

**The Pastor  
And The  
Lutheran School**



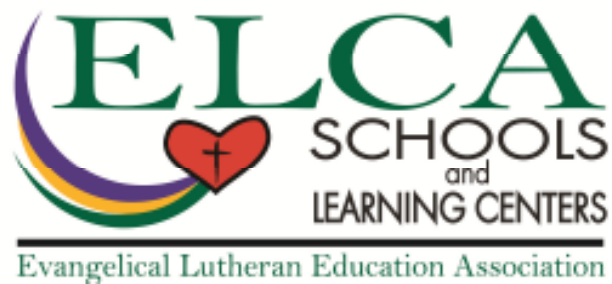


**THE PASTOR  
AND  
THE LUTHERAN SCHOOL**

A resource for the enhancement of the ministry of pastors serving congregations  
that operate early childhood education centers or elementary schools

MELVIN M. KIESCHNICK

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NOTE: In the text of this resource the word "school" refers to early childhood education centers and elementary schools that are ministry programs of their congregations.

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## **FOREWORD**

Lutheran schools and early childhood education centers currently face their greatest challenge and the possibility of their finest hour. The opportunity is there for these Lutheran institutions to bring to their sponsoring congregations and communities the gifts of quality age-appropriate Christian nurture, solid academic education and evangelical outreach. A key factor in determining whether or not the school or center will meet this challenge is whether or not the pastor is effective as a member of the school leadership team.

When the entire family—made up of pastor, administrator, principal, staff, parents, students and congregation—work together for a single goal, excellence is almost assured. If any of these components are absent, the school will probably fall short. If the pastoral support and leadership is missing, the chances for success are severely threatened.

This publication seeks to provide a vision and practical suggestions for pastors to supply a richly blessed pastoral ministry to the entire family associated with the school or center.

## **HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE**

This resource is more than just something to read. It is a guide for interaction, discussion, and group process. The exercises that are incorporated in the texts are meant for use by pastors, principals, early childhood education center directors, school boards, faculty, etc. The pastors and the administrators may want to use some of the exercises at a series of weekly team meetings. The exercises involving the staff may be used at one staff meeting per term. Similarly, there are exercises that a school board may use at one or two of its regular meetings.

The greatest benefits will be derived if all exercises and discussions are characterized by both trust and honesty. A key requirement is that participants speak the truth in love.

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# **CHAPTER 1: AN ISSUE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE**

## **The Potential Is Great**

### **It's Good To Be Here**

"One of the reasons I accepted the call to St. Mark's was because it operated a Christian day school. I wanted a pastorate that allowed me the opportunity of that special ministry of daily contact with children and their parents. I have not been disappointed. I love working with the school and its entire staff," reports Pastor Hanson.

"I wasn't so sure I really wanted a congregation with a preschool. I had heard that this particular congregation was not 100% in favor of the preschool. Rumor had it that tensions between my predecessor and the director had become obvious to congregation leaders. But I've been here three years now and I must say that things are going very well. The school is a major source for new members. It's wonderful to have the little ones sing for our senior citizens' Christmas party. And the director is not only a valued colleague but a close personal friend," enthusiastically asserted Pastor Joyce.

### **Children Are Blessed**

The evidence is in. When a Lutheran congregation under the supportive leadership of its pastor utilizes a Christian early childhood education center or day school as one of its principal avenues of ministry, great blessings result. First of all, children are blessed. Day after day children learn of the love of Jesus. Through regular worship, vital formal religious classes and daily living under Law and Gospel the Christian faith of baptized children is strengthened. Others not yet baptized hear, some for the very first time, of the seeking and forgiving love of a God who still reaches out in grace to touch the little ones.

It's not always immediately obvious. Sometimes it seems as though all of the seed has fallen on hard soil. Then unexpectedly someone enters the pastor's office. She seeks to be counseled or to be married, to have a child baptized or to be reactivated on the congregation's membership rolls. Slowly the story unfolds. A long wayward journey, but finally the homesick heart has been called back home to a congregation - a congregation in whose school she had first learned of a waiting Father.

### **Congregations Are Vitalized**

Pastors following in the footsteps of the one who by the Spirit called them into the pastoral ministry enjoy being in a congregation with a school. Often under the pastor's visionary leadership the school ministry enlivens the entire congregation. Especially in urban settings, the school becomes the principal means of outreach and service to the community. In other settings, the school draws young families into the congregation's orbit. In communities across the land it is the Lutheran congregations with schools that are most inclusive in their ministry to persons of a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In one area the local Lutheran pastors and principals counted 19 native languages other than English being spoken in the homes of their school families. Another pastor spoke enthusiastically of how the elderly persons in the congregation loved to receive birthday cards from the school children. Schools take a lot of energy, but they can also be the source of new vitality for an entire congregation.

### **Communities Are Enriched**

Critical research has documented the stabilizing effect that a church—sponsored school can exert on a community. For some it's a sign of the church's continuing commitment to the area that the congregation has served for as long as a century. For some parents it's the one place in a community where they feel secure about the safety of their children. They believe their children will learn. They trust the local Lutheran school; one reason for that trust is that one person they see on the school premises is a pastor who is a symbol of care, responsibility, and commitment.

## **Pastors Are Affirmed**

It's not surprising therefore that children of the school, irrespective of their actual church membership or non-membership, eagerly point to the school pastor whom they happen to encounter in the neighborhood grocery store and proclaim to all within shouting distance, "There's my pastor!"

A Lutheran school board was having a serious discussion on how to meet the challenge of keeping its school open in its economically depressed neighborhood. Without outside prompting one board member spoke up, "We must keep this school open. When I brought Jose here it was the first time I ever met Pastor Donnally. He led me to Christ." Within minutes two other board members shared a similar witness. They had been attracted by the good reputation of the school. Soon, however, they met the pastor. Through the ministry of the pastor they had all joined the church and were active congregational leaders. Each of them credited the pastor's personal interest as a key ingredient.

Administrators and teachers in Lutheran schools speak warmly of their collegial relationship with their pastor. They affirm their pastor for the care, interest, and support that is provided to staff and to school families. All of this makes it apparent that pastors of congregations with schools have an unusual support base of fellow workers, parents, and children.

## **The Costs of Falling Short Are High**

### **Not In This Place**

The opportunities for joyful, satisfying pastoral ministries described above are not just hallucinations. They are real. Equally real are the missed opportunities, the tensions, the disappointments, and the bitterness. Some pastors rue the day they accepted a call to a school congregation. Others speak with considerable pain about how the preschool is their biggest problem. School-related issues sap almost all the energies of some pastors. In other situations, pastors have chosen to almost ignore the school. "Let the school people run the school; I'll work with the congregation," is the sad solution of some. When the pastor's relationship with the school isn't working everybody loses. The pastor is frustrated. The school staff becomes critical of the pastoral ministry. Children and their parents act as though there's no connection with the congregation or its pastor. Sometimes, regrettably, open warfare erupts. The "we against them" attitude takes over. The pastor is accused of being anti-school. Personal and professional lives are embittered. Even the general public notices and the pastor-school hostility is sensed and reacted to negatively by the very people whom the school had sought to draw into the fellowship of the church.

Everybody loses—the pastor, the principal or director, the staff—and especially the children for whom the school experience could have been such a blessing.

It is the purpose of this resource to examine some basic concepts, positive understandings, and helpful models for a pastor's relationship with the congregation's school or early childhood education center for young children. The goal is to provide assistance, especially to the school's two main leaders, the pastor and the principal or director, to enable them to work together with satisfaction and effectiveness so that the mission of the congregation and of the school may be more nearly achieved.



# EXERCISE 1A

## (Pastor-Director-Principal)

### Exercise A

Below are five statements designed to facilitate discussion between a pastor and a principal or director. Each is to have a copy of these five statements. They are to follow the instructions and then spend 30 minutes together discussing how each marked the answers and the reasons for doing so.

**Directions for the pastor:** Read each statement. Mark on the continuum the extent to which you agree with the statement.

**Directions for the principal or director:** Read each statement. Mark on the continuum how you think the pastor will answer the question.

1. One of the joys in my current ministry comes out of the fact that I am pastor of a congregation with a school.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

2. One of the frustrations I experience in this congregation comes from a lack of agreement about exactly what my role as pastor should be in relation to the school.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

3. I would do a more effective job of ministry to the members of this congregation if I didn't have to devote so much time and energy to the school.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

4. I feel that my ministry in this community is enhanced because I'm the pastor of a congregation with a school.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

5. I believe there's a consensus among the school staff, the congregation officers, and myself about what my role as school pastor should be.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

## EXERCISE 1B (Pastor-Director-Principal)

In a second session between pastor and principal or director repeat the process used in Exercise A. There are statements about the principal's or the director's ministry.

1. One of the joys that I get from being a professional educator comes out of the fact that I am the administrator of a Lutheran school.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

2. One of the frustrations I experience in my role as school administrator comes from a lack of agreement as to how I relate to the congregation that operates this school.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

3. I would be a more effective school administrator if I didn't have to spend so much time in activities related to the congregation.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

4. I feel that my contribution to the life of this congregation is enhanced because I'm the administrator of this school.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

5. I believe there's a consensus among the pastor, the school staff, the congregation officers, and myself about what my role as administrator should be.

Disagree Agree  
[-----]  
0 10

## CHAPTER II: A BASIC POINT OF VIEW

Before speaking of the relationship of the pastor to the school it's important that there be a shared understanding of the relationship between the congregation and the school. Consider these three choices:

1. The school is related to the congregation.
2. The school is sponsored by the congregation.
3. The school is a school of the congregation.

Each may be accurate. The last is the most appropriate. A Lutheran school or center is most likely to achieve its potential when it is clearly seen by all as an institution of the congregation. The school is an integral part of the whole mission of the church and of the congregation. The school is as much a function of the congregation's ministry as is the choir, the Sunday school, or the adult membership classes.

The local congregation therefore needs, first of all, to be very clear about its distinctive mission and purpose and then to be intentional about the school being an integral part of that congregation's mission. It is assumed that the mission of the congregation grows out of its understanding of the mission of the whole church. The mission of the church is the mission to which God calls it. This mission has been described in a variety of ways. One Lutheran church developed the following six mission affirmations:

1. The church is God's mission.
2. The church is Christ's mission to the whole world.
3. The church is Christ's mission to the church.
4. The church is Christ's mission to the whole society.
5. The church is Christ's mission to the whole person.
6. The whole church is Christ's mission.

Some reflection and study of these six affirmations could lead to a significant statement about a local congregation's mission. On that basis, then, a mission statement for the congregation's school could also be developed.

Many Lutheran congregations develop their mission statement based on teachings drawn heavily from the book of Acts. Such mission statements frequently include the critical functions of worship, nurture, witness, fellowship, service, and working for justice.

What's critical for the purpose of this study is that, first of all, a congregation be clear about its own mission and secondly that the congregation's school have a mission that is clearly supportive of the congregation's mission.

At different times in its historical development a local congregation will focus on different aspects of the church's mission. Similarly the mission of the school may change from time to time. This is dramatically real for many Lutheran schools. Many of the Lutheran schools established early in the history of the Lutheran church in this country had as a major thrust of their mission the nurturing of the baptized children of God from the local congregation. For many of those congregations, that primary mission focus may no longer be appropriate, as few of the school children are in fact "baptized members of the congregation." A major new mission thrust may now be to bring the Gospel and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to the many students who are not Christians at the time of their enrollment.

A major source of difficulty in Lutheran schools today grows out of the fact that there is not agreement among pastor, school staff, board, and parents about the mission of the school. In the absence of such agreement it is

extremely difficult for any kind of harmonious productive team ministry to take place. On the other hand, research conducted by Don Erickson, a leading investigator of nonpublic education, has found that when school leaders, teachers, and parents are in agreement on the mission of the school the school will most likely be effective and successful. Any pastor who wants to play a vital role in the congregation's school must begin by being clear about the school's mission. Of course, the pastor's understanding of the mission of the school is not just something the pastor thinks up in the privacy of the pastor's office. The pastor's vision is shaped and influenced through dialogue with school leaders.

When the pastor is clear and has secured agreement about the school's mission, then pastoral leadership can be exerted. That leadership is exercised as the pastor lifts up and articulates the mission of the school. The mission of the school is frequently referred to in the pastor's sermon. When the pastor speaks to prospective staff members or to parents making inquiry about church membership or school enrollment the message is clear, consistent, and understandable. This school's mission drives everything it does. This school's mission is supportive of the mission of this congregation. The congregation's mission is supportive of the mission of the school.

Leadership by a pastor for a school is complex. Yet in its simplest terms pastoral leadership in a school can be summarized in three sentences:

1. The pastor's vision for the school is biblically sound, is positive, and can be clearly stated.
2. The pastor is successful in securing alignment, agreement, and consensus for the vision from congregation and school leadership. Or better yet, the pastor identifies key congregation leaders who have a vital view of the school's mission and then "jumps on their bandwagon."
3. The pastor is both a leader (not a boss) and a partner in developing, executing, and evaluating processes and programs which achieve the mission of the school.

Note again the critical importance of agreement and alignment. The pastor's vision dare not be just a private vision. There must be alignment, agreement, and consensus; for the school is a mission of the whole congregation, not just of the pastor, school board, faculty, or parents.

There is no more fundamental issue facing Lutheran schools today than the challenge of developing an appropriate mission statement and then mobilizing all resources for the accomplishment of the mission. The pastor's role in this process is absolutely essential.

## EXERCISE 2A

### (Pastor and School or Center Board)

Each member of the board needs to have a copy of questions 1 & 2. Allow 10 minutes for each person to answer. Then combine all scores to get a group total for each item. Discuss the results.

**NOTE:** This exercise might also be used with the church council, parents or staff.

1. Distribute 50 points according to the relative importance of the following five aspects of the mission of your congregation.

- \_\_\_\_\_ To gather the people of this congregation around the altar and the pulpit for weekly worship and spiritual renewal for ministry in the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be a teaching church in Sunday school, school, Bible classes, adult forums, confirmation instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To reach out with the Gospel in such a way that new members join this body of believers we call our congregation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To experience each other as a unique family of God where we find mutual acceptance, support, and meaning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To identify with the hurts, the aspirations, and the needs of the people within our community and to be a sign that the Kingdom of God has come to this community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

2. Distribute 50 points according to the relative importance of the following five purposes of your congregation's school.

- \_\_\_\_\_ To nurture the faith of the baptized preschool and/or school-aged children of God of our congregation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To provide the highest possible quality of basic age-appropriate education within the context of a Christian community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To reach unchurched children and families of this community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To conduct a total program for children and their families so that an increasing number of them will become members of this congregation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ To respond to the reality that it's almost impossible for people in the community to receive adequate education in the public school or early childhood centers, and to therefore provide a viable alternative for parents who desire quality education for their children.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other

3. Discuss how the congregation members would allocate the 50 points in question 2. The parents of your students? The school staff? Or send these two questions to a random sample of these groups.
4. If your discussion reveals a lack of agreement, plan a strategy that could lead to consensus.
5. The pastor and administrator are essentially in agreement on the purpose of the school.  
True \_\_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER III: EIGHT WORDS TO LEAD BY

An organizational chart showing lines of reporting relationships would be one way of defining a pastor's role in the Lutheran school. Formal organizational designs can be helpful. On the other hand, very few organizations, including ecclesiastical ones, actually function primarily on the basis of the formal organization design as drawn by boxes and solid or dotted lines. Much more important is the informal organization, the process by which decisions are actually made and how influence and control are exercised in reality. Underlying it all is the self-perception of the leader and the manner in which that leadership actually functions. In this chapter we will present eight words to describe ways in which the pastor can model the pastoral role in a school. If these terms actually describe both the pastor's and the school staffs perceptions, then a basis exists for an exceedingly joyful and blessed pastoral ministry.

The eight words are:

Shepherd

Theologian

Servant

Leader

Presence

Advocate

Officiant

Peacemaker

### Shepherd

#### The Call

It's probably true that one of the primary reasons people choose to enter the pastoral ministry is because they want to be shepherds in the image of the Great Shepherd. They want to use Law and Gospel to guide the flock to which the Holy Spirit has called them. Pastors called to congregations with schools or childhood centers have unusual opportunities to carry on this important and rewarding shepherding function. The entire school community is a part of their flock. Faculty and staff, students and their families are all part of the flock that looks to the pastor as their spiritual shepherd.

This ministry of Word and Sacrament begins with the faculty and staff. These school/center leaders are most in need of being led to quiet waters. It's tough being a teacher. Energy is constantly drained. Problems are faced on a daily basis. Decisions affecting children's lives are made almost by the minute. Therefore, these staff members need to be fed spiritually. How fortunate for them if the school pastor is a true shepherd. The shepherd often leads staff devotions. Regular staff Eucharistic services are held. The teachers know that when they have a personal problem, a family crisis, or a difficult decision to make—in each case they can go to their school pastor who will listen, pray, counsel and shepherd them.

What joys await the school pastor in being a shepherd to the children of the school! It takes only a few contacts with children to develop a shepherd-lamb relationship. The small children will quickly want to get

physically close to the pastor. They will tug at the pastor's legs. They will want to finger the stole as they get next to the pastor in the chancel during chapel services. If there is an elementary school, older students, too, want to be acknowledged by the pastor. They will be pleased to assist the pastor as reader or usher at services. When students face a problem at home that they can discuss with no one else, there's always one confidant, one support, one shepherd—their pastor.

In elementary schools with a large proportion of congregation children, the pastor as shepherd will often integrate the congregation's confirmation ministry into the school's religion curriculum and special confirmand-pastor relationships are formed.

A shepherding ministry to school families is another special opportunity for the school pastor. Some parents will stop by the pastor's office after they drop off their children for school. Most Lutheran schools today have children from families who have no church home. To them the school pastor quickly becomes their sole pastor. The school pastor visits in the home, counsels the troubled, baptizes the babies and buries the dead always bringing the presence of the One Great Shepherd.

- A student of a Lutheran school was killed in an automobile accident. In the midst of the unchurched family's anguish, there was a voice of calm and blessed assurance. It came from the pastor.
- A family with four unbaptized children became aware that they needed the ministry of the church. The school pastor became their pastor.
- A school faculty wanted to have inspiring worship at their August orientation workshop. They turned to their pastor knowing the Word would be spoken and the Sacrament administered.
- A director retires after 30 years in a Lutheran preschool and at the farewell banquet announces, "I praise God that throughout my teaching ministry I could go to my pastors and know they would feed me like a shepherd."

### **Tension Points**

But it isn't easy being a pastor-shepherd to the school community. First is the reality of time limitation. The pastor is shepherd of a flock larger than just the school flock. The demands of the pastor's time often make it impossible to be the kind of shepherd to the school community that is optimally desirable. Let's face it, too. Sometimes the administrator and/or staff are more like the lost sheep than the cooperative ninety and nine. In fact, some school staffs are incredibly resistant to the Pastor as shepherd. They don't even show up at Sunday worship with the regularity one would hope for. When the pastor, as shepherd, leads a staff devotion, the teachers keep glancing at their watches and one even corrects papers during the homily!

Then there's the question of who is the pastor of those staff members who belong to congregations other than the school congregation? Or how does the pastor relate as shepherd to enrolled children and families who are members of other Christian churches and have their "own" pastor?

Sometimes pastors bring the problems on themselves, especially when they confuse their shepherding function with the school administration function. In most Lutheran schools the pastor is not the top school administrator. That's the principal or director. If a pastor cannot distinguish the shepherding function from the administration function, difficulties are sure to result. A well-meaning pastor forgot this. He thought he knew how desks should be arranged in the eighth grade classroom. so he went in over the weekend and arranged them that way. When the teacher arrived on Monday morning and saw what had happened it was extremely difficult for her to see her pastor as guiding shepherd.

It is essential, therefore, that the pastor's shepherding function not be confused with that of school administration. That issue is further discussed in Chapter V.

## EXERCISE 3A

### (Pastor alone)

The following stories are true.

- Reflect upon the likelihood of them being true in your church school/center.
  - After reflection, select a specific action to be taken and schedule that action for a specific date in your calendar.
  - This exercise is not complete until a specific planned action has been actually scheduled in your calendar.
1. A pastor reports: "I'd like to be a pastor to the school staff but they make it almost impossible. A third of the staff has 'their own pastor' because they are not members of our congregation. Those who are members here come about one Sunday out of three. I invite the teachers to MY Bible Class but they very seldom show up."
  2. After six months of successful chemotherapy a director reports, "Not once did my pastor make a pastoral call on me at the hospital or at my home. Oh, he visited and we talked about school matters. But there were no prayers, no scriptures, no communion."
  3. A pastor-principal team reports: "We really don't provide much spiritual support for each other. We're both very busy. Our time together is very much centered around business matters. Somehow mutual spiritual support is kind of taken for granted, but little acted upon with intentionality."
  4. A pastor writes, "Now that I'm in a congregation without a preschool I really miss being the pastor of the entire school family. I miss the morning devotions with the staff, the festival Eucharistic services with the whole school family. And I so much miss the little ones cheerily greeting me with their warm "Hello, pastor!"



## **Theologian**

### **The Call**

Lutheran schools need to teach and practice a theology that is truly reflective of the Christian faith as expressed and experienced by Lutherans. The person to ensure that this happens is the pastor. The pastor is the principal theologian of every Lutheran congregation school.

As chief theologian, the pastor ensures that the Lutheran school is not moralistic or fundamentalist, as is, unfortunately, the case with some church schools. The pastor as theologian provides the leadership necessary to prevent a theology of glory replacing a theology of the cross. As a Lutheran theologian the pastor helps the school staff properly distinguish Law and Gospel, helping teachers understand that the power for changed lives comes from the Gospel. As a theologian, the pastor serves on the school's religion curriculum committee and participates in the selection of teaching materials that reflect sound doctrine, genuine Christian nurture, and are age—appropriate.

The pastor consults and plans with the director/principal to provide in-service growth opportunities in theological studies for the school staff. These opportunities include inviting a seminary professor or church college theology professor for a presentation to the staff. The pastor can suggest theology books for the school staff to read. There may be a conference for pastors which teachers would be well advised to attend. Some areas have academic programs similar to a Lutheran House of Studies. All Lutheran school systems have processes by which a teacher can become certified by the church as an Associate in Ministry, commissioned teacher or something similar. The training for these designations always includes a theological study component. The pastor can be a strong advocate for this training.

The Lutheran pastor, as the school's theologian, is a resource for the endless religious questions children ask their teachers. Blessed is the pastor who frequently opens the office door to a school pupil who enters saying, "My teacher said that maybe you could help me with this question."

Blessed is the Lutheran school that has a pastor who as chief theologian works with the school administrator in putting together a planned annual program of spiritual growth for the faculty. While this is true of any Lutheran school it is especially true of Lutheran schools/centers where most of the faculty have had little theological training.

### **Tension Points**

It's often very difficult for the theological convictions of the pastor to be actualized in the day-to-day life of the school/center. The Lutheran pastor's rock bottom conviction that we are justified by grace through faith is constantly challenged by parents whose very purpose for sending their children to a Lutheran school/center is the hope that the children will be taught morals which will make their children good, and certainly immunize them against messing around with drugs and sex. Or parents enroll their children out of racist motives that the church must address.

The pastor's very best intentions of teaching theology to the staff may meet incredible resistance. Teachers may see no personal need for theological growth. The teachers' previous experiences in the formal study of religion may have been boring and not helpful. Courses at the nearby secular university may bring salary increments; the pastor's theological instruction may not. Teachers may hear invitations for growth in theology as a not so subtle message that there's something wrong with their faith or that only Lutherans can really do theology right. Additional theological study under the pastor then may be experienced as a put-down rather than as one more way to be built up.

