. Milhouse, Enlisting and Developing Church Leaders (Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947), p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 32 & 46.

Ill., has a system whereby assistant elders help and work with the regular elders. Frequently these assistant elders later are elected as elders, and when that takes place they have already received "in-service" training.<sup>5</sup>

Council members are trained informally also through the regular agencies of parish education within the congregation. Many of them have already been trained in the parochial school, Sunday school, and Walther League societies. This training continues through the Bible class, the worship services, and the sermons. Erdman W. Frenk, of St. Peter's Church in Joliet, preaches a "State of the Parish" sermon each year, during which service the members of the church council sit together in the front pews. During the sermon these men are reminded of their part in the work of the church.<sup>6</sup>

A pastor can likewise train his council members through social fellowship with them. O. L. Shelton writes:

Unity and comradeship may be created by arranging opportunities for social contacts, which will, in turn, enhance the spirit and interest of the members of the board and add greatly to the effectiveness of their work.<sup>7</sup>

In such social and recreational settings the pastor can

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<sup>5</sup>Information received from personal interview.

<sup>6</sup>Erdman W. Frenk, "A 'State of the Parish' Sermon," Today, IV (Nov.-Dec., 1949), p. 9ff.

<sup>7</sup>The Church Functioning Effectively (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946), p. 194.

exert an influence both by his personal example and by his conversation.

There are some opportunities for training councilmen which are only partially formal. Very likely they include some element of openly formal training in an informal situation. One such example would be that of a dinner meeting. This type of meeting is popular today particularly among professional men, and can be of great value in bringing church leaders together under pleasant circumstances for profitable discussion, presentation of a definite topic, or for the conducting of business. Frenk meets with the professional men of his congregation once each week for a luncheon meeting. Other men advocate an occasional evening dinner meeting as a substitute for the regular monthly business meeting.

Another effective method of training in this group would be that of a Sunday or weekend retreat. Getting away to a quiet setting for the sole purpose of considering the work of the church for at least an afternoon and an evening, with the added stimuli of group worship and recreation, could be powerfully effective in training church leaders for spiritual growth in general, and for the duties of their offices in particular. Andrew Blackwood points out the value of such a retreat for planning the program of the parish for the coming year:

At a quiet spot remote from the sanctuary the officers and other leaders spend an afternoon and evening.

thinking and praying about strategy and tactics. They need not employ these terms, but somehow they consider the need for objectives and plans for reaching them . . . . When the planning conference adjourns, everyone ought to know why the home church exists, and what it hopes to accomplish this next year.<sup>8</sup>

These methods of training mentioned so far, because of their informality, are perhaps the easiest to conduct and are most readily accepted by the council members. Holding a retreat, while the idea is still new, might prove to be an exception to this statement. Yet it is the opinion of this writer that there is also a definite place for formal periods of instruction of the council members. Of course, the pastor must be careful not to offend or insult the councilmen by high-handed methods or by introducing such instruction clumsily. But if properly done, such training can be given profitably and with cheerful acceptance by the council. Evidence for this view will be given in the following discussion of specific methods and in references to instances where such instruction is being carried on.

The first of these formal methods to be discussed is that of prayer and devotion. While no statistics or careful study of the matter are at hand, it is extremely likely that at most council meetings there is some element of devotion in connection with the opening or closing of the meeting. Yet the mere fact that a prayer is spoken or a hymn verse

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<sup>8</sup>Pastoral Leadership (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 16.

is sung is no guarantee that the men present are experiencing any true spiritual growth or feeling. It might be nothing more than a matter of thoughtless routine. On the other hand, this brief period of prayer and devotion in connection with the regular meetings can be a definite means of training the church leaders for their work by strengthening their faith. Of course, the pastor must prepare the devotions carefully so that they will be meaningful to the members. He must lead and guide them into a truly worshipful experience. The pastor might also use this opportunity for training his leaders in the art of leading public prayer and devotion. By guiding the council members themselves to conduct the devotions and to lead in prayer, the pastor will be training these men to be of spiritual help to others in the congregation. It is recognized that this is not an easy task, particularly if the men have had little or no experience along this line. But through a long process of education, which should have begun in the early years of the men's lives, such worship led by the laity can be developed. In many cases it can be developed even in adulthood. To whatever degree the devotions can be made vital to the individuals, the men will receive training for their work, which must be grounded in their own faith.

Bible study is a valuable method of training lay leaders. Naturally the councilmen should be encouraged to attend the regular congregational Bible classes. But if an

opportunity can be arranged for Bible study within the council group, there will be the advantage of applying the Bible study directly to the needs and situations that face the council members as leaders in the congregation. Nothing could be more valuable and more powerful in making these leaders conscious of their responsibility to God and in inspiring them to diligent service than the study of God's Word.

Every church council holds meetings, and it appears to be generally agreed that it is best for councils to meet regularly each month.<sup>9</sup> In connection with these regular meetings the council can set aside a certain amount of time for training, "for wholesome discussions of subjects related to the effective functioning of the official family,"<sup>10</sup> or for a well organized session of instruction. The most pressing problem involved in this method may be the matter of time. For that reason that problem shall be briefly considered here. Spangenberg alleges that only rarely should a meeting last longer than an hour and one-half. He says that future attendance is discouraged more by long, drawn-out meetings than by almost any other cause.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, men who want to carry out the work entrusted to

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<sup>9</sup>Leonard Spangenberg, Minding Your Church's Business (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1942), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Herrmann, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>11</sup>Op. cit., p. 20.

them as effectively and efficiently as possible will realize the need for training and will be willing to give the time necessary for it. Meetings can still be kept within a reasonable amount of time, satisfactory to the members, by careful planning of the meetings. The chairman should prepare an agenda of business to be discussed, grading the items according to their importance and to the amount of time which they will require for discussion.<sup>12</sup> In this way sufficient time can be assured to the matters of business, still leaving time for a program of training. If the officers are trained in discussion, much time can be saved. The chairman should carefully adhere to a definite time of closing the meetings. This will help to assure a rapid flow of business and will also encourage attendance.

Another method of formal training is to hold special evening meetings solely for this purpose. Here again time is a factor that must be considered, for time is bound to be at a premium for many of the officers as well as for the pastor, and additional meeting nights frequently are not welcomed. From the pastor's viewpoint, any time spent in training these men should actually be a time saver, for he will be training the men to do tasks that would otherwise be forced upon himself. As stated previously, a well-trained council can relieve that pastor of a great deal of

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<sup>12</sup>Ralph Richman, "Church Council Chit-Chat," American Lutheran, XXXV (March, 1952), p. 7.



organizational and other work. In regard to the time of the councilmen, Eugene Dolloff writes the "men . . . who cannot or will not take time necessary for this instruction prove themselves thereby to be unqualified to hold office."<sup>13</sup>

This does not solve the problem entirely, though, because many men who are entirely willing and diligent workers for the church are so tied down with jobs in various phases of church work that they simply have not the time. W. O. Kraeft, while discussing the problem of time for Sunday school teacher training, recognizes this problem and comes up with the following conclusion: "In some way the number of activities of any church-worker should be limited, so that more intensive work can be done."<sup>14</sup> Theodore Graebner came to a similar conclusion when he wrote:

It is a wise regulation not to permit any member to hold office upon more than one of the boards of the congregation. Particularly the Board of Elders, the School Board, the Finance Committee, and the Auditing Committee should come under this rule."<sup>15</sup>

From this it is evident that the proper solution is not to eliminate or minimize training, but to get more men active in church work and make possible intensive training of the men for the offices which they hold.

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<sup>13</sup>A Crowded Church Through Modern Methods (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), pp. 31-32.

<sup>14</sup>Working Together (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 85.

<sup>15</sup>Handbook for Congregational Officers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), p. 123.

The fact that such special training sessions can be held with effective results is shown by several groups and congregations that have adopted such a program. Some years ago the United Lutheran Church in America planned such a program of leadership education for its congregations, for which it prepared a series of texts. The series was known as The Lutheran Leadership Course. For credit in this course persons were required to devote ten fifty-minute sessions, plus an equal amount of time in preparation. Apparently this amount of time was required for each part of the course.<sup>16</sup> A similar example of lay training is found in the Sunday school teacher training program of our own Synod. Under this training program many lay teachers devote time for training in weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly meetings and cherish the training which they receive.

An outstanding example of training of council members is in operation in St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Joliet, Ill., under the direction of the pastor, Erdman W. Frenk. In this congregation an officers' training course is conducted soon after the new officers have been installed. This consists in one or two evenings of instruction and training, to acquaint the officers thoroughly with their work and to build up "Christian fellowship and friendship among the members

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<sup>16</sup>Paul Edward Keyser, Our Congregation and Its Work (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1936), pp. 3-4.

of the official family of the church." To at least one of these meetings the wives of the elders are invited, so that they will understand the duties of their husbands and will be able to be of assistance. These wives are required to join their husbands at least once a year in the elders' visits to the families in their districts. These initial meetings, however, are not the end of the training program. Because of the vital role which the elders play in the spiritual leadership of the congregation, the elders have a special meeting once each month, together with the pastors. While some business is conducted at these meetings, there is a strong emphasis in the meetings on education and inspiration. The pastors regard these meetings as the most deeply spiritual meetings conducted in the parish. The pastors have worked out a four year training program for the elders, an outline of which is attached to this paper as an appendix. Thus through four years of such meetings the elders receive training on 48 separate topics. At the end of that time the program is started again from the beginning. During one of these meetings which this writer attended, one of the councilmen presented a study on one of the Great Churches of America, based on the study published by the Christian Century Foundation under that title. It seems apparent from the example of this congregation that an effective training program of church council members in special evening sessions can be set up, and such a program can be made tremendously successful. One other method of instruction in

these meetings is the following. The pastor or junior pastor presents several problem cases for discussion by the elders. It was thrilling to see how the elders readily grasped the fundamental issues at stake in these factual cases, discussed them with apparently deep spiritual insight, and proposed solutions for them. It was an example of training in meeting concrete, real-life situations, and it gave evidence of what can be done through careful training.<sup>17</sup>

A number of variations of this type of formal training might be introduced. One such method would be to hold seminar sessions or workshops. Under this arrangement the church leaders would gather, perhaps with some outstanding figure in church work as a guest. The large groups might break up into smaller groups for discussion of specific areas of work, and then come together again to share the ideas which each group has evolved.<sup>18</sup> Under skillful leadership such a plan could prove very helpful to each person who participated.

Another variation would be to hold circuit-wide leadership institutes and training schools. Such an arrangement would bring church council members together for conferences similar to the small area conferences held by their pastors.

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<sup>17</sup>Erdman W. Frenk, "Our Elders Made 3,800 Calls Last Year," Today, IV (October, 1949), p. 5ff. Additional information was received from a personal visit to this congregation.

<sup>18</sup>Milhouse, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

One layman<sup>19</sup> has suggested week-day evening dinner meetings, to be held four times a year, on such a circuit-wide basis. The chief value of this plan is the joint gathering with other church councils. Thus new angles, new ideas, and new methods would surely come to the foreground, and the mutual sharing would help each council to get out and keep out of ruts in its thinking and work.

A congregation should also encourage its church leaders to attend church conventions, conferences, schools and institutes which would be of value to the leaders in their church work. Even though an expense for the congregation is involved, the education and inspiration received by the leader would be of value to the congregation as a whole.

Finally, the congregation should provide materials for personal study on the part of its church leaders. A councilman can learn a great deal through the reading of church periodicals, books, pamphlets, etc.<sup>20</sup> The council or the congregation might see to it that a library is set up for this purpose. It might purchase subscriptions to certain periodicals for the council members. Frenk's congregation supplies its elders, at the time of their election, with a portfolio containing these booklets: Duties of Elders, by John H. C. Fritz; Mutual Obligations of the Ministry and the

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<sup>19</sup>Fred A. Schurmann, "We Pause to Wonder," American Lutheran, XXXV (Jan., 1952), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup>George V. Moore, Better Church Leaders (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1950), p. 18.

Congregation, by Karl Kretschmar; Church Ushering, by Paul Lang; Church Etiquette, by Oscar Fedder; and other materials, including a copy of the church constitution.<sup>21</sup> In connection with this literature, the men should be encouraged to make careful use of it and should be guided in its use.

It might be repeated here that not all of the above methods will be applicable in every congregation. Certainly no congregation would attempt to use all of them. But they do indicate that it is possible to set up a careful program of training for the church council. Each pastor must study the situation that obtains in his own congregation and introduce methods that are acceptable and that will be most advantageous. Paul Edward Keyser<sup>22</sup> points out that the training must be adapted to those who participate in it. It should be simple enough for all, yet challenging for all. It should be short enough for the truly busy people, yet adequate. If the pastor considers the people involved and also the needs of the congregation and the tasks that must be met, he will be able to adopt the methods that are most suitable and that will bring the most effective results in his congregation.

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<sup>21</sup>Erdman W. Frenk "Our Elders Made 3,800 Calls Last Year," Today, IV (October, 1949), p. 7.

<sup>22</sup>Op. cit., pp. 98-99.

## CHAPTER VI

### AREAS OF TRAINING

When it has been established that the members of the church council should be trained and that a program for their training is to be set up, then the content for that training must be selected. Anything that is a part of the educational program of the entire congregation will be of value to the council. Yet the training should be organized into areas that will be of particular value to the church council as such. For the purpose of this report these areas are classified into two groups, namely the program of the church and the functioning of the church. The division is arbitrary and involves some overlapping. Yet it is felt that it facilitates a listing of the areas. It is not the purpose here to give a sample course of study for each area of training. Rather the purpose of this chapter is merely to list and describe the major areas that ought to be covered in a training program for the church council.

Beginning with the program of the church, the training ought certainly to include a study of the congregation itself. This would include a study of the purposes for which the congregation exists. The pastor should lead his officers to an understanding of the congregation as a divine institution, which exists for the purpose of carrying out

its work. The specific phases of the congregational program will be mentioned separately later in this chapter.

A second area under the program of the church is that of the office of the ministry. It is important for the congregation, and its leaders in particular, to have a thorough understanding of just what the office of the ministry is. They should realize what duties and responsibilities God has given to their pastor, and, on the other hand, they should see clearly what their responsibilities are toward their pastor. Such training will help the church council to realize better what the most important work of their pastor is, and it will lead them to encourage and assist the pastor in devoting the preponderance of his time to that most important ministry of the Word.

The pastor will want further to train his council in the program of the Church at large. This will include first of all the Synodical organization and the relationship of the congregation to Synod. J. E. Herrmann writes:

The congregation's relationship to Synod should be analyzed and understood by the members of the church council. They should know and recognize their responsibilities and privileges as members of Synod . . . . A thorough study should be made of Synod, its world-wide program, and the part the congregation is to play in that program.<sup>1</sup>

This is a broad field. It includes the organization of the circuit, the district, and Synod itself. The church leaders

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<sup>1</sup>The Chief Steward (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), p. 87.



should be made to realize that no congregation is an isolated entity. They should see what Synod has done and continues to do for them, and they should recognize what they can do for their Synod. This area includes also training in home and foreign missions apart from the work that is done by the individual congregation. A great many helps are available for the pastor in this area of training, including slides, films, charts, etc. The pastor who uses them will be increasing the effectiveness of his teaching. More remotely included in this area are various phases of church history, the most important of which might be the history of the Reformation.

The training of the council should include a study of the congregation's program of evangelism. The leaders of a congregation must never remain content with merely serving their own members, but they must be aware of their responsibility for winning souls to Christ. Reuben Youngdahl, whose church in Minneapolis has experienced phenomenal growth from 331 members in 1938 to over 5,000 in 1950, believes that evangelism is the principal work of the church, and that every church member should take part in this work. He makes himself responsible for the raising of the church's budget, while he uses his laity primarily for this work of evangelism.<sup>2</sup> The pastor who is interested in training his church

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<sup>2</sup>"Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota," Great Churches of America (Chicago: The Christian Century Foundation, 1951), p. 1ff.

leaders should certainly include a demonstration of the importance of evangelism in the program of the church.

An important area in the program of the church is that of parish education. Since this is such a broad field, and since it is so closely allied with the entire program of the congregation, it is not deemed necessary to go into any detail of the program here. This area includes the Biblical teachings that must be taught to all members of the Christian congregation, various phases of home training, etc. The important factor here is that the council be made aware of the importance of this part of the congregational program and that it becomes acquainted with how the program operates in the parish. Naturally, the board for parish education will receive special training in this area.

The next area is that of stewardship. The council itself should be trained in the practice of good stewardship,<sup>3</sup> and it should be taught the general principles of stewardship and how these principles are to be applied to the entire congregation.

Worship is an important part of the program of every congregation, and the council ought to receive a thorough training in its art. This phase of training can be very extensive, including the many aspects of public worship, as well as of family and private worship. It includes the

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<sup>3</sup>0. L. Shelton, The Church Functioning Effectively (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946), p. 117.

philosophy of worship and also specific techniques that can be employed. If the council members serve as ushers they will have much to do with making the public services meaningful. The elders who go into the homes can exert an influence on family devotions, so they should be trained for that. A minister should also train his officers to be able to pray in public<sup>4</sup> and to lead in worship.

An area which is frequently neglected in the program of Lutheran churches is that of rendering social services. Formerly many of our congregations had a poor fund in their budget and elected almoners to distribute the fund to those who needed it, but these seem to be rapidly disappearing. This is all the more reason for the need of training church leaders to see their responsibility in this field. There is still much that the church can do to lead its people to face social problems in the light of Christian teaching.<sup>5</sup> Problems which might be considered are the race problem, labor-management relations, care for the aged, and other problems of human society.

The pastor should also train his leaders in the relationship of the congregation and its members to other denominations. This is a topic which is frequently of great interest to lay people, and the pastor should make use

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<sup>4</sup>George V. Moore, Better Church Leaders (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1950), p. 16.

<sup>5</sup>Shelton, op. cit., p. 165.

of that interest in teaching them the proper relationship that should exist. He should also train them as to the proper relationship that the congregation should have over against the world and the community around it. A congregation of Christians is never segregated from the worldly community. The laymen who are leaders of the church have frequent contact with the community and probably have firm interests in community activities. The pastor should not overlook this area, but should train his members to build up those relationships with the proper perspective.

The second major grouping of areas for training concerns the functioning of the church. This includes the work and techniques that are employed in carrying out the program of the church. Basic to all techniques and functions that are put into operation is the motivation behind them. For that reason the pastor must train his council carefully in developing the proper motivation for the work of the church. He should develop in them a sincere love for God and a desire to serve their fellow men spiritually and physically which will remain in their minds as basic principles to be considered in all of the congregational work. Where such motivation is lacking the pastor may have great difficulty in working with his council. But if he has been successful in implanting this motivation, then his training in the functioning of the church will have to be little more than a training in the proper techniques.

An area of the congregation's operation that is always regarded as important is that of finances. Here the pastor may or may not need to carry on very extensive training. He may or may not be capable of giving such training. But he should see to it that his council is capable of setting up a well planned budget, that it recognizes the financial needs of the congregation, that it employs proper and efficient methods of raising funds, and that it keeps good records. He should also lead his council to recognize those members who are negligent in their giving<sup>6</sup> and train them in dealing with such persons. Some congregations have considerable difficulty in raising needed funds, while others seem to have little difficulty. Lewis C. Niemoeller<sup>7</sup> contended that when he had a person's heart he also had his pocketbook. Thus he indicated that financial giving is based on the level of spirituality, which in turn shows where the pastor's emphasis should lie in his training.

The organization of a congregation is important to its proper functioning. For this reason the pastor ought to lead his council in a careful study of church organization. The entire council should thoroughly understand the pattern of its own congregation's organization, so that it can operate smoothly. This includes an understanding of the duties

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<sup>6</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>7</sup>Pastor of Glendale Lutheran Church, Glendale, Mo. This assertion was given in a personal interview.

which they themselves have and also of the methods which they might employ in carrying out their duties most efficiently. This area of training should include also an examination of the organization of other congregations, always keeping in mind the possibility of finding new arrangements or new methods that would bring an improvement to the congregation making the study. During such a study of organization the pastor ought to introduce some instruction on principles of leadership for the benefit of the councilmen themselves. Here he would point out that the councilmen must learn to work co-operatively with one another and with other members of the congregation for the good of the congregation as a whole.<sup>8</sup> He would discuss the following qualities of effective church leadership: sincerity, dependability, humility, an abundance of energy, a clear vision of purpose, courage, patience, knowledge and understanding of the people with whom one works, enthusiasm, adaptability, reasonableness, and a thorough Christianity.<sup>9</sup> He would discuss with them also the dangers and difficulties involved in their positions of leadership, and especially the rewards of their service.<sup>10</sup> Through all of this training the pastor should endeavor to lead the council members so as

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<sup>8</sup>Moore, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

<sup>9</sup>Paul W. Milhouse, Enlisting and Developing Church Leaders (Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947), p. 60ff.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 49ff.

to improve the effectiveness of their work and of the work of the congregation in general.

Membership growth and attendance is an area which should receive attention. Under this heading will come a careful analysis of the membership of the congregation, particularly in regard to the church and communion attendance and to the degree of participation in congregational work and activities. After such an analysis has been made, the council should interpret its findings to show just how successfully the program of the congregation is functioning. It should then go on to seek and study methods of bringing about an improvement in the various areas of Christian faith and living. In order to bring about an increase of participation by the congregation in the activities and program of the church, a congregation ought to have some record of the abilities of its members and of the areas in which they are willing to serve. The council could make a special project of gathering such information by means of a questionnaire, and they should see that such a record is kept up to date by getting the same information from new members as they come in.<sup>11</sup>

Another area under the functioning of the congregation concerns the property of the congregation, particularly the house of worship. While such a study would be of particular

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<sup>11</sup>Weldon Crossland, A Planned Program for the Church Year (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 80.

interest to the trustees or those who are responsible for the property, it would be of great value to all the church officers. The specific topics to be included under this area would vary according to the needs and plans of the congregation. When a new church building is needed and planned for, the pastor should lead his council in a discussion of church architecture, art, furnishings, etc.

Shelton mentions that

It will be the responsibility of the property committee to study church buildings, lighting effects, elements of tone, and atmosphere; to plan for the church as an instrument of worship and guide to a more meaningful ministry in this sphere.<sup>12</sup>

Even when no building program is in mind, the pastor can profitably instruct his church leaders in symbolism, in methods of beautifying the church premises, and related topics.

It is extremely important for the members of the church council to be well trained in the procedure of parish visitation. According to the plan proposed in this paper this area will be of particular concern to the elders, who are the contact men between the council and the members of the congregation. Since the home visitation by the elders is such a vitally important part of the effective functioning of the congregation, it is necessary that these men be well trained in the art of visiting. After an organizational plan has been set up whereby each elder is to visit the ten

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<sup>12</sup>Op. cit., p. 181.



or more families in his district several times each year, there still remains this important work of teaching the men just how to go about the visiting. The men who are new to their offices may feel a strong reluctance toward such visiting; yet by proper training they can become eager and effective workers. O. L. Shelton, while considering a parish visitation program that is designed primarily for the purpose of securing financial pledges, gives a description of training that is helpful also to the general visitation program under consideration here. He writes:

The canvasser should be well trained. It is not too much to extend this training over a period of four weeks, one night a week. The program of training should be carefully arranged by the pastor and director of the visitation and should include discussion of the following: the budget and its implications for service, the values of the church in civilization and in the community, the opportunities of the local church, how to enter a home, the attitude of the canvassers, the approach to individual contributors, how to keep the cause uppermost, how to make financial sharing appealing, how to meet criticism, excuses, and unspiritual opposition, what objections are likely to be given and how to meet them . . . . Demonstrations may be made. That the spiritual goals are greater than the financial and that the visit is to enlist people in service and activity in the Kingdom of God should be constantly stressed.

Final instructions should be given the canvassers along these lines: be thoroughly acquainted with your church program; keep your task on the spiritual plane; pray before you start into a home; since you are representing Christ and His claims, be genuinely Christian; be enthusiastic for your church and its program; help every person to see the worth of the church and its spiritual ministry in the world; secure individual pledges and help to train each individual; make this a great spiritual crusade; enlistment is a part of spiritual growth; finish the task now.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>O. L. Shelton, op. cit., p. 131.

Eugene Dolloff adds one important caution, namely that visitors must not be subject to peddling gossip from one house to another.<sup>14</sup> Such a training program is extensive, but when applied to the entire area of Christian living, it will be eminently worth while in the results achieved through the continued visitation.

The societies of the congregation and their functioning could be regarded as another area for study. They might be included under the study of the organization of the congregation, but if not they should be taken up separately. The pastor should see that the church officers are familiar with the purposes of each society, and he should train them to support the work of each of these auxiliary organizations.

The final area for training to be mentioned is that of parish planning. Actually, the training for such planning is not a separate area or entity in itself. Training in every area of the congregation's program and functioning is training that prepares for good parish planning. Yet separate mention of this factor is made here to indicate that the pastor should train his council to recognize the importance of such planning and to take an active, interested part in it. He should also lead them to see the purpose of such planning and the pattern which it must follow, as indicated in the following quotation:

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<sup>14A</sup> Crowded Church Through Modern Methods (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), p. 133.

A church program, to be effective in cleansing the motives and firing the courage of its people, must possess certain positive qualities. First of all, it must be a unit, based upon the needs of the church as a whole, not a mass of antagonistic and competing activities and plans. The particular program of each department or group must manifest a relatedness to every other departmental or group program, and it must be planned with an awareness that it is a part, but only a part, of the over-all church program.<sup>15</sup>

Every council member should have this idea of the importance of planning, whether or not the council itself is the group that does the planning for the parish.

To furnish an example of the areas which actually are covered in one congregation's program of training for its elders, an outline of the four-year training program of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Joliet, Ill., is provided in the appendix.

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<sup>15</sup>Moore, op. cit., p. 63.

## CHAPTER VII

### OBJECTIVES OF TRAINING

Most of the objectives of a program of training for church council members have already been referred to throughout this paper. Yet it is felt advisable to bring these objectives together and list them here in brief summary form.

The first objective of such a training program is to bring about spiritual growth in the men who are members of the council. Since these men are leaders of the congregation, the pastor should endeavor to build them up in their faith and in the outward manifestation of their faith in their lives to as extensive a degree as possible. Through his training he should engender in these leaders an enthusiasm for Christ and His Church. At the same time he should train them to be better stewards of their time, their money, and their abilities. In regard to their activity for the church, he should train them so that there is a deep spiritual motivation for all their activity. O. L. Shelton wrote the following in this regard:

The attitudes, motives, spirit, and purpose of the leaders who do the tasks are more important than the plans of organization or the processes by which responsibilities are carried out. Therefore, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Church Functioning Effectively (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946), p. 18.

Above all, the pastor should aim to implant a strong personal faith in God and in Jesus Christ as their Savior in the hearts of these councilmen, so that they themselves will be and remain true children of God.

Secondly, the pastor should aim by his training to make his council members efficient and effective congregational leaders. In order to do this he must first of all acquaint them with the overall program of the church at large and of their own parish in particular. He must show them how this program is in accord with the responsibilities and duties which God himself has given to His church. He must then go on to train them in the techniques of church work and in the principles of leadership. By working toward these specific aims he will be developing his major objective of creating the ability to lead others. As a subsidiary objective related to this, the pastor should aim to keep in the service of the church those leaders whom he has trained. "Many members who once were active in church work no longer are active . . . . This is to be regretted, for no congregation ever has too many active workers."<sup>2</sup> According to Paul W. Milhouse, a pastor can keep leaders at their tasks with continued diligence by keeping records and having the leaders file reports, by giving recognition to work that has been done, and by exalting the various areas of Christian

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<sup>2</sup>J. E. Herrmann (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), p. 88.

service.<sup>3</sup> This, of course, does not mean that the pastor should aim to keep the same men on the church council indefinitely. But he should try to keep such men as have been trained as leaders active in some phase of church work in which his training will be put to good use. Even when good leaders cannot hold office, because of a rotating system, they can be of great value to the congregation in the voters' assembly, on committees, and in other specific areas of activity.

The most important objective of the pastor's training program for his council does not concern the council alone, but it concerns the entire congregation, as well as the community and the world, through the influence which the congregation brings to bear on them. This objective is to bring about, first of all, spiritual growth within the congregation. If this were not the aim of the training program described, the pastor would be spending an amount of time with the council that would not be properly proportionate to the number of people involved. However, the pastor realizes that a group of trained leaders working together with him can have a far more beneficial influence on the people of his congregation than he could possibly bear by himself. George V. Moore writes:

The people look to the church for leadership toward goals that are as high as the thoughts of God, as pure

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<sup>3</sup>Enlisting and Developing Church Leaders (Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947), p. 33ff.

as the mind of Christ, and as wide as humanity. They turn their eyes toward the minister and officials of the church to lead them vigorously toward the realization of such goals.<sup>4</sup>

To fulfill this expectation is an objective of the training plan described. It is apart of this objective to extend the spiritual growth also outside the congregation, by drawing ever more people to Christ the Savior through missionary and evangelistic efforts.

It is a further objective of council training to bring about a numerical increase in membership and in attendance at the congregational services and activities. This objective is, of course, dependent on the previous one of bringing about spiritual growth. Numerical increase is merely an outward sign and measure of that abstract growth. Because it is outward and because it is a measure, even though not always accurate, it is important. The church council, particularly through the elders' visitation program, can be very effective in bringing about progress toward this objective. Retaining present members and reclaiming previous members who have been lost should certainly be included under this objective. Other specific aims that fall into this category are the increase of attendance at worship services and at the Sacrament of the Altar, and an increase of participation in the congregational societies and in other phases of church work by the laity.

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<sup>4</sup>Better Church Leaders (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1950), p. 121.

To make possible good planning is an objective that has been alluded to several times in this paper. The importance of such planning is pointed out by Weldon Crossland, who emphasizes that a yearly Church-wide Planning Conference should be held to work out plans for the coming year and even longer. These plans should be worked out by official committees and groups with the pastor.<sup>5</sup> Since the church officers naturally play a large part in planning the parish program, the time and effort expended in training them will go a long way toward assuring wise, adequate, and effective planning.

Finally, it is an objective of the training program for the council to establish a strong contact and good rapport between the pastor and the council, between the pastor and the congregation, and between the council and the congregation. The pastor must be careful not to conduct his training program with an air of superiority that might create a feeling of antagonism between himself and his spiritual assistants. His attention to this group evidently should not bring about a feeling in the congregation that these men are special favorites of the pastor. On the contrary, this training should create a unity of mind and unity of purpose throughout the entire congregation. The service of the elders as contact men to the congregation should help to

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<sup>5</sup>A Planned Program for the Church Year (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 11ff.



build just such a feeling. Leonard Spangenberg writes that the pastor and church leaders have a responsibility of educating the entire congregation as to the business of the congregation.<sup>6</sup> In this way they will increase the members' interest in that business. "An informed congregation is a co-operating congregation," says Shelton, and, therefore, the plans and activity of the board should be passed on to the congregation.<sup>7</sup> A good training program for the church officers can help greatly to build a unanimity of feeling between pastor and council and congregation, which will in turn increase the effectiveness of the entire functioning of the congregation as a whole.

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<sup>6</sup>Minding Your Church's Business (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1942), p. 13ff.

<sup>7</sup>Op. cit., p. 193.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PASTOR AS LEADER IN THE TRAINING PROGRAM

The success of the training program outlined in this paper depends to a very large degree on the person who conducts the training, namely the pastor, and on the leadership which he himself employs in his training. The present chapter will contain a discussion of the important part which the pastor plays in the training of his church council members. This, in turn, will be followed by a presentation of the most effective method of leadership which the pastor might employ in his training.

O. L. Shelton, in his book The Church Functioning Effectively, proposes that "One of the most important tasks of the modern minister is that of administration. The effectiveness of the church will depend largely upon his inspiration and guidance of its lay leaders."<sup>1</sup> It is generally agreed that this statement is correct in placing a great deal of emphasis on the importance of the pastor's part in the ultimate success of a plan of lay training. Erdman W. Frenk, in a personal interview, expressed a similar opinion, namely that the personality of the pastor is all-important in the development of an active congregation through effective lay leadership; it is with the pastor that such a

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<sup>1</sup>St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1946, p. 43.

plan either succeeds or fails. It stands to reason that the success of any plan is determined primarily by the man who is in charge and control. Since the pastor is the leader and the executive of the congregation, a man who is expected to be the guiding light in the functioning of the congregation, it is essential that he have the requirements and the ability to conduct a good training program for his church council. J. E. Herrmann points to this dependence on the leadership of the pastor in the following quotation:

Whether our congregations will measure up to their privileges and responsibilities in this explosive age of opportunities will depend, humanly speaking, upon the leadership of our pastors. People are as they are led . . . . A pastor's position does not make him a leader; it only gives him the opportunity to prove himself a leader.<sup>2</sup>

It is important also that the group in which the pastor is working accept him as their leader. Paul W. Milhouse lays stress on this factor as he writes:

Leadership also requires that the group accept the guidance of the leader (or leaders) . . . . If one should find himself officially in a position of leadership, but not so recognized by the group, he must seek to win the confidence of the group and be accepted as a leader before he can expect to do much leading.<sup>3</sup>

Ordinarily this is not a problem for the pastor, for he is readily accepted as the leader of the congregation and of the church council. Still there is a possibility that the

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<sup>2</sup>The Chief Steward (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1951), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Enlisting and Developing Church Leaders (Anderson, Indiana: The Warner Press, 1947), p. 10.

council may not readily accept the leadership of their pastor in a training program which he introduces. This would be true particularly if the pastor conducts the training not as a leader, but as a dictator who is trying to foist something upon the council. If such should be the case, the pastor ought to pay particular attention to the qualities that are necessary for good leadership, and strive to develop these qualities in himself.

There are a number of things that are necessary in a pastor, if he is to be successful in his training of his church officers. The pastor himself must first of all show sincere, genuine Christianity in his own living and in his relationship with others. He must be an example to his flock.<sup>4</sup> If this is the case, the councilmen will most probably be ready to accept his leadership in building up the Christianity of themselves and of the congregation and community. The pastor must furthermore have a thorough knowledge of the subject matter which he is handling and of the persons who are to be taught. He must know where the learners stand, start with them at that point, and then proceed.<sup>5</sup> Naturally, there are many other qualities of good leadership which a pastor ought to have. He ought to be acquainted with educational methods. He ought to have an

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<sup>4</sup>Herrmann, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>5</sup>Albert W. Palmer, The Minister's Job (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), pp. 43-44.

understanding of the principles of psychology. Rather than take up a detailed consideration of such matters, however, it is felt to be adequate to leave the discussion with what has been said and with what will be said about the type of leadership to be used in the latter half of this chapter.

It is, of course, important for the pastor to periodically check on the effectiveness of his leadership.

Herrmann writes:

Every so often - and it ought to be often - the Christian clergyman will look at himself. He will honestly ask himself questions which others do not have the courage to ask him. He will take himself apart as a leader to see just how he might improve himself.<sup>6</sup>

Such self-analysis will go a long way toward helping the pastor to be an effective trainer of his church leaders.

While the part of the pastor in the training program is extremely important, a word of caution is in order. A situation should never develop in a congregation in which the pastor is indispensable. One writer points out that a church should not be entirely dependent on its pastor for leadership. Otherwise it will be lost when the pastor leaves. The pastor should carry out his work so that even after he leaves the church will continue to progress.<sup>7</sup> Similar emphasis is given by Herrmann, who wrote the following:

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<sup>6</sup>Op. cit., pp. 35-36.

<sup>7</sup>Leonard Spangenberg, Minding Your Church's Business (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1942), pp. 10-11.

The very fact that we doubt that others could take over is not a compliment to our leadership. We should have trained people through the years for the effective functioning of a Christian congregation. It is the work of the public ministry to teach and train others to work with them, not under them, in order to achieve God's purposes for men.<sup>8</sup>

So while the pastor plays an extremely important, even vital, part in the training of his council and in the functioning of his congregation, that very training should make it possible for the congregation to get along without the pastor, when that is necessary, without serious hindrance to the accomplishment of great things in God's kingdom.

It is possible that the realization on the part of the pastor of the vital part which he himself must play in the training of his council may cause a feeling of inadequacy to come over the pastor. Undoubtedly this feeling comes to all pastors, but it should never become so great as to hinder a pastor from carrying on such a training program at all. Here the pastor must remember that God will provide His strength and assistance as He does in every area.

Herrmann has the following to say to those who are overcome by such a feeling of insufficiency:

But I am so unworthy! True. Who is not. But know that God glories in raising spirits out of the dust of their own inability and making them pillars in His church. His strength becomes perfect in their weakness. It is not a question so much of what you can do as what God can do with you and through you. It is absolutely amazing what our Lord can do with a life that is

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<sup>8</sup>Op. cit., p. 29.

dedicated to His use. The power of Christ rests upon those who wait upon Him for strength. You have every reason to thank your Lord who has enabled you to be a minister of the new testament.<sup>9</sup>

Next to be considered is the type of leadership which ought to be employed by the pastor in his training. This involves the basic philosophy of leadership which the pastor holds and which he puts into practice. To illustrate the problem at hand, a statement of the two opposite extremes will be helpful. On one hand there is the opinion that the pastor should be absolute ruler in the congregation and in the council. He should be chairman of the council so that he can be certain that nothing will ever be "slipped by" him. He should always insist on the acceptance of his own views and force the council to conform to his pattern of thinking and activity. Admittedly this is an extreme statement of the position. On the other hand there is the opinion that the pastor should be a true leader, not a "boss" or a dictator. He should be entirely evangelical in his dealings with the council, as well as with the entire congregation. He should follow the principles of group work, using and drawing together all the resources that are present in the group to lead the group toward the fullest possible realization of its goals.

This latter view is the one which is held most predominantly by experts in leadership in many fields:

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

business, youth work, and church work. Andrew W. Blackwood, in his book Pastoral Leadership, has the following to say:

Experts in the business world stress leadership, not drivership. They look on technical competence as essential, but as almost worthless in itself. A church leader must know more than how to drive mules; he must like men, and believe in them as friends and equals. Instead of trying to become a parish pope he should humble himself, and be willing to take advice. No man called of God to lead a flock dares think of his own plans as inspired and infallible. On the other hand, he should look on himself as indirectly responsible for the effectiveness of all the work in the church. <sup>10</sup>

Other men who are experienced in the field of leadership agree that such a procedure is far more effective in bringing lasting values to the group and in achieving desired results than a dictatorial policy can be. Dolloff maintains that

. . . the minister . . . is never justified in considering himself as a dictator. . . .

This method is suicidal. . . . It reminds one of Pat, to whom the professor put the following question: "Pat, what is your solution for the world problem?" "Well sor," came the ready reply, "I think we should have world democracy, with an Irishman for a king." <sup>11</sup>

He goes on to point out that people hate to be driven, even by a pastor. When the pastor tries to drive them, they revolt and defeat the pastor. The pastor "must meet all of his officers on a common ground, always as equals, that

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<sup>10</sup>New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949, pp. 72-73

<sup>11</sup>Eugene Dinsmore Dolloff. A Crowded Church Through Modern Methods (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), p. 33.



together, through common counsel and sympathetic co-operation, they may work out the highest values of the Kingdom."<sup>12</sup> Spangenberg points to the importance of proper balance in the leadership of a congregation. He says:

If the clergy attempts to control all phases of the church life it becomes narrow. If the members exert too much influence the church becomes too broad. A happy medium is the correct solution.<sup>13</sup>

In order to bring about such co-operative leadership, a leader must also be a good follower, as is pointed out by Henry C. Link.<sup>14</sup> He emphasizes that a leader must be well-disciplined in obeying rules and in giving full co-operation in all activities. Applied to the pastor among his council members, this would indicate that the pastor must follow the same rules and the same patterns of conduct in the meetings that expects the members to follow. He must claim no special privileges for himself. From this it appears that there is common acknowledgement that the best type of leadership is that wherein the pastor actually leads his council, not as a dictator but as a democratic leader. Such leadership is certainly in accord with the basic principles of Christian love.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>13</sup>Spangenberg, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>14</sup>The Rediscovery of Man (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 170.

Ordway Tead, who is an expert in leadership and administration in the field of business, strongly advocates administration that is thoroughly democratic. His definition is so thorough and thought-provoking in its applicability to pastoral administration that it is quoted here at length:

Democratic administration is that direction and oversight of an organization which assures that aims are shared in the making, that working policies and methods are agreed to by those involved, that all who participate feel both free and eager to contribute their best creative effort, that stimulating personal leadership is assured, and that in consequence the total outcome maximizes the aims of the organization while also contributing to the growing selfhood of all involved in terms of clearly realized benefits. It means also that there is a periodic, orderly, shared review of control and of operating methods to assure that aims and methods, that leadership in action, and that the necessary preparations of good training are all continuing as agreed and as agreeable.<sup>15</sup>

If set up under such principles, a program of training for church council members would have the highest possibilities for success, because the council members themselves would be playing a large part in the program and would be working together for its effective operation. Tead goes on to emphasize that for the success of such a plan the leader himself must work according to democratic principles. His description of such good leadership is also worth quoting:

Sound democratic administration, in a word, necessarily entails democratic leadership . . . . The essence of leadership is getting people to mobilize on behalf of some aim because they come to desire its realization

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<sup>15</sup>The Art of Administration (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951), pp. 134-135.

and want to join in bringing it to pass. And this happy outcome results only from deliberate intent and careful planning, attractive policies and co-operative methods. And this deliberate intent grows out of the characteristic outlook and drive of the good leader. Given a favorable and sympathetic field of endeavor, he can largely create the conditions in which the responses of followers will make leadership a fact. For democratic leadership is always won. The leaders' characteristic outlook is thus of basic and determining importance.<sup>16</sup>

The ready applicability of this pattern to use in the church is shown in the fact that the church does mobilize its people for action by bringing them, through the power of the Gospel, to desire the extension of God's Kingdom. The pastor is trained to lead people in this direction, and, therefore, he should be able to show such democratic leadership in his work of training his assistants in church work to work efficiently and effectively toward the goals of the congregation. By employing this type of leadership, under God's guidance, the pastor will be able to train his council for the benefit of the congregation, the community, and the world.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

To sum up the findings of this study, it appears first of all that the laity of every congregation ought to play an active role in the functioning of the congregation. Both the priesthood of all believers and the necessary limitations on the time of the pastor call for such lay activity. The congregations have elected certain men to be their leaders in the administration of the congregation's work, and placed them on the church council, and for that reason these men in particular should be assistants to the pastor in leading the congregation to an effective carrying out of its God-given responsibilities.

While the organization of church councils varies widely, the following plan has been found to be most effective. The council should consist of the elected officers of the congregation, plus the elders, plus the chairman or a representative of each congregational standing committee. The congregation should be divided into districts, preferably with about ten families in each district. There should be no more than twenty-five families to a district. To each district is assigned an elder. The elders are the contact men from the council to the congregation, and they are directly responsible for the spiritual welfare of the people in their district. The duties of the council and of the

elders in particular are as broad as the work of building up the church of Jesus Christ.

Because of the tremendous responsibilities that rest upon the members of the church council, and because of the high potential value which these men can bring to the congregation and to the world, through the congregation, these men ought to be thoroughly trained for their task. The pastor will naturally carry on such training through his informal contacts with the councilmen, and in the normal conduct of business meetings. However, he should also conduct some kind of a formal plan of training for the council, of which there are various types and methods at the pastor's disposal.

The areas to be covered in such training include all the phases of the church itself and of the efficient functioning of the church. Particular attention should be given to those areas and activities which will directly aid the councilmen in the performance of their duties. In all of his training the pastor should aim to build up the council members in their own spirituality and in their effectiveness as church leaders. He should further bear in mind as an ultimate objective of his training the growth of this congregation and of the church at large in numbers as well as in personal faith and godly living.

In the carrying on of such a plan of training, the pastor himself plays a vital role. Humanly speaking, the success of the training will depend largely on the personality and ability of the pastor. He must be a genuine

Christian, and he must show his Christianity in his contact with others, particularly in his relation to the council. He must further exercise his guidance over the council, not dictatorially, but as a democratic leader who, working with the council, leads them to the achievement of great things for God.

Under God, the plan here outlined will be helpful to the Christian congregation in carrying out its program of building the church of God in this world.

APPENDIX

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, JOLIET, ILLINOIS  
ELDER TRAINING  
 (FOUR YEAR PROGRAM)

	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	FOURTH YEAR
	1-A	1-B	1-C	1-D
1 Sept.	Christian Primary Education	Christian Higher Education	Confirmation Instruction	Adult Educa- tion in the Church
2 Oct.	2-A Roman Catholic Church "The Split"	2-B Martin Luther	2-C Roman Catholic Church "The Split"	2-D The Lodge
3 Nov.	3-A The Congre- gational Budget for the next year	3-B Stewardship and Finances	3-C Stewardship of Time and Talents	3-D Synodical Missions and our Financial Obligations
4 Dec.	4-A The Elder and Alms	4-B Lutheran Charities	4-C Christmas Visitation of the Aged and Shut-ins	4-D Wheat Ridge and the American Bible Society
5 Jan.	5-A Elder Leadership within the Church	5-B The Tech- niques of Home Visitation	5-C The Elder in the Public Service	5-D At the -Sick bed -Casket Side -Marriage Service -Funeral Service -Baptismal Service

	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	FOURTH YEAR
6 Feb.	6-A The Elder and Lenten Disciplines	6-B Lenten Mis- sion Pos- sibilities	6-C The Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter Services	6-D Lenten Publicity
7 March	7-A The History of the Missouri Synod	7-B The History of St. Peter's Church	7-C The History of the Lutheran Church	7-D The History of the Reformed Church
8 April	8-A Sola Scriptura	8-B Sola Gratia	8-C Sola Fides	8-D The Separ- ation of Church and State
9 May	9-A The Elder and Per- sonal prayer	9-B The Elder and Bible Class	9-C The Elder and Church- Communion Attendance	9-D The Elder and his Pastors
10 June	10-A Christian Courtship (Youth and the Church)	10-B Marriage and Divorce (Mixed Marriages)	10-C Religion in the Home	10-D Pre-Marital Counseling The Home Counseling Board - Post Marital Counseling



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