

# The Noble Task: Counsel for Those Considering the Pastoral Ministry

By  
Philip M. Bickel

Adapted By  
Norman J. Threinen and Corinne Nowoczin

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Special acknowledgment is due the author's wife, Julie, and his father, Pastor Ottomar Bickel, for their significant contributions to this work. Also deep gratitude is expressed to the many lay people and pastors who read the manuscript and supplied helpful criticism.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philip M. Bickel (M.Div., D. Missiology) is Missions Pastor at St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Bloomington, MN, and an adjunct professor at Concordia University, St. Paul, MN. Phil has served as a pastor, church planter, missionary to Venezuela, media producer, writer, publisher, professor and Director of the Oswald Hoffmann School of Christian Outreach. His writings include: *Joy to the World*, *Outreach Promises* and "God's Mission Promises," a free, weekly e-column available at <http://www.lcms.org/ca/mission/mission-promises/index.asp> Phil's website, [www.rollercoasterpress.com](http://www.rollercoasterpress.com) features a wide variety of evangelism and mission resources, including dramas, games, essays and book excerpts.

Copyright 1984 by Philip M. Bickel. Adapted in 2005 with the author's permission. Printed by Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Edmonton, Alberta.

All Biblical quotations taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* Copyright 2003 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

The Noble Task:  
Counsel for Those Considering the Pastoral Ministry

CONTENTS

1. The Nobility of the Ministry
2. The Call and the Desire
3. Desiring the Ministry for the Wrong Reasons
4. Desire Quenchers
5. Aspiring to the Ministry: Qualifications
6. Aspiring to the Ministry: Training
7. Aspiring to the Ministry: Formal Education
8. The Call
9. Serving Cross-Culturally
10. Journey to Seminary: Real Stories
11. Appendix 1: Reading Resources  
Appendix 2: What a Pastor Is and Does  
Appendix 3: What a Missionary Is and Does
12. Contact Information

1. The Nobility of the Ministry

In 1 Timothy 3:1 the Apostle Paul says, *If anyone aspires to the office of overseer (i.e., pastor), he desires a noble task.* In these words one has Paul's appraisal of the ministry. It is "a noble task," worth desiring and worth aspiring to. There are several factors which combine to make the office of pastor noble and desirable.

First of all, it has as its centre the task of telling the Good News that human beings are made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ who died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead on the third day. Through this message the Holy Spirit works saving faith in the hearts of men, women and children. Preaching, teaching, witnessing, counselling, baptizing, communing, etc., all involve the use of this message of salvation. Thus, the pastor works continuously with the most precious of tools, the saving Gospel. What more noble enterprise can there be than this? To serve as an ambassador of Christ; to warn people on the way to hell of their danger, so that they might turn and live eternally; to lead those who feel like orphans in a meaningless universe to know their Creator and be reconciled to Him. Nothing can match the drama, the significance and the nobility of this task.

Secondly, our holy God makes use of people who are in the ministry to do the work which He wants to have done in the world. He calls someone to serve as an apprentice to Himself to be used as a tool of God. While the pastor is called to serve people, he is really being called to serve the Lord. When pastors begin to rely on their own wits and powers, they accomplish very little.

A biblical character who learned this lesson well was Joshua, the man called to lead the people of Israel during the conquest of Canaan. Joshua 5:13-15 says: *When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

Joshua was about to take his forces up to the well-situated, well-staffed and well-built fortress of Jericho. He was looking for military advice. In a moment God would reveal to him the miraculous strategy by which Jericho would fall. But first the commander of the LORD's army tells Joshua to take off his shoes.

The action of removing one's shoes had no military value. Yet spiritually, it had great significance. Taking off one's shoes was a form of worship; a demonstration of reverence and awe. Joshua had every reason to exhibit such awe for he was on holy ground, holy because the Holy God Himself was present to aid and encourage His servant Joshua. But before Joshua could fight the LORD's battle God wanted him to know the LORD Himself.

Through this encounter Joshua learned a critical lesson which all pastors and indeed all Christians need to learn: God Himself must have first place in everything we strive to do for Him. Worship must precede warfare for

God. Awe of God must precede action for God. Fear of God must precede courageous living for God. Dependence on God must precede daring for God.

Like Joshua, every pastor will come into the presence of the living God, take off his shoes and marvel that the Lord alone is holy, eternal, unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere, righteous, true and, above all, merciful, loving and gracious. Only after he takes stock of the towering status of his Lord can the pastor fathom his own status. He is only an apprentice to the Master, a pupil to the Teacher, an undershepherd to the Good Shepherd, a servant of the Suffering Servant, an armourbearer of the Lord of Lords, an ambassador of the King of Kings.

The Apostle Paul's appraisal of the ministry is no understatement. Truly, if anyone aspires to the office of pastor, he desires a noble task. It is noble because it uses the Word of God for the benefit of people. It is noble because it involves doing the work of God Himself.

## **2. The Call and the Desire**

Is the desire for the ministry the same as the call to the ministry? Some people seem to think so but they are not. The desire for the ministry is an inner compulsion that arises from the heart in response to the love of God which is ours through Jesus Christ. If one is to be a pastor, it is important that he desires to lead people to Christ as their Saviour, that he desires to shepherd a congregation of believers, instructing them in the Word, counselling those in need, comforting the bereaved, and encouraging and

training all to trust and serve their Lord more faithfully. It is important that he wishes to be apprenticed to the Lord, serving under His tutelage. Such a desire is often the first step used by the Holy Spirit to guide a person into the ministry. As the Psalmist says, *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart* (Psalm 37:4).

Although the desire may indeed be a sign of God's leading, it is not the same thing as a call to the ministry. Referring to the Old Testament priesthood, Hebrews 5:4 says, *No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.* The Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church echoes this teaching in Article XIV, *It is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper call* (German Text).

The Scriptures give some vivid examples of God calling people: Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, the twelve Apostles, and later Paul. From these examples one might conclude that a call involves God's direct confrontation and appointment, often accompanied by some miraculous sign.

While God still works miracles today, nowhere in Scripture has He promised to perform a supernatural sign every time He directs someone into the public ministry. Instead, Scripture tells about another kind of call which is less direct but just as much from God. When Paul and Barnabas appointed pastors in the new congregations they had established, they did not wait for God to appear to someone, as He had to Moses and Isaiah. Acts 14:23 says that they *appointed elders*. The Greek word translated as

*appointed* literally means "to stretch forth the hand, to elect by the raising of hands." Clearly then, these pastors were appointed in a human way from among the spiritual men in the congregations. Thus one sees that the early church recognized that God could exercise His call through the decision of His people.

The practice of the indirect call is still carried out today by churches all over the world. Although such a call may not be as spectacular as Paul's call on the road to Damascus, it is still just as much from God. The Apostle Paul himself affirmed this fact when he told the pastors of Ephesus, *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers* (Acts 20:28a). Although these people had been elected by their churches, Paul did not hesitate to state that the Holy Spirit had called them to be pastors through the decision of the church.

Why is it important to make a distinction between the call into the ministry and the desire for the ministry? It is important because the two have often been confused. The desire for the ministry is a subjective, inner attraction and compulsion to share Christ's love with people. The call to the ministry is objective and concrete, namely, a request from a group of Christians to serve them as a minister of the Word. Both the desire and the call are from God but they should not be heedlessly equated. If they are, one of two faulty attitudes may result.

The first is pushiness. When a person mistakenly assumes that his desire for the office of ministry is the same as a call, he may think that this entitles him to push himself upon some congregation as their pastor. Or, he may

think that because he is called, there is no need for him to train or educate himself for the ministry. God has given the right to call to the church, not to the individual, and the church has a right to set standards of training which must be met before someone is entrusted with the office of the ministry (1 Timothy 3:10; 2 Timothy 2:2).

The second faulty attitude is passiveness. A person might say, "I am interested in the ministry but I am waiting for God to call me. As soon as He does, I will prepare for the ministry." On the surface this may sound both logical and humble, yet see what happens when the same reasoning is applied to another vocation. Imagine someone in high school saying, "I am interested in a professional football career but I am waiting for a C.F.L. team to draft me. As soon as I am drafted, then I'll prepare by playing university football."

The person who is asking God, "Am I called?" often has in mind some Samuel-like experience, where God pages him in the middle of the night. However, God usually calls indirectly through His church. Such a call is most likely to be extended to someone who has prepared spiritually for the duties of the ministry. The person who passively waits for a call before he prepares for the ministry is likely to wait a long time.

This chapter can be summarized by comparing God's will in this matter to a traffic signal. The green light represents a call into the ministry. The red light means no call. Many men prematurely expect the green light of the call, and as long as they see no green, they mistakenly assume that the light is red and God is not interested in them becoming pastors. However, there is one other colour

on a traffic signal - yellow - and it should not be overlooked. Yellow means proceed with caution. The **desire** for the ministry is the yellow light on the traffic signal of God's will. If the light is yellow, then one should proceed by aspiring to the ministry.

*If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task* (1 Timothy 3:1). The Greek word translated as "aspire" means "to stretch out for." This word tells you that if God has given you a desire for the ministry, then stretch out for it, train for it, diligently work and plan for it. The response to the desire should not be the passiveness of awaiting a fuzzily-defined call, but the positive action of aspiring.

### 3. Desiring the Ministry for the Wrong Reasons

A faulty view of the ministry will be carried into action and limit the effectiveness of the pastor's labours. To clarify the image of the ministry for you and your desire for it, it is important to consider some of the improper reasons for desiring the office of pastor.

**Pastor Deadhead.** It is an unfortunate fact that some pastors seem to show by their actions that they do not believe in Christ as their *Saviour*. They may desire to enter ministry to atone for past sins, assuage their guilt or do good works to appease God. Such a minister could be called Pastor Deadhead because he serves as a spiritual leader while he himself may be spiritually dead. A deadhead is a fallen, sunken or submerged log in a river or lake which is a hazard to boats and people. Pastor Dead-

head is no less of a danger to the faith of the Christians in his parish.

To examine the genuineness of one's faith, it is useful to meditate on the following questions:

1. Do you believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
2. Do you believe that you are a sinner who deserves nothing but eternal separation from God?
3. Do you believe that Christ died for all your sins and rose from the dead?
4. Are you absolutely sure that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?

The person who answers all these questions with a confident "yes" can be certain that he is building his plans for future church work on the only proper foundation, Jesus Christ. The person who cannot answer these questions with a heartfelt "yes" needs to seek out Christian counsel so that he might firmly trust in the true God before he attempts to serve Him.

**Johnny One Note.** It is possible for someone to be interested in being a pastor simply because it will give him a chance to do public speaking or administering or counselling or youth work. The pastor of this type could be compared to the character in the song, "Poor Johnny One Note," whose singing ability was limited to one lone, droning note. You need to ask yourself where you stand regarding this matter. Is there only one aspect of ministry which is appealing or do you desire the office of the ministry with all that it entails?

This does not mean that an individual minister may not become a specialist in some area. According to his abilities and interests he may become a counsellor, evan-

gelist, teacher, military chaplain, minister to the elderly, foreign missionary, musician, etc. The ministry opens the door to a variety of creative ways to serve the Lord.

**The Heir Apparent.** In some families, especially those with a strong Christian background, it may be assumed (perhaps subconsciously) that little Joey will become a pastor. Joey may even come to view himself as an "heir apparent" to the pastorate. When he has grown up, he may have difficulty judging whether his desire for the ministry is real or simply a camouflaged ambition to please his family. This dilemma may also occur through the influence of a highly regarded non-family member, such as a pastor or teacher.

If you wonder about your motives in this regard, here are some suggestions:

1. Don't feel guilty about it. Thank God you have Christian relatives who care enough to encourage you.
2. Be honest with your family about your career ambitions.
3. Most of all, be honest with God in prayer, so that you may know and do your Heavenly Father's will.

**Father Do-It-Himself.** Someone may be interested in being a pastor because he harbors a paternalistic attitude toward laypeople. Father Do-It-Himself assumes that his purpose is to perform all the spiritual duties of which he thinks common laypeople are incapable, such as praying, teaching and witnessing. In his church, people are not likely to know how to do these things (or even want to) because Father Do-It-Himself never encouraged or trained them to do so.

Ephesians 4:11-13 makes clear what the proper role of the pastor is to be: *He gave the apostles, the prophets,*

*the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The pastor's role is not to do all the spiritual work himself, but to train and equip Christians for meaningful works of service. In this way, laypeople will avoid remaining spiritual infants dependent on a paternalistic pastor.*

**Reverend Peacock.** A person may desire to serve as a pastor because of the status which he perceives to be connected with the position. This person might be described as a peacock. The peacock is an apparently pompous bird who seems to be conceit personified. An inflated opinion of one's self can also affect God's ministers. Such pastors could merit the title, "Reverend Peacock." The Apostle Peter warned the pastors of his day regarding this danger, *Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight,...not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock* (1 Peter 5:2a, 3).

There are charlatans who have made the ministry a means of profiteering, but human pride can short-circuit effective ministry in more subtle ways and can turn the work around so that it will serve the pastor instead of God.

An even more subtle form of the Reverend Peacock syndrome is an attitude of professionalism that cuts the pastor off from his people. The danger here is that of being more job-oriented than people-oriented. Example: a pastor arrives at the church 30 minutes before a meeting with hopes of preparing for it. A parishioner asks to speak to the pastor about a personal problem. The person-

oriented pastor will strive to minister to the person while the overly-professional pastor will more likely side-step the person and concentrate on the coming meeting. To avoid the danger of professionalism, the person considering the ministry should ask, "Do I desire the ministry only because of the professional aura that surrounds it? Or do I desire the ministry because it is, first and foremost, a means of serving people and helping them to walk in the way of the Lord?"

The heavy work load can at times compel pastors who really love people to give them low priority. Due to our sinful nature, status seeking may on occasion gain a foothold. Nevertheless, these transgressions were paid for by the Crucified One. When they are confessed, God's forgiveness is received and the Holy Spirit can provide the sanctifying power necessary to keep Peacockism from predominating in one's ministry.

The conceited peacock does have one humble characteristic. His call is a forlorn wail that sounds like he is imploring, "Help! Help!" So also pastors will cry out, "Help, Lord, help!" That is what Martin Luther says in the following prayer: *Lord God, You have placed me in Your church as overseer and pastor. You know how unfit I am to administer this great and difficult office. Had I up to now been without help from You, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call on You. I gladly offer my mouth and heart to Your service. I want to teach people, and I myself want to continue to learn. Therefore, I shall meditate diligently on Your Word. Use me, Lord, as Your instrument. Only do not forsake me; for if I were to continue alone, I would quickly ruin everything. Amen.*

#### 4. Desire Quenchers

The desire for the ministry is like an ember. It can be fanned into flame, or it can be quenched by fears and misunderstandings regarding the ministry. The following are some common fears or desire quenchers.

**The Fear of Not Finishing.** From childhood many people are taught to finish what they have started. This ethic may be so deeply ingrained that one may at times even refuse to strive towards a goal, such as the ministry, for fear that one may never attain it. Such apprehension may be further heightened by a misinterpretation of Luke 9:61,62 which reads, *Another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."* Some may understand this to mean that once one has indicated an interest in the ministry, to turn back from that goal would be a grave sin. But Jesus' words about looking back have a much wider application than the ministry. He is warning pastors and laypeople alike that if they intend to follow Him, they must no longer focus their attention on the world but upon Him.

How can one deal with the fear of perhaps not finishing one's ministerial training? There is the possibility that at some point (even after years in the ministry) the desire for the office of pastor will disappear and perhaps God will direct a person out of the pastoral ministry into another vocation. God, indeed, has a plan for all of His children, but the ministry is not on the blueprints for everyone. If, after much prayer and soul-searching, a person decides not to continue aspiring to the ministry, one

need not fear! God will lovingly guide a person in whatever vocation he seeks to serve Him (Proverbs 3:5,6).

**The Fear of Not being Successful.** In the church, one can so easily contract the worldly disease of successitis. Christians may assume that if a pastor has a large church, or if he preaches on television, or if he has authored a book, then he must be a success in the eyes of men and of God. Conversely, a person may suppose that the thousands of anonymous pastors across North America are at worst useless and at best mediocre.

A prospective pastor who holds this view of success may be tempted to conclude, "If I am only to become a mediocre pastor in an insignificant parish, why bother? If I can't be a super-star, why let my light shine at all?" This is dangerous thinking. It can cause one to either abandon aspirations to the ministry now, or later to throw in the towel when one's ministry fails to be the booming success of one's fantasies.

What does God say about success? First, the Bible says that every congregation is the body of Christ. Therefore, one cannot think in such terms as large churches being the major leagues and small churches being the minor leagues. Second, God gives different talents and degrees of ability to His servants. He does not expect them all to attain the same results; He desires only that they be faithful with what they have been given (Matthew 25:14-30).

The pastor must continually remind himself that he does not have to cater to the grandstand, because the world is not his audience. He is called by God. He speaks for God. He works to bring glory to God. His success is

measured by God, for God Himself causes it, with the pastor serving as His instrument.

**Fear of Not Being the Type.** People sometimes say, "I am not interested in the ministry; I am not the right type." This reflects a stereotype of pastors as being interested only in other-worldly matters, living in a perpetual state of reverence. Most pastors are normally lively, fun-loving people. Certainly, they are concerned about spiritual matters, but they can also have an interest in athletics, cars, electronics, computers, photography, hunting, fishing, etc.

Pastors have also been pigeonholed as being "holier than thou," people whose ears burn when someone curses in their presence, people who never fall into temptation. The reality is that pastors often know a great deal about the evils of life, because they are actively striving against them. They cannot help but touch the real world as they befriend and counsel the drug addict and the adulterer, the insane and the injured.

If a man is worried about whether he is the pastoral type, he has only to look at the Apostles. Several of them were fishermen, the outdoors type. Matthew was an accountant. Simon the Zealot was a former revolutionary. Clearly, Jesus did not look for one type of personality. He simply looked for teachable men who would respond when He called, *Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men* (Mark 1:17).

**The Fear of Public Speaking/Witnessing.** Many people feel uncomfortable speaking in front of large groups of people or speaking about their faith; therefore there is no use preparing to be a pastor. The truth is that pastors

must learn how to preach and witness just as they must learn other things relating to the ministry. To overcome these fears the prospective pastor might offer to read lessons in worship services and ask to shadow and assist the pastor as he visits and is involved in other aspects of his ministry.

It is comforting to know that when the pastor preaches and carries out other duties, he is not alone. It is the Holy Spirit who speaks the message to the hearts of the hearers through the pastor as His instrument. Look to Him for the faith to overcome fears, *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord* (2 Timothy 1:7, 8a).

**Financial Fears.** The three or four years of university and four years of seminary may seem out of reach financially. Entering the job market and receiving a good salary may be tempting. Children, mortgages and a desire for the finer things in life may add to the financial fears of preparing for pastoral training.

The financial challenges cannot be minimized. Careful budgeting and significant sacrifices on the part of the whole family are needed to pursue preparation for the ministry. Part-time and summer employment, spouse's employment, student loans, financial assistance from congregation, district and seminary are all sources of income. God's people are very generous in providing for the economic needs of pastors-in-training at the seminary. Most people preparing for the ministry have found that "the Lord provides."

Compared to other professionals like doctors and

lawyers, a person who goes into the ministry knows that his salary will always be lower. But he is promised, *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you* (Matthew 6:33). Honest financial planning with the Lord in mind will bring dividends that the world cannot give - contentment with what one has and satisfaction from performing the most rewarding work on earth.

**Fear of the Heavy Work Load.** The ministry is a very demanding profession. Studies have shown that ministers work an average of 56 hours per week, with several of these hours spent in high-stress circumstances. A pastor is always on call. The heavy workload places a strain upon his family and may endanger his health. This could discourage people from going into the ministry.

However, one should remember that many other occupations are equally taxing. Although the pastor's schedule is full, it is flexible and generally allows for opportunities for recreation and family activities. Besides, in spite of the long hours, the job of being a pastor is very rewarding and fulfilling.

By balancing their time and energy, pastors do not need to feel guilty about taking off time to care for themselves and their families. For even when they take off needed time, they know that the Holy Spirit continues to work in the hearts of those to whom they have ministered. As Martin Luther once said, "While I drink my little glass of Wittenberg beer, the Gospel runs its course." Luther was referring to the fact that the pastor's labours have an ongoing effect as the Holy Spirit continues to work in the

hearts of the pastor's hearers (Mark 4:26-29).

Most of the pastor's work is hidden from the view of laypeople. To gain a perspective on the pastor's duties and schedule, the person considering the ministry would do well to talk periodically to his pastor and, if possible, to shadow the pastor for several days and experience firsthand what a typical day in the life of the pastor is like.

## 5. Aspiring to the Ministry: Qualifications

In 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 the Apostle Paul teaches what kind of men are qualified to serve as pastors. These qualifications can be organized into six points:

**General uprightness of life.** Paul tells us a pastor must be blameless, above reproach, upright, holy. He must have a good reputation with outsiders and love what is good. But Paul is not demanding an unattainable perfection. He is throwing out a challenge. If we daily offer our sinful hearts to God to receive His Son's fresh cleansing, then by the Holy Spirit's power, we will be able to rise to the challenge and live in a manner approaching the standards set forth in these Scriptures.

**Self-control.** A pastor needs to have mastery over himself, to be temperate, self-controlled and disciplined. There are also some negative qualities to be overcome: not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not overbearing, not quick-tempered. Clearly, the ministry is not the occupation for someone who is flighty, easily swayed, bossy, ready to shoot off his mouth or dependent on stimulants or depressants.

**Attitude toward material possessions.** A pastor should not be pursuing dishonest gain nor be a lover of money. The love of worldly goods and activities can overcome pastors and laypeople without them realizing they have been beguiled. The positive side is demonstrated by Paul's insistence that the pastor be hospitable.

**Ability to teach.** The minister can hardly go through a day without teaching, because preaching, counselling, evangelizing, and of course instructing are all forms of teaching. Therefore Paul instructs Timothy to seek pastoral candidates who are "able to teach." This involves communicating sound doctrine in such an effective and personable manner that it is truly understood, believed, and acted upon.

**Family.** Paul makes detailed reference to the pastor's family life which he considers of critical importance. The pastor must be *the husband of one wife* (1 Timothy 3:2). This has implications for pastors who desire divorce for unbiblical reasons. The only grounds for divorce mentioned in Scripture are adultery (Matthew 19:3-9) and desertion (1 Corinthians 7:15). Readers who have been divorced ought to discuss this matter with their pastors.

The character of the pastor's wife is dealt with in 1 Timothy 3:11, *Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.* See also Proverbs 31:10-31.

The pastor's relationship to his children is dealt with in 1 Timothy 3:4,5, *He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household,*

*how will he care for God's church?* and Titus 1:6, *...his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.*

**Proven spiritual maturity.** It ought to be clear from Paul's list of pastoral qualities that few, if any, recent converts would possess the spiritual maturity to serve effectively as pastors. He gives a good definition of spiritual maturity in 1 Timothy 4:12, *Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.* Clearly, spiritual maturity is not the same as age, because Timothy possessed it even though he was young. Rather, it is the ability to set an example for the believers.

Such ability is not attained overnight. It is usually the result of a process of spiritual growth. Paul speaks of this needed maturing process in 1 Timothy 3:10, *And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.* Although this verse refers to deacons, it can be applied to prospective pastors as well. The time of testing is carried out as one serves as a layman in his local church and as he studies in order to prepare himself for the noble task. The next two chapters will provide more detail regarding these activities of serving and studying.

Aspiring to the office of pastor is indeed serious business. However, RELAX. Do not forever be scrutinizing and judging yourself as to whether you are fit for the ministry. Simply enjoy your activity in the church and your academic preparation, and thus give yourself and the Holy Spirit time for His fruit to mature on the vine of your life.

Do not keep comparing yourself to some spiritual giant you know, kicking yourself for having not yet reached his level of sanctification. It is much wiser, healthier, and more accurate to compare yourself to yourself. How do you do that? Think about your level of spiritual maturity of a year or two ago. If you cannot see any progress in that lapse of time, then something is impeding your growth. If you can see marked progress, then praise the Lord for the headway you have made. Just remember that growth is a process. A boy does not simply wake up one morning and discover he has turned into a man. Rather, he matures towards manhood through an involved and sometimes uncomfortable process. It is the same with spiritual maturity in general and aspiring toward the ministry in particular. Enjoy growing up in the Lord day-by-day, and praise the Lord that the maturation process does indeed work.

## 6. Aspiring to the Ministry: Training

**The Training Centre.** Did you know there is a training centre for prospective pastors? It is called the Christian church and there is a branch near you. In every individual congregation God the Holy Spirit has brought together a microcosm of His holy Christian Church. This communion of saints is a training centre in which the Christian faith is shared and Christian living is dared. The congregation is the training centre for all Christians, both for those who wish to aspire to the ministry and for those whose goal is to become more dedicated laypeople.

Strive to gain experience in different areas: participating in worship, Bible class, young people's work, evangelism and visitation; teaching Sunday School; serving on a board or committee. Such on-the-job training is of immeasurable value.

**The Trainers.** In the training centre of the church, God has provided trainers, the head trainer being the pastor. In Ephesians 4:12, Paul informs us that the pastor's main objective is to *equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ*. Seek his counsel. Learn from his example. Enjoy his friendship. Finally, do not forget to be a friend to him in return and to remember him often in your prayers.

Your pastor is not your only trainer, however. You can learn from every member of the congregation. We learn by working together with others, whether we are working on a missions festival, helping out at a youth camp, leading a home Bible study, attending a board meeting, aiding a refugee family, counselling a delinquent member or reshingling the church roof.

Some readers may object and say, "Sure, one can learn and gain valuable experience in *SOME* congregations, but mine is a real lemon!" If your church has defects (and they all do), you must overcome the temptation to complain and find fault. Rather get into the action of praying for renewal, and striving, by the Holy Spirit's power, to strengthen the good things that remain (Revelation 3:12).

**The Training Manual.** You have probably guessed that the training manual is the Bible. One will be properly equipped to serve the Lord to the degree that he is in contact with the Word.

Clearly, a daily quiet time with God is a spiritual exercise which puts muscle on us. Yet there are some who admit, "When I read the Bible nothing seems to happen. I start in chapter 3 and wake up in chapter 5 wondering what I have been reading. When I pray I cannot think of anything to say." If this is your experience, then perhaps you are isolating your devotions too much from your daily life and the context within which you live. You need to ask yourself, "What is God saying to me through His Word? What needs in my life or in the world should I bring to the throne of my heavenly Father?"

If you have experienced difficulty in establishing the habit of daily devotions, start small. Do not vow to spend an hour in devotions every day if you have never spent more than ten minutes straight in the Word and prayer. If you start small, five to ten minutes perhaps, you will develop a sense of accomplishment, instead of defeat.

**Tools.** Besides a training centre, trainers, and a training manual, our God in His grace and wisdom, has also equipped all Christians with tools to be used in serving Him. We call these tools the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to be used for the well-being of the entire Church. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift, and many have more.

The Bible provides detailed instruction concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12

and Ephesians 4:1-16. In each of these sections the church is compared to the human body which has many parts with different functions. The Holy Spirit does not make Christians with a cookie cutter. He creatively provides each of us with a variety of gifts to be used to accomplish God's will. Depending on your spiritual gifts, natural talents, and the needs of your church, the possibilities will be thrilling to behold. Study the above mentioned chapters of the Bible and also read books (see Appendix 1 later in this book) so that you may learn how to discover and utilize your spiritual gifts.

There are some who have foolishly held off from getting involved in their churches because they wanted to wait until they were taught how to do things "correctly" in seminary. But remember, although the rookie soldier receives training at boot camp, he only becomes a veteran on the front lines. Your church is situated on those front lines. Join the rest of the troops! They are waiting for you.

## **7. Aspiring to the Ministry: Formal Education**

Before looking at seminary study, a brief look at pre-seminary education is needed. How necessary is it that a student enter seminary with a bachelor's degree? While it is possible for a limited number of more mature men to enter with only one year of liberal arts courses, the better option is to have a bachelor's degree, preferably in the broad liberal arts. There are several advantages to this. One is that the student will have experience in a wide range of studies and be better able to draw on those experiences

for preaching, teaching and speaking with people. He also will have some training in writing and thinking skills. Education enhances the ability to create because one is exposed to new ideas. Considering that a pastor will probably produce about 2500 sermons and teach for perhaps 7000 hours in a 40-year career, he can use all the learning and creativity he can get.

**Areas of Seminary Study.** Following is a brief look at the four areas of seminary study and why they are profitable. Details of the various courses can be obtained from your pastor, the director of admissions at the seminary or through reading the course descriptions in the seminary's academic calendar (your pastor should have one or you can ask for one from the seminary).

**a) Biblical Studies (Exegetical theology)**

Obviously, a pastor should be extremely familiar with the Bible: its books, history, people and teachings. Furthermore, our seminary also requires students to attain a working knowledge of both of the original biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, before entering seminary. The Bible can be understood through English translations, but knowledge of Hebrew and Greek helps one avoid errors of interpretation and provides insights for teaching.

Seminary studies include: Old and New Testament survey courses, plus specific Old and New Testament books, and a course on biblical hermeneutics which teaches methods for interpreting the Bible.

**b) Church History (Historical theology)**

To know who you are, it helps to know where you came from. Christianity is not limited to just one century

or one denomination. The study of church history provides a person with a full picture of the body of Christ and how it has come to the place at which it now stands. Seminary courses include early Christianity, the Lutheran Reformation and the Lutheran Church in Canada.

**c) Doctrine (Systematic theology)**

The Bible is a book of narratives, poetry, letters and other forms of literature, but our minds also require that the Bible's teachings or doctrines be set down in a logical, systematic pattern. The catechism is a familiar example of this. Courses at the seminary deal with the Lutheran Confessions and specific articles of faith, Christian ethics, contemporary religions, etc.

**d) Practical theology**

Courses in practical theology provide direction and experience in preaching, teaching, evangelism, worship, administration, counselling, stewardship, mission education, etc. Through four years of instruction and practice the student gains the ability to carry out basic pastoral tasks. Most practical courses have a "hands-on" component which is practiced in a local field education congregation to which the student is assigned for the first two years of seminary. The third year is a year-long vicarage or internship in a congregation of Lutheran Church-Canada under the supervision of a local pastor.

Spiritual growth is encouraged through daily chapel services with messages delivered by professors, local pastors and seminarians.

Seminary also involves education through fellowship with professors and fellow students. Professors have years

of experience in ministry to draw upon in their classes. The insights they share are filtered through their personalities as well. They are eager to help the students.

Lasting friendships are often made at seminary because all students are working toward the same goal. Age is irrelevant. The variety of experience and background among the students contributes to greater understanding and breadth of knowledge. Small class sizes make for better discussion and help professors and students to know each other well. Some classes contain laypeople who add their particular flavour to the discussions.

Perhaps three to four years of pre-seminary learning and four years of seminary training seem too long. A good encouragement to study comes from Billy Graham who, when he was asked what he would do with his time if he knew that Christ was returning in three years, said, "I would study for two years...and preach for one." He commented that he often had to do things with too little preparation. If such a capable man as Dr. Graham senses the need to study, then no one need feel that thorough preparation is a waste of one's time.

## 8. The Call

How does one get from seminary to the parish or field of ministry where God wants him to serve? By means of a call, although the calling procedure varies among church bodies. In Lutheran Church-Canada, the Council of Presidents and placement officers from the seminaries meet and assign graduates to those congregations that

have requested a candidate through a formal call. The graduates have indicated their preferences and needs to the placement officers. At the placement meeting, the group strives to place the graduates where they will be most effective and content. The Holy Spirit works through these people to accomplish God's holy will and to place His workers in the harvest field where He wants them (Matthew 9:38; Acts 20:28).

The most thrilling day at our seminary is the Sacred Convocation when fourth year students graduate with a Master of Divinity degree, receive their Theological Diploma and are placed in a Lutheran Church-Canada congregation. Many former questions are at last resolved: What kind of ministry should I pursue? Where will I live? What kind of people will I serve?

But the call might also be awaited with dread. Many a seminarian has wondered, "What if I am sent someplace where my skills are not utilized or my efforts not appreciated? What if I don't like the placement?" Ultimately, the question is, "Does God really call pastors through the decisions of His people, and, if so, can God be trusted to choose what is best for me?"

If God gives the desire and guides the preparation, He will not desert you at the time of the call. Instead, *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act* (Psalm 37:4, 5).

The following is Rev. Bickel's call experience in his own words: "In my second year at seminary, I began to think about the area of ministry in which I would like to

work. Above all else, I desired to do campus ministry. I recalled the uncertainty of my own college days, and I wanted to provide direction for other young people who were drifting in life, without a clear course to sail. Because of this 'burden' for campus ministry, I steered my studies in that direction. As I approached the end of my four years of seminary training, I felt qualified to tackle a campus call. In fact, I couldn't wait to start.

"There was just one minor obstacle. In my denomination (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) it was not standard policy to call someone to the campus straight out of the seminary, because they preferred to have the campus posts manned by pastors with previous experience in the parish. This news caused me to become perturbed with the Lord. I told Him, 'Here I've waited years to get a chance at campus ministry, and now it looks like I will be delayed even longer. Lord, how could You be letting this happen? Why would You give me such an interest in campus work and then not let me do it? It does not make sense to me.'

"As Call Day drew near I resigned myself to the following options: (1) If the call was totally contrary to my interests, I would probably decline it and seek a position with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship; (2) If it was bearable, I might accept it, though reluctantly. But I was sure that this call could never excite me as thoroughly as campus ministry.

"Finally, the Call Service arrived in which they handed out the call documents. I will never forget that moment. Anxiously opening the envelope, I peeked inside

and read these words, 'Begin from scratch new mission church in Lafayette, Indiana.'

"What happened at that moment can only be a miracle. Up till that very second my heart had been overflowing with the desire to serve college-age people, but instantly I could sense that desire subsiding, and in its place there arose a new desire to do this unexpected work which the Lord had chosen for me. It was just like God had turned off a faucet marked 'campus ministry' and turned on another faucet labelled 'starting a church from scratch.'

"I had come to the Call Service doubting if my call would be a valid directive from God, but now I found myself willing to follow through with His unpredictable, but trustworthy will.

"As I think back over the five and a half years that I spent in Lafayette, I have no doubt that God directed that call. I do not think I could have been given a finer group of people with which to share the work of starting up and fine-tuning a new congregation. Never for a moment do I regret the choice that the Holy Spirit made for me through the decision of His church.

"In telling you the story of my call, I do not mean to imply that you will have an identical experience. But the Lord will make clear to all who await the church's call, that it is also His call. And He can be trusted, for *we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28)."

## 9. Serving Cross-Culturally

No matter the place to which God may call you, it is important to realize that God has a *global* plan. I (Phil) had blindly accepted what some refer to as “The Comfortable Doctrine” of missions. It claims that if people in India or Africa want to hear about Christ, they need only seek out the Christians in their country. For the first four years of my ministry I believed this. The problem was, I was failing to see the world as God sees it and failing to love the world as God loves it.

Christians often limit their vision to their congregation or church body or nation, instead of thinking with a global perspective. Christ said, *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19). The Greek word translated as “nations” means people who share an ethnic heritage. Unfortunately, we have falsely assumed that once the church is planted within the political borders of a certain country, the job is done in that country.

Serving in a foreign culture may seem to be the hardest job in the world. Everyone who does so suffers temporarily from culture shock, the painful reaction to adjusting to a setting completely different from one’s own. Yet the person with missionary potential recovers from it and eventually grows to appreciate the culture and love the people in it.

Do you have this gift? The best way to find out is to spend time with people of an ethnic background other than your own. If you have even a small interest in cross-cultural ministry, try to experience a foreign culture prior to

graduation from college or seminary. Such opportunities exist right in your own community. Can you eventually feel comfortable with people of another culture? Can you develop friendships in spite of your differences? If so, you probably could be a missionary or work with people of other cultures right here in Canada.

You can do your part for world evangelization right where you are. As the saying goes, “Bloom where you are planted.” You do not have to go to a foreign land to do mission work; people of other cultures have come to Canada. Several of our Lutheran Church-Canada pastors are working in cross-cultural settings. But each community also has people who do not know Christ — people who have lived in Canada for years and those who have recently arrived from other countries. The mission field is at your doorstep.

## 10. Journey to Seminary: Real Stories

The story of how someone was led into the ministry is always an interesting tale of the Holy Spirit’s guidance in this special journey. Hopefully the following stories from our graduates will provide you with insights applicable to your own situation and provide direction for your future.

**Kevin Klein**, a pastor’s son, didn’t want to be a pastor. “Then the Lord started planting seeds through various people who helped me to see that the life of a pastor is very rewarding due to preaching the Word, but also very exciting. Starting mission congregations, designing and leading youth retreats, creating a vision for God’s people, not to mention driving back roads in winter

snowstorms is the stuff of high adventure. There is no job like it. A pastor does not work in a cubicle or office building, but is out among his people, visiting, shepherding, lending a hand on the tractor, playing softball, skiing, visiting the hospital. It is a great job and I am always amazed that we get paid for it."

God put various people in Kevin's path to make him think about entering the ministry. After working with Lynne Gergens at Concordia University College for a year as a Church Recruitment Officer, and visiting many LCC churches and seeing their ministry, he eventually came to seminary. "It was great — my class was full of keen students and people who lived life to the fullest (an embodiment, I believe of one who knows he is justified by grace and filled with the joy of the Lord).

"Before I knew it, it was call day. Like the NHL draft, the air was filled with tension and anticipation. My call came, 'Kevin Klein — Prince of Peace, Peace River, Alberta.'

"My three years in Peace River were fantastic. The church really believed in being involved in the community and encouraged me to volunteer at the ski hill as an instructor, work for search and rescue, provide volunteer chaplain services to the RCMP, and serve on the local recreation board. It was a great ministry and one that I will never forget."

After three years, Kevin was called by the mission department to be a chaplain to the Canadian Forces. "After 7 years, filled with world travels and deployments, time with soldiers and families, I look back on this journey

(which is still far from over) and think of how exciting the life of a pastor is."

**Matt Ziprick** too, is a pastor's son. "I didn't have to be a pastor to do something good and worthwhile. There are an infinite number of ways to serve the Lord. I never felt any pressure from my parents to enter seminary." Matt had a lengthy conversation about ministry with his grandfather, a pastor, who said, "Don't sweat it. If it's supposed to happen, it'll happen." Those words of wisdom gave Matt freedom.

He earned a B.Comm. and worked as an investment adviser. "I would have skipped my presentations at U of A, if there'd been another way to pass the courses. Speaking in front of people didn't come naturally. You look out at a sea of faces, and think, they're waiting for me to slip up!" He had already experienced that one Sunday morning in his father's church when he was 13 or 14. He was asked to do a reading and got out two words, then froze. He put his head on the lectern and had to be helped down. But "preaching now is one of the things I enjoy most."

So, why do you want to go to seminary? a pastor once asked Matt. "My eyes filled with tears and I said something about wanting to love people. I'd experienced so much love in my life and I wanted other people to experience that. God has a ferocious passion for people. I wanted to be a conduit for His love and grace." Matt does just that as he works with his father in a growing urban church.

**Vic Morris** didn't start out to be a pastor; he was in the Director of Parish Services program at Concordia University College. While travelling with the choir in his first year, he asked every pastor how they knew that ministry was for them. "I was encouraged by many, but was expecting a 'burning bush,' a flashing sign in the sky...I would have settled for an anonymous email to guide me into ministry. One night I was talking with a pastor who said, 'Vic, you've been thinking about this for a long time, right?' I said, 'Yeah, for months; I can't seem to get the idea out of my head - I'm losing sleep!' He encouraged me to go visit someone at the seminary."

Vic had been influenced toward pastoral ministry by his parents and pastors. He grew up in a town that had a LAMP base and the missionary pilots would take him on their visits.

There were doubts and fears: finances, biblical languages, amount of time, etc. "God provided for every need. It was humbling to be taken care of the way we were. God is good. He has promised to never leave us or forsake those whom he has called His own. He puts a desire in our hearts to serve. If He wants you to be a pastor, He will make a way and provide for you. God takes care of His own."

**Mike Keith** did not grow up in a church-going home; therefore he had some concerns about his lack of background and suitability to serve as a pastor. "I believe my lack of a church-going background presents me with some challenges serving in the Holy Ministry, but it has also provided opportunities for speaking the Gospel to those

who have no church background themselves. I understand what it is like to be the 'outsider' at church and can relate to them and their situation."

Mike had several people who influenced him in the direction of pastoral ministry, particularly the chaplain and a professor at Concordia University College. "Both men taught me about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and showed me the love of Christ. Through many discussions and much encouragement I was encouraged to continue my studies of theology and study towards entering the Holy Ministry." What influenced him toward entering the ministry was "the radical nature of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins and a great desire to teach others about Jesus Christ." Attending the seminary just seemed natural.

Mike's advice to prospective students: "Do not look to yourselves to determine whether you are worthy or not to enter the seminary to study for the Holy Ministry. You are not. You never will be. However, by God's grace, He works through His called and ordained servants." Mike's brother, Murray, heeded that advice and is following in his brother's footsteps.

**Mark Hennig** and his brother, Don, followed in their father's footsteps. Harvey, their father, entered seminary after taking early retirement but in his second year of studies he developed cancer and later passed away.

Mark's family often discussed the Bible while working on their farm. Members of his church encouraged him to become a pastor. His confirmation pastor first influenced him in that direction. Mark had been encouraged to come to seminary while attending Concordia University

College but instead he took up farming with his brothers. He was attending a Young Adult Conference with his wife, Darla, after his father's death, when with the encouragement of one of the leaders, he first felt that God was leading him toward seminary studies. At this time he also met a seminary student who encouraged him.

"After lengthy discussions with Darla, my pastor and my family, Darla and I decided to contact the seminary that fall. I had not finished my degree and was concerned about being accepted. The seminary was quick to help and assure us of any concerns or worries we had. Two years later one of my brothers was also led to study at the seminary and both of us have been blessed to graduate and share God's Word with His people."

By all appearances, **James Paulgaard** had it made. He was married, had a family, owned his own home and business. "I had the world by the tail," he says. Yet he was frustrated because the hopes, dreams and plans that he had for his business were continually falling short.

While at a family church camp in 1996, he found himself thinking about going into the ministry; the seeds had been planted several years before by his pastor. But James was thirty-seven years old, had four children and no college degree. Another pastor gave him advice: If you have the inner desire to serve in ministry, plus gifts that can be used for ministry, and others recognize those gifts for ministry in you, then that is a pretty good indication that it's ministry to which God is calling you.

James finally decided to take the path to ministry. He and his wife, Susan, sold their home and business and

moved to Saskatoon. But things did not go smoothly: the first seminary he tried wasn't a good fit and Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton could not, for a couple years, accept him without a degree. So James got his bachelor of arts degree at the University of Saskatchewan (graduating *magna cum laude*), and, two years later, arrived at Concordia Lutheran Seminary for his four year Master of Divinity degree and placement as a pastor in Lutheran Church-Canada. How did he manage, especially with his family increased to seven children? People were "so generous to us throughout this journey, giving us food, clothing, and financial gifts." The Paulgaards had no regular source of income and yet all their bills were paid. James believes that God had been working through other people to give them everything they needed and more. "We have been so blessed."

These are just a few stories of men who have been called by God to serve in the pastoral ministry. Every pastor has his own story to tell and each one is different. Each had obstacles to overcome both in making the decision to come to seminary and also in making it through seminary studies. Yet, in each case, God provided the means and encouragement for them to become pastors in Lutheran Church-Canada.

If you need more information or would like to speak to someone about becoming a pastor or about entering the seminary, please contact us. Contact information is listed at the end of this booklet.

## 11. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Reading Resources

Armstrong, Richard Stoll. *The Pastor as Evangelist*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984. Full of useful ideas and practical suggestions.

Armstrong, Richard Stoll. *The Pastor-Evangelist in the Parish*. Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1990. Describes specific opportunities for evangelism.

Bickel, Philip M. "God's Mission Promises," online: <http://www.lcms.org/ca/mission/mission-promises/index.asp> [cited December 21, 2005]. Weekly Bible study and devotional column.

Bickel, Philip and Curtis Deterding. *Considering a Church Career? Determining God's Plan for Your Life*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995. A brief look at the various church career opportunities in the Lutheran church.

Bickel, Philip M. *Joy to the World: An Introduction to Christian Missions*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990. An introduction to mission work written especially for Lutherans.

Lindvall, Michael L. *The Good News from North Haven: A Year in the Life of a Small Town*. New York: Doubleday, 1991. A young pastor reflects with sensitivity and humour on his early ministry in a small town parish.

Little, Paul E. *Affirming the Will of God*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1971. A little booklet packed with loads of clear, practical advice about how to determine and affirm God's will for your life.

Ludwig, J. Taylor. *It was Never About Books: Conversations Between a Teen and Her Pastor*. Austin, TX: LangMarc Publishing, 2005. Based on conversations between a troubled young girl and the kindhearted pastor who showed her God's love while she rearranged the books in his library.

Mattson, Ralph T. and Arthur F. Miller. *Finding a Job You Can Love*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing Co., 1999. Helps identify inherent gifts (talents) and gives insights in how best to apply them.

Miller, Arthur F. and Ralph T. Mattson. *The Truth About You: Discover What You Should Be Doing With Your Life*. Berkley: Ten Speed Press, 1989. Presents the concept of motivated abilities: the things you do best and love to do.

Svennungsen, Ann M. and Melissa Wigington, eds. *Awakened to a Calling: Reflections on the Vocation of Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. A collection of sermons from some of America's most eminent preachers whose aim is to help young people find their vocation in ministry.

Wingren, Gustaf, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen. *Luther on Vocation*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957. Integrates Luther's statements about vocation with his basic theology.

## Appendix 2: What a Pastor Is and Does

A pastor proclaims and teaches the Word of God, administers the Sacraments, announces the forgiveness of sins, counsels and leads people to grow in Christian faith and life.

**Responsibilities:** performing marriages and funerals; teaching; visiting the sick and homebound; spiritual counselling; designing, guiding and leading worship; personal witnessing; the mission of the congregation.

**Spiritual qualifications:** a vibrant faith in the triune God; a heart of love for people; knowledge of the Bible and doctrine; a strong worship and devotional life; the ability and eagerness to witness; the ability to teach; self-discipline; self-control; patience.

**Personality traits:** emotionally stable; persevering; responsible; humble, yet a leader; able to identify and use resources; socially skilled.

**Education:** a bachelor's degree; a Master of Divinity degree, which includes three years of classroom study (with field education) plus a year of internship under the direction of a parish pastor. Includes learning and using the original languages of Scripture: Hebrew and Greek.

Variety of pastors:

**Parish pastors** - serve one congregation

**Senior/administrative pastors** - oversee a congregation's entire professional team

**Associate/assistant pastors** - serving in designated areas, complement the work of the senior pastor

**Multiple-parish pastors** - serve two or more parishes at the same time

**Visitation pastors** - serve and visit the homebound, the sick, the elderly and the physically challenged

**Church planters** - begin new congregations and assist newly formed congregations to grow from the ground up

**Bi-vocational pastors** - hold two jobs, secular and congregational

Outside the local parish, pastors may serve as:

**Chaplains** at institutions or in the military

**Christian counsellors** (with an advanced degree)

**Church consultants** (following years of experience)

**Cross-cultural pastors** (domestic and overseas)

Specialized areas of ministry include:

**Family/youth/elderly**

**Differently abled**

**Education/evangelism/stewardship**

**Urban/rural**

**Cross-cultural**

**Brief History:** The New Testament portrays the pastor as an undershepherd, called to serve a local flock in the stead of Jesus, the Great Shepherd. Words synonymous with the word *pastor* in the New Testament are *bishop*, *elder* and *overseer*. Each of these refers to the office of the public ministry, the pastor. Among the first Christian pastors were Timothy and Titus, appointed by God through the apostle Paul to serve in Ephesus and Crete. Titus was also instructed to appoint pastors for other towns. Through the centuries God has continued to care for his church through faithful pastors.

### Appendix 3: What a Missionary Is and Does

A missionary displays Christ's love by word and deed in a culture or environment different from their own, sharing the Gospel with those who have not heard it.

**Spiritual qualifications:** a vibrant faith in the triune God, knowledge of the Bible and doctrine, a strong worship and devotional life, the ability and eagerness to witness, self-discipline, self-control, patience, a heart of love for people.

**Personality traits:** emotionally stable, adaptable to cultures, good-natured, able to get along with others, able to endure hardship, persevering, humble.

**Education:** Training at a college with a program in missions. Non-clergy missionaries with a bachelor's degree should spend at least one additional school year studying courses such as these: Bible, Christian doctrine, worship, church history in general, history and theology of missions,

mission principles and strategies, world religions, cultural anthropology, intercultural communication, personal witnessing/evangelism, language acquisition, missionary internship experiences.

Variety of missionaries:

**Evangelistic missionaries** - often are pastors, teachers, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, etc. Their main tasks are: lead people to Christ, equip people for Christian service and outreach, plant new congregations, establish a locally directed national church. Other roles: Bible translator, evangelist, Bible and tract distributor, Christian bookstore operator.

**Support missionaries** - are employed by a mission board to enhance the work of evangelistic missionaries. Examples: teachers for missionary children, medical missionaries, construction experts, missionary pilots, agricultural experts, mechanics and repairmen, business managers, literacy workers.

**Brief History:** Missionaries have been an essential part of the church's ministry since the days of Christ. The word *missionary*, like *apostle*, means "one who is sent." New Testament missionaries included the twelve apostles, Paul, Timothy, Luke, Priscilla, and Aquila. Because of missionaries through the centuries, the Good News has reached many, many people.

A century ago, missionaries traveled to foreign lands. Today, God is bringing hundreds of unreached people groups to our own country. Therefore, a missionary is any Christian involved in cross-cultural ministry anywhere, even next door.

## 12. Contact Information

Jeff Nachtigall

Director of Admissions/Director of Recruitment

Concordia Lutheran Seminary

7040 Ada Boulevard

Edmonton, AB T5B 4E3

Phone: 780-474-1468

Fax: 780-479-3067

Email: [admissions@concordiasem.ab.ca](mailto:admissions@concordiasem.ab.ca)

Website: [www.concordiasem.ab.ca](http://www.concordiasem.ab.ca)