Yet the task remains. The Lutheran school enterprise is at its heart a theological enterprise. The pastor is usually the chief theologian in residence. When the pastor actively provides theological leadership to the school, the church that meets in school classrooms flourishes.

## EXERCISE 3B

### (Pastor and School Staff)

A pastor and school staff identified seven ways in which the pastor can serve as the school's theologian. They are listed below. It has been decided that in the current school year only three of these activities will be carried out.

Engage the pastor and the staff in a process through which they will arrive at a consensus on which three activities will be undertaken.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Over the course of a year the pastor will conduct four one-hour sessions with the entire staff. The four topics are: Reformation, Epiphany, Lent, Pentecost.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The pastor will be the principal resource for a one-day workshop on "Law and Gospel in the Lutheran classroom." Each staff member will be required to write a description of a classroom encounter. The discussion will be on how Law and Gospel apply to that situation.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The pastor annually teaches a six-session course on Lutheran doctrine and practice as a pre-membership class. Those staff members who are not Lutheran are asked to attend the classes—not to join the church—but to gain deeper insights into Lutheran teachings and practice.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The pastor is available sometime every Tuesday to answer theological questions of children and staff.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The pastor is asked to be a fully participating member of the school's spiritual life committee that has two main agenda items: the school's/center's religion curriculum and the spiritual nurture of school staff.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The pastor is asked to arrange for and be the principal speaker for a special breakfast meeting in October. Invited to attend this meeting are the pastors of all congregations that have children enrolled in the Lutheran school. The purpose is to explain to these pastors how "religion" is taught in the Lutheran school.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The pastor is requested to lead a Bible study at the fall term teachers orientation session. The basis of the study is Paul's paradigm of the Church as the body of Christ. Specific application is to be made to the place of the school and school staff in this image.

## **Servant**

### **The Call**

Being the pastor of a Lutheran congregation with a preschool or school provides the pastor with an exceptional opportunity for greatness! In the unique hierarchy of God those are greatest who serve the little ones. Lutheran schools exist to serve children. Lutheran pastors are their servants. It is therefore critical that the pastor be very clear that the school and all related personnel exist for the sake of the children, not the other way around. Critical to the call for the pastor to be servant is the call to be a listener. Any pastor who comes into a situation assuming no need to listen or no need to gain new insights will surely fail to become an effective leader. The pastor of the school listens—to the Word, to the staff, to the parents and the children. By keeping in touch with the school family's hopes and hurts, goals and programs, joys and conflicts the pastor is in a unique position to respond in service.

The pastor as servant believes in shared wisdom, taking very seriously personal insights, ideas, suggestions and knowledge. This expertise is then shared with the group—not from an "I know; you don't know" stance, but as a contribution to add to the accumulated wisdom of the group. However, shared wisdom flows both ways. The pastor is open to the wisdom of children, parents, and staff.

The pastor as servant believes in shared responsibility. The prevailing questions are, "How can I be helpful? What role do you want me to play? How can I be supportive?" When pastors share in the processes of identifying potential staff, recruiting students, improving relations with parents, securing funding, then the servanthood posture leads to greatness.

### **Tension Points**

Pupils usually do not see the pastor as servant. The small ones may even see the pastor as God. This is but one source of unusual pastoral ego inflation in a Lutheran school. Parents, too, sometimes see the pastor as the ultimate authority, the ultimate problem solver and a miracle worker. It requires a definite servant mentality to avoid getting hooked into this super person image.

On the other hand, being the pastor of a school can be hard on the pastor's ego, too. This is especially true if the school is excellent and the school administrator is a capable leader. It's the administrator and the teachers who receive the attention, accolades, and community recognition. In urban settings the school is sometimes seen as "more successful" than the congregation. It's the school that has the good reputation in the community, the growing enrollment, and the financial resources to do those extra things. In such cases it requires both a healthy self-concept and a strong commitment to a servanthood style of ministry that will allow the pastor to serve with joy and satisfaction.

But the greatest threat to a pastor's servanthood style is the belief system that governance in the church (and especially in the local congregation) is essentially hierarchical. If the pastor's primary concept of congregational leadership is described by an organization chart with the pastor in the top box, then servanthood becomes exceedingly difficult. More appropriate is the inverted organizational chart in which the pastor sees the pastor's role as being servant of all, equipping them for ministry.

## **EXERCISE 3C**

### **(School/Center Staff)**

Each of these three exercises is suitable for a devotion or for the opening meditation of a staff meeting.

1. Read and meditate on 1 Corinthians 12.  
What implications does this have for teachers, administrators, and pastors?
2. Use Romans 12 as the basis for a faculty Bible study.  
Ask two questions:
  - \* In what ways is our life together in school and church a living example of what this chapter calls us to be?.
  - \* Where are we falling short?
3. Read Mark 10:32-45. Have each participant underline one phrase or verse that seems directed especially to your local situation. Have each person tell what was underlined and why that section was selected.

# Leader

## The Call

The call to be a pastor is a call to be a leader. But what does it mean to be a leader? On a very functional level the answer is relatively simple: A leader is one whose words and actions influence others to—think and act in the manner desired by the leader. When this functional definition is applied to a pastoral leader it becomes obvious that more is needed than just the title of leader. What's needed is actual leadership. Pastoral leadership in a school involves at least the following eight components:

1. The leader has a vision. The leader sees what others cannot see. The leader looks at any situation and sees how it could be improved. The leader knows that an organization is never static. It is either progressing or regressing. It is the function of the leader to see that it progresses, to dream the impossible dream, to see opportunities not yet explored, to see the possibilities not yet realized.  
  
This vision for a school can be concrete and stated in terms of new facilities, higher enrollment, and more fiscal resources. Or the dream may be more qualitative such as, "Everyone connected with our school will feel like it's family." Or "This school's prevailing characteristic will be that the Gospel is alive in this place." Or "This school will be a sign to the community that persons of all ethnic backgrounds can grow together in mutual love and respect." Or simply "We will by all standards be the best school in this district." Or "Our school is a school where everyone every day experiences the Master's touch." The leader's vision is highly personal, but it doesn't just grow out of personal reflection. The pastor's dream (vision) for the school is also shaped by the demands of the Word as it intersects this time and place. The dream of the pastor will be shaped by the understanding of what the parents want and the community needs. The dream is not just a wild pipe dream, but takes seriously the availability of resources needed to turn the dream into reality. Of course, the pastor must not only be a good leader, but must be a leader for good. The vision therefore must be called forth out of a highly ethical context and must be congruent with the biblical call to the true, the good, and the lovely.
2. The leader's vision is a vision that is consistently and constantly communicated. Everybody knows what the leader's dream is because he or she talks about it all the time. Ask the administrator or the board chair, or a parent what the pastor's vision for the school or center is and they can tell you. This is because the second characteristic of a leader is that the vision is shouted from the rooftops and the pages of church publications, from the lectern in educational buildings and the pulpit in the sanctuary.
3. Yet leadership is more than dreams and communication. It's alignment, agreement, consensus. That means that the leader is effective in having others say, "Yes, that's my dream, too. I, too, want what my pastor wants. The vision becomes one overall shared vision. It's the pastor's willingness to say of the administrator's dream, "That's my goal, too." It's also the pastor's ability to jump on another's bandwagon and unite the vision of a number of supportive groups
4. Vision, communication, alignment ... strategies. The genuine leader knows it takes people and programs, activities and tasks to get the job done. The pastor is a program planner. The school is always a part of the pastor's thinking and dreaming as priorities are set, budgets are determined, and time schedules prepared. The leader involves others in setting goals, developing strategies, and initiating the problem-solving process. The leader empowers others for their tasks in carrying out the mission. The leader validates the functions of staff and board. The leader brings out the best in people.
5. Getting the job done requires a leader, not a boss. A boss gives orders, a leader provides a model. A boss exercises control, a leader exerts influence. A boss relies on rewards and punishment, on authority and status; a leader relies on shared commitment.

6. A leader knows how to use power—not the power of authoritarianism, but the power of persuasion, of meaning, of sacrifice, of love, and of the spirit of God. A leader knows the power of prayer, of Christian challenge, of shared sacrifice for a common purpose.
7. A leader is not afraid to evaluate and to be evaluated. Evaluation simply becomes one more technique to develop new dreams, to create a fresh vision, and to start all over again.
8. A leader is a servant. The words of Jesus in Mark 10:32:45 still apply. To be a leader requires one to be a servant.

This kind of pastoral leadership simply will not be ignored. The school board, the congregation, the staff and the parents all will be eager to be part of a magnificent obsession which controls a local Lutheran early childhood center or school. One source of that inspired vision may well be the pastor.

### **Tension Points**

The most efficient leadership is often a dictatorship. Effective leadership, however, is shared leadership. Shared leadership is difficult to put into practice. This is especially true in relation to pastor and director/principal roles. Too often local schools and congregations have not adequately defined the respective roles of the pastor, the administrator, and the board.

Other tensions arise over lack of agreement on three terms: authority, responsibility, and accountability. That's why pastor and administrator must get agreement on "Whose responsibility is this?" "Is there enough authority to carry out the responsibility?" "Who is finally accountable for this function?" Remember, too, that authority and responsibility can be delegated, but accountability cannot.

We may as well put it in writing: Sometimes the problem is that the administrator is simply not a leader and the pastor has been unable to empower him or her to exercise effective leadership. And it may be the other way around. The pastor may have the title of leader, but is, in fact, no leader because nothing positive happens. In such a situation the one who refuses to lead must be empowered to lead—or be asked to leave—or the church/school will flounder.

## EXERCISE 3D (Pastor-Administrator)

The pastor reads the following three statements, write answers to each of the questions and discusses these written responses with the director/principal.

In their book, *Leaders*, Bennis and Nanus survey ninety successful leaders. All ninety had an agenda: an unparalleled concern with outcomes. What are some outcomes of the Lutheran school which are part of the vision of the pastor?

In an article in Alban Institute's *Action Information* titled, "Taking Charge as a Pastoral Leader," Donald R. Pederson writes: "The first task of pastoral leadership today is to create a vision. How do you create a vision? You begin by dreaming! You study, you think, you assess, you evaluate, you gather data. You remember that God has been there before you. God walks alongside you. God was at the beginning and God will be there at the end. What would God like done through you, with your skills, your energy?" Answer that question as it relates to your school.

In their popular book, *The One Minute Manager*, Blanchard and Johnson call for three essential tasks of a leader. The leader has "one minute goals"-goals that can easily be written on less than a full sheet of paper. The leader often uses "one minute praises": that is, regular, short, sincere, touch-reinforced words of acknowledgement and appreciation. The leader regularly uses "one minute reprimands": that is, regular, face—to—face, honestly felt, non-blamefully spoken descriptions of dysfunctional behavior.

Give an example for each of these three behaviors as they might apply to the pastor as leader of a school. Follow this format:

1. One thing I as pastor of this school plan to do next week is:

2. One behavior of the administrator which I want to praise him/her for next week is:

3. One unacceptable behavior of a staff member which I want to confront next week is:

## **Presence**

### **The Call**

The incarnation of God in Christ is one of the most wonderful mysteries of the Christian faith. In the midst of the mystery, the message is clear. God chose to dwell in human flesh among God's people—a godly example for any pastor who wants to be a school pastor. The calling to those who are designated pastor is a calling to be in the midst of the people, to simply be there, to be present, visible and available.

The specific places and situations which call for the school pastor's presence may be obvious, but some examples follow. The pastor will, of course, be present for services at the beginning and closing of the school year. The pastor will be present for at least some of the school board meetings, school award ceremonies, meetings with school parents, some school programs for parents, athletic events, and some staff meetings.

The school pastor will often just be around—highly visible in the school halls, on the playground. A pastor just dropping by in the classroom, especially in the preschool should be a cause for joy—not alarm.

One of the many things that distinguish a Lutheran school from a public school is that a pastor is readily available. The pastor is available for counsel, for introduction to new parents, for some of those impromptu birthday parties for children and staff. It's a big thing for a first grader to tell her dad that for her birthday party at school she needs 25 treats—22 for classmates, one for the teacher, one for the principal and one for "our pastor!"

This availability extends to parents who have no other pastor. It's no news to pastors that our schools are crowded with children from families in crises. Often the sole spiritual counselor whom these families trust is the pastor of the school. This crisis counseling by the pastor is not only helpful in dealing with specific problems, but also becomes the first step for the family to join the church, to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Savior.

### **Tension Points**

There are only twenty-four hours in a day—even in the day of a pastor. The pastor may well have the desire to spend a great deal of time with the school, but faces the reality that the school or center is but one of many legitimate avenues of time-consuming ministry.

Unfortunately, some teachers and administrators feel insecure about themselves and their teaching or care giving. They inappropriately, yet possibly understandably, become nervous if the pastor is around a lot—and almost panic if the pastor steps into the classroom unannounced, or even as previously agreed upon. Honest interest and concern on the part of the pastor may be misinterpreted as pastoral snooping.

All pastors, and especially urban pastors, struggle with the demands and the opportunities to spend hours and hours with school families caught up in the crises of divorce, drugs, unemployment, illness, housing, child-parent conflicts. Pastors then need to assert that their call is to the public ministry and not primarily to private counseling.

We also need to face the fact that some directors/principals and teachers see this matter of the pastor's presence as a one-way street. These staff persons want the pastor present at all kinds of school activities, yet these same teachers are themselves not willing to be present for any of the congregation's non-school-related events. When the pastor asks school staff to be available for a stewardship effort, help for a Sunday school picnic, etc. too often the response of the teachers is, "We gave in the classroom!"



### **EXERCISE 3E**

#### **(Pastor, Secretary, Staff)**

Arrange to keep a one-month time log.

- ⇒ Record how much time the pastor spends on school or ECE center matters
  
- ⇒ Identify the school events at which the pastor was present
  
- ⇒ Include time spent on the telephone or for private consultation with members of the school family
  
- ⇒ During the same time period keep a log on the school staffs presence in specific non-school congregation activities
  
- ⇒ Study the results, not to play "Gotcha!" but for thanksgiving and opportunity for one minute planning, one minute praising and one minute reprimanding.

## Advocate

### The Call

The pastor who believes in the Lutheran school is an articulate advocate for the school/center. This advocacy begins within the congregation. Members hear advocacy for the school ministry from the pulpit. They read of it in the pastor's monthly or annual reports. Everybody on the budget committee knows that the pastor is going to be an advocate for adequate professional teacher and other staff salaries.

The pastor extends advocacy for the congregation's school when the pastor is in the community, at a service club, at the hospital, on home visits. Simple yet important advocacy vehicles are church stationery and signs. They identify church and school. They name both pastor and principal/director. The Sunday church bulletin doesn't appear unless the school is noted in some way.

Yet, once again, it's a two-way flow. Like it or not, sometimes the pastor also has to be an advocate to the school for the total congregational ministry. Sometimes the school family needs to be reminded that the congregation has ministries other than the school. Music programs, the world-wide mission of the church, care for the elderly, the Sunday school all require the advocacy of the pastor who must carry that advocacy to the school community.

Finally, the pastor is an advocate for children. It's the pastor who speaks up for the children who may appear powerless. It's the pastor who reminds all that the school exists for the kids, not kids for the school. It's the pastor who really believes the Master's teaching about the faith of a little one, a cup of water to a thirsty child, and the ultimate worth of each small one.

### Tension Points

The advocacy of a pastor for the school must be authentic. It can be that some unfortunate things happen in the center/school that may make it very difficult for the pastor to be a congruent advocate. A key question a pastor has a right to ask is, "Would I want my own child to be enrolled in this school?" When the answer is "Yes, by all means!" then it's easy to be an advocate,

Some people see pastors who advocate their school as being *ipso facto* against the public school. The argument is false, of course, yet it is an issue school pastors must be ready to defend. The pastor demonstrates an interest in and support of the public schools by being involved with them and working for public school improvement and by acknowledging the important ministry of congregation members who are public school teachers.

Even some church leaders have tried to stifle advocacy of church schools by pastors with the argument that congregations with schools do less for benevolences or global mission. The facts refute this argument, yet the mere accusation may dampen the pastor's public advocacy of his congregation's school.

Some congregation members who choose not to send their children to the Lutheran school become upset when their pastor lifts up the value of the Christian day school. The pastor needs to be sensitive to the fact that God does indeed call for Christian parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. However, God patently does not designate the Lutheran school as the required vehicle for such nurture.

One of the most powerful witnesses to the possibilities of a Lutheran school is the witness of a pastor who supports the school even when it affects the pastor's pocket book. Praise God for those pastors whose own income might be restricted because the congregation supports a school and who nevertheless are advocates for the school. Yet the tension point remains. It seems to be a universal trait of the human species to believe that the salary of any one who makes a higher salary than one's own is probably overpaid. So it's tough for a pastor to be an advocate for higher school staff salaries, especially if those salaries nearly match or in a case or two actually and legitimately exceed the pastor's.

### **EXERCISE 3F**

#### **(Pastor, Administrator)**

How wholeheartedly can you, as pastor, support the present practices and standards of your center/school?

Score on a continuum of 1 to 10 using the following benchmarks:

10 -This is something I feel good about and can speak of very positively.

5 - This is something that I think is okay, but really does need some improvement before I can speak highly of it.

0 - This is a current significant weakness. It really needs to be improved a great deal before I can speak highly of it.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Our staff really cares about kids.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We feel like we are all one family.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The presence of Christ is a felt reality in our school.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Our school has high standards.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Our teachers work together as a team.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The staff is an advocate for total congregation ministry.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Salaries paid the pastor and salaries paid school staff seem to be equally fair.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelistic outreach is a strong characteristic of our school.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Christian nurture of the baptized children of God in our school is age-appropriate and is done well.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ The use of Christian liturgy and music in our school is satisfactory.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Our school is free of racism.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Our school is not sexist.

Talk to the administrator and tell him/her of your appreciation for each item scoring 7 points or above.

Talk to your administrator and arrange for a meeting to discuss any item scoring below 5.  
The purpose of the meeting is to plan strategies to get that rating raised.

(Another option is to also invite the administrator, school board, and congregation council to complete and discuss the results of taking this instrument.)

## **Officiant**

### **The Call**

The Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler once said that the successful pastor is a servant of Christ who is able to preach with power, teach with competence, counsel with compassion and officiate with reverence. It's this last requirement: "officiate with reverence" that is another special opportunity for the pastor of a congregation with a school or early childhood center.

One of the distinctive marks of a Lutheran school is that the school family worships regularly. Some schools have a total school liturgy every day. Others have worship in the individual classrooms on four days and joint worship once during the school week. Some, especially preschools, have formal group worship experiences much less frequently. In each case, the pastor plays a critical role. It is the pastor who models reverence along with fidelity to the Gospel and a respect for the Lutheran worship heritage.

Children's worship can be extremely influential in shaping their perceptions of God and the human response. That is another reason why worship in a Lutheran school dare not deteriorate into semi-religious ditties and little stories of how Jesus is like a teddy bear! What's needed is a pastor who understands children and their spiritual development, understands worship and is able to officiate with reverence.

In the Lutheran ritual for the baptism of infants, sponsors pledge to bring children to services in God's house, teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments. All of these nurturing functions can be related to the worship life of the Lutheran school. The key leader for this worship life is the pastor.

There's a new role for the pastor as officiant that is emerging especially in the inner city schools of the Lutheran church. Life in the city is often fragmented, hectic, quick-paced and always changing. In that setting the mere presence on the street or playground of a pastor with clerical collar is sometimes a reassuring message to the residents. Further, the consistency of certain set, repeated rituals of worship, serve to give the worshippers a deepened sense of a God who is a God of order and constancy in an otherwise random world.

### **Tension Points**

School pastors who have a unique opportunity for regular, possibly daily, liturgies with the school family face some of the same tensions as their non-school colleagues. How does one strike a balance between our centuries old Lutheran liturgical heritage and the newer tastes, desires, and practices of twenty-first century believers? And how does all of this relate to children's worship? How can it be age appropriate?

Since corporate worship is a daily activity at some Lutheran schools the pastor as worship leader needs to work extra hard lest worship on the one hand become a dead formality, a vain repetition or on the other hand an ad hoc series of liturgies conducted in a casual off-hand sort of way.

Then, too; there's the question of fostering Lutheran distinctiveness when the worshipping group is very pluralistic. Another issue: Some pastors have become strong advocates for early communion with seasonal Eucharistic festivals for the school community. Others decide to never offer the sacrament in a school service.

At what age should children first receive communion? Which of these two approaches is more appropriate?

Some pastors don't have an educational background that helps them understand the cognitive development stages of children or the stages of faith development. This affects the worship they plan. They might feel reluctant to ask the more knowledgeable center or school staff for information, support or constructive evaluations.

## EXERCISE 3G

### (Staff)

Listed below are twenty-two worship options for a Lutheran school/center. Use this list as a basis for total staff discussion. Have each staff member code each item. When all have completed their codings discuss the results beginning with items coded C.

It's critical that the pastor be involved in this discussion. Use the following code:

- a: We do this at our school/center.
- b: It would not be appropriate to do this at our school.
- c: We are not now doing this, but we should consider it.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Conduct total school liturgy every day.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Have students lead chapel services.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Conduct special festival Eucharist during the school day.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Baptize children at school chapel service.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Have students do chancel drama.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Have students recite portions of the Small Catechism at school worship services.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Use all or portions of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* or *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* orders of service.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Teach children to chant the Psalms.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Have children write the chapel service prayers.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Use object lessons as part of worship.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Be very intentional about teaching children the church year and the liturgical colors appropriate for each season/festival.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Celebrate children's baptismal anniversaries.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a non-Lutheran speaker during Christian Unity Week.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Have students provide vocal or musical solos.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Have teachers preach the homily.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Use older students as big sisters/brothers to sit with smaller children during worship.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a year-long worship plan with a central theme.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide a guided tour of the sanctuary to all new students.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Conduct occasional school services of healing.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Worship outdoors.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ Provide each classroom with its own worship center.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ Invite as preachers the pastors from other parishes which have children in your school.

## **Peacemaker**

### **The Call**

"Blessed are the peacemakers," promised our Lord. Every Lutheran school needs peacemakers. Often the pastor becomes the lead peacemaker. This is true first of all because it is the pastor who keeps stressing that Jesus Christ is our peace. The pastor's message is constant, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." God's seeking love reaches out to every member of the school family offering the peace of forgiveness from God.

The pastor may also be called upon to be an agent for peace between people or groups of people. Student against student fights do break out in Lutheran schools, too. Angry parents are ready to and do scream. They threaten and they file lawsuits. Teachers get angry with other teachers and fight with one another. The pastor is often the best possible person to help affect resolution and reconciliation. The pastor is sometimes in the position as the person to whom higher appeal can be made. The pastor may not have punitive powers and so is more qualified to deal with the issues. Hopefully the pastor has listening, conflict resolution, and third party facilitation skills. However, the emphasis in this brief paragraph is to highlight the pastor's role as spiritual leader for peacemaking. It is the pastor who will teach the Law and point out the sin. It is the pastor who will apply the Gospel and speak the word of forgiveness.

There must be clear agreement between pastor and administrator on the appropriate course of action for upset people. They simply cannot do an end run around the administrator and bring their complaint directly to the pastor. The pastor must insist that upset school persons must first discuss their grievance with the administrator.

In some situations the Lutheran preschool or elementary school and its constituents will be on the leading edge of bringing together various social, ethnic, and racial groups. When that happens values collisions occur. Emotions flare. Accusations are made. Tempers blaze. Threats are uttered—shouted! Blessed indeed is the school which is blessed with a peacemaker. And peacemaking does not mean bowing before the loudest voices, or knuckling under just to keep the lid on. Peacemaking by the pastor may well call upon the pastor to take sides, to stand for something and not just meekly retreat in the interest of preserving a false peace. Peacemaking in a school community is hard work. The strategies for doing that are too complex to detail here, but the point needs to be made. Pastors of schools cannot retreat from conflict. They must identify the issues, work toward solutions and finally claim the wonderful title of peacemaker.

### **Tension Points**

Some people confuse being a peacemaker with being a referee. Then they begin to see the pastor as judge. So the pastor ends up being the final arbiter on issues as diverse as how to punish a child and what color classrooms are to be painted. If pastors place themselves in the position of referee they will soon be in trouble, for not all calls go in favor of the appellant.

Being a peacemaker is not the same as being a disciplinarian. It is the judgment of this writer that the pastor should not be the school's chief disciplinarian.

Peacemaking is difficult and dangerous work. To be effective at it requires more than love, more than good intentions. Specific conflict intervention and resolution skills are required. Not all pastors possess these skills. Unfortunately it happens from time to time that the pastor is at the center of the conflict. Sometimes ego needs, weak self-concept, underdeveloped communication skills, desire for power, self-pity, past hurts, etc. get a school pastor into conflicts from which extradition can be accomplished, if at all, only with outside assistance.

## **EXERCISE 3H**

### **(Pastor alone)**

This is a personal reflection exercise for the pastor. It does not require any other person's involvement. It does require about twenty minutes of reflection time.

1. Reflect upon a conflict in which you were involved as a child.  
What did you do to deal with the conflict?  
Would you use the same method today?
  
2. Our reaction in conflict situations tends to be related to our theology and our belief about God, self, justification, church.  
How is your theology reflected in your ways of dealing with conflict?
  
3. Persons most often in conflict are often persons of low self-esteem.  
What does this say about the way you approach conflict?
  
4. To what kinds of situations in my current ministry am I most often called upon to be a peacemaker?  
How are you doing?
  
5. Is there some one with whom you should sit down and discuss your current activities as a peacemaker?
  
6. How can you educate others to use Matthew 18 as a model for interpersonal conflict resolution?

## CHAPTER IV: TEAM MINISTRY

**Note:** The subject of team ministry deserves a much wider treatment than can be given it in this brief monograph. The heart of a good team ministry model can be derived from the Team Self-Assessment Form at the end of this chapter. See also other links on the Wheat Ridge Ministries Web site.

### The Call

The calling to team ministry is one of the great attractions for the pastor of a congregation with a school. The school staff provides a group of others who are there to support the shared ministry of the congregation. These colleagues are potentially persons with whom one can have daily prayer, weekly planning sessions, regular shared planning—a source of affirmation, partnership, and good times.

The team ministry with the school director/principal (assuming that the pastor and the administrator are not the same person) holds special potential. When pastor and principal share the same sense of mission, communicate the same vision, plan together for effective programming, and support one another privately and publicly, then the true meaning of partnership is actualized.

Team ministry in a Lutheran congregation with a school is more than just professional partnership. Team ministry involves the Church, the people of God. Neither pastor nor administrator nor teacher is in private practice, but always a part of the church team that includes all staff members, board persons, and congregation council. It's the body of Christ functioning as a single unit.

### Tension Points

Team ministry doesn't always happen. It's very easy for the school leadership and the pastoral leadership to just go their separate ways. Sometimes open conflict erupts over differing understandings of the mission, of opposing points of view of the role of the pastor in the school, or over such mundane matters as size of office or assignment of parking spaces.

School administrators don't always have an adequate understanding of all that's involved in being a pastor and therefore have unrealistic expectations of the amount of time that a pastor can spend in the school/center. Or the administrator may go in the opposite direction and actually prefer for the pastor to not get involved in school matters at all. Pastors receive little training and often have little experience in anything other than "one-person offices" and so they may have difficulty with shared leadership. Other pastors may play "organizational yo-yo" with their administrators. They make an assignment or request an action, but before the administrator acts they jump in and yank back the assignment or responsibility. Almost all of the tension points listed in Chapter III impact upon effective team ministry.



## CHURCH AND SCHOOL STAFF Team Ministry Assessment and Planning Instrument\*

This exercise is designed for:

- the pastor and principal or director
- all church and school administrators
- the entire staff of the school
- or the entire staff of the church and school

Each person participating in this exercise should have a copy of the assessment and planning instrument. By sitting down and talking about it, attempt to get one consensus score for each category.

The following scoring should be used by the participants:

- Level 1: 0 points
- Level 2: 1 point
- Level 3: 5 points
- Level4: 10 points

Select the one level that best describes how your team currently functions and write that score in the box provided for each category.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL3	LEVEL4	SCORE
<b><i>Co-workers, but not a team</i></b>	<b><i>Basic Team</i></b>	<b><i>A Good Team</i></b>	<b><i>An Excellent Team</i></b>	
<b>TEAM MEETS</b> Irregularly, not on any schedule	<b>TEAM MEETS</b> Administrators meet every week, entire staff meets monthly	<b>TEAM MEETS</b> With printed agenda, minutes according to schedule of level2	<b>TEAM MEETS</b> All have access to agenda, get involved in decision making according to schedule of level2	
<b>TEAM PRAYS</b> Individually, but not as a team	<b>TEAM PRAYS</b> Together at meetings	<b>TEAM PRAYS</b> Daily, part of staff devotions	<b>TEAM PRAYS</b> Together daily, also have personal prayer and praise lists	
<b>TEAM PLANS</b> Individuals plan, but not together	<b>TEAM PLANS</b> Individuals plan with team in mind	<b>TEAM PLANS</b> Are developed privately by leaders, then shared with all	<b>TEAM PLANS</b> Together, then works the plan together as team members	

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL3	LEVEL4	SCORE
<i>Co-workers, but not a team</i>	<i>Basic Team</i>	<i>A Good Team</i>	<i>An Excellent Team</i>	
<b>TEAM STUDIES</b>  Individually about matters applying to work	<b>TEAM STUDIES</b>  Individually about matters relating to work of the team	<b>TEAM STUDIES</b>  Individually, learnings are shared with the team	<b>TEAM STUDIES</b>  Together, applies learnings, studies God's Word together	
<b>TEAM COMMUNICATES</b>  Briefly on specific needs, only as ad hoc opportunities arise	<b>TEAM COMMUNICATES</b>  By telephone, by written memo, plus as described in level 1	<b>TEAM COMMUNICATES</b>  Person to person, reports and minutes are shared, questions and answers flow both ways, levels 1 & 2 continue	<b>TEAM COMMUNICATES</b>  Formally and informally, members listen for feelings, members honestly self-disclose, levels 1-3 continue	
<b>TEAM MEMBERS RETREAT TOGETHER</b>  away from the church never or less than once a year	<b>TEAM MEMBERS RETREAT TOGETHER</b>  annually	<b>TEAM MEMBERS RETREAT TOGETHER</b>  A full day at least three times a year plus one overnighter per year	<b>TEAM MEMBERS RETREAT TOGETHER</b>  One day a month plus annual overnighter and respect others' day off	
<b>TEAM MEMBERS FELLOWSHIP</b>  Only if they happen to be together as part of some other event	<b>TEAM MEMBERS FELLOWSHIP</b>  As opportunities develop at work and occasionally have lunch together	<b>TEAM MEMBERS FELLOWSHIP</b>  At least quarterly, lunch together often, and levels 1 & 2	<b>TEAM MEMBERS FELLOWSHIP</b>  Often, formally and informally and occasionally include spouses and significant others and "drop in and chat" is acceptable, also levels 1-3	
<b>TEAM MEMBERS CELEBRATE</b>  At scheduled church and school events	<b>TEAM MEMBERS CELEBRATE</b>  Birthdays, Christmas, with recurring rituals	<b>TEAM MEMBERS CELEBRATE</b>  With laughter, developed staff traditions, stories (personal boundaries are respected), as well as levels 1 & 2	<b>TEAM MEMBERS CELEBRATE</b>  With some exuberance, appropriate hugs are O.K., just the right gifts are exchanged, as well as levels 1-3	

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL3	LEVEL4	SCORE
<p><b>TEAM CONFRONTS</b></p> <p>Each other only indirectly or with put downs</p>	<p><b>TEAM CONFRONTS</b></p> <p>Each other in matters of great importance, usually by memo or letter</p>	<p><b>TEAM CONFRONTS</b></p> <p>Each other directly, listens to defensiveness and then problem solves</p>	<p><b>TEAM CONFRONTS</b></p> <p>Each other with honesty, respect, self-disclosure, non-blamefully, with commitment to win-win solutions and mutual forgiveness</p>	
<p><b>TEAM CARES ABOUT</b></p> <p>Each other because that's the only way individuals can get their job done</p>	<p><b>TEAM CARES ABOUT</b></p> <p>Each other enough to be courteous and avoid harmful criticism</p>	<p><b>TEAM CARES ABOUT</b></p> <p>Each other as persons and as professionals, respects each other, sub or cover various responsibilities for</p>	<p><b>TEAM CARES ABOUT</b></p> <p>Each other with a deep bond of affection and respect, and genuine empathy</p>	
<p><b>TOTAL CONSENSUS SCORE</b></p>				

## Scoring the Team Ministry Assessment and Planning Instrument

### Scores of 0-25

Indicate very little team ministry

Each seems to do their work without much reference to the others

Indications are that much greater effort at team work is needed

### Scores 26-50

The basis for a significant team ministry exists

Exploration of ways to strengthen what is already happening is needed

### Scores 51-75

Team ministry behavior indicate above normal relationships

If tensions exist it's probably due to value differences rather than an unwillingness to work together

### Scores 75-100

Indications are that the structure is in place to facilitate a strong team ministry

### What do we do with these scores now?

- Discuss the scores and their meaning
- Select not more than two categories on which to concentrate as areas of improvement
- Make specific behavioral plans for improvement
- Make a mutual commitment to meet again during the year to redo the assessment

*\* Based on Team Ministry paradigm designed by Henkleman and Carter in 1986*

## CHAPTER V: STRUCTURE AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Most institutions have formal statements describing how they are to be governed. Often these statements are accompanied by an organization chart illustrating reporting and accountability relationships. The goal is to describe who should be responsible to whom and to clearly define who has authority. Theoretically they describe where the power to make decisions is vested. All of this is termed the "formal organization."

Institutions, however, have another level of organization. This is the organization that governs how decisions are actually made and how power and authority is exercised in "real life." This informal structure is much more important than the formal structure. It determines what really happens and how decisions are really made. This is called the "informal organization." Sometimes it parallels the formal organization. Usually it does not. As mentioned above, the informal organization is more important than the formal one.

The preceding chapters have attempted to describe the pastor's role in the informal structure. The pastor's ministry is effective because of the way it is carried out day to day. It is effective because of the personal style of the pastor and because it has the validating power of spoken Word and life-giving Spirit. It functions almost independent of the formal structure or formal organization. Yet there is a place for formal structure and formal organization. That is the topic of this chapter.

The first point that needs to be made is that Lutheran congregations and schools/early childhood centers have devised an almost infinite number of ways to formally organize themselves. They seem to have only two constants: In Lutheran congregations it's the congregation itself that has final authority in major matters relating to the congregation programs; the pastor is the spiritual leader of the whole congregation and is accountable to it.

Where does the school pastor fit into this pattern? There are many options. Here are six of them.

1. The congregation operates the school or center through a duly elected or appointed school/center board. This board is accountable directly to the congregation assembly. The pastor sits on the board as an ex officio member, sometimes with vote, sometimes with no vote. The school/center board employs the administrator and staff. The administrator is accountable to the board. Note that in this model the pastor is a member of the board. Note further that the congregation probably believes that the pastor has a pastoral concern for all of the school/center family. Note finally that the pastor is not the supervisor of the administrator—nor is the administrator directly accountable to the pastor for the manner in which the school/center operates. The teachers are professionally accountable to the administrator/preschool director. The principal/director is accountable to the school board. The pastor exercises official authority through membership on the school board.
2. There are variations to the above model. Sometimes the school board (or Board of Christian Education) is accountable to the congregation council and the council is accountable to the congregation assembly. In this model the pastor usually sits on both the school board and the congregation council.
3. Sometimes the pastor is also the school's/preschool's executive director and is held accountable by the board. In this arrangement it's usually imperative that there also be a building principal/director. The building administrator in this model is directly accountable to the school head who is also the pastor.
4. A variation of the above is for the congregation pastor to also be the school principal. (I have never heard of the pastor being director of the preschool.) This seldom works well. Very few pastors have the training and virtually none of them has the time to be both congregational pastor and school principal. The only time it seems to work is when the pastor has an assistant principal or a head teacher who manages the day-to-day operations of the school.
5. Some school principals are also pastors. This works best if the primary duty of the pastor-principal is to be school principal and a second person is the senior pastor of the congregation.

6. Occasionally the organizational structure designates the pastor as superintendent. In educational circles this is very confusing. Very few functions of the typical school district superintendent are ever assigned to the pastor. It is not recommended that the pastor be given the title of superintendent. It is this writer's judgment that the best title for a school pastor is "pastor." If the pastor functions in the manner described in the previous chapters the pastoral ministry will be vital, helpful, and a source of blessing to all.

### **Job Descriptions**

Job descriptions are essential and helpful—as long as they are not permanently etched in stone. Sample job descriptions for principals/directors are plentiful. The best model job description for Lutheran principals is found in the BOARD MANUAL FOR LUTHERAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS published jointly by the Lutheran churches. The Concordia Publishing House publication *How To Develop a Team Ministry and Make It Work* by Henkelmann and Carter contains sample job descriptions for pastors of congregations with a school. Congregations affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America can be assisted by the statements on "The Pastor" in the model constitution for congregations. That document lists among the duties of the pastor the phrase "supervise all schools and organizations of the congregation."

However, no one outside the local congregation and local school/center can write the specific job description for the pastor in a specific place. It can, however, be helpful to have such a document. The pastor and administrator should together write the first draft and then present this to the school/center board and congregation council for revision and adoption. The job description will include such topics as job summary, primary duties, lines of accountability, committee or board membership, supervision responsibilities, job qualifications, and evaluation. The final job description should be approved by the congregation's council and/or the congregation.

Almost all Lutheran schools have separate handbooks detailing policies and procedures for parents, staff, and board. Each of these should have a statement speaking of and affirming the role of the pastor.

The preparation of these documents can be time consuming, irritating, and an opportunity for bickering. On the other hand it can also be affirming, supporting, and enriching. The key is that all who work on these statements come with the conviction that the pastor's role in the school is a wonderful opportunity for shared ministry, shared servanthood, shared wisdom, and shared growth!

### **Special Case**

Not every Lutheran school/center is operated by a single congregation. Some of the finest Lutheran schools are the joint ministry of two or more congregations. These association schools can have the blessing of the ministries of several pastors. Unfortunately it is also possible that everyone's opportunity becomes no one's responsibility. When there are several sponsoring congregations, it becomes even more imperative that structures and job descriptions for pastors be carefully drawn up and approved by the board. Several general guidelines can be stated. Sometimes all pastors serve on the central school board. Some or all may serve without vote. The general guidelines for pastors as suggested in this publication apply to all pastors. Some association schools annually designate one pastor to serve as pastoral advisor to the school. Others ask one pastor to serve as school pastoral team coordinator. Another model calls for the total pastoral team to meet weekly with the principal/director. This has proven especially valuable when the first 30 minutes have been spent in worship and spiritual centering and the next 30 minutes in discussing and planning school matters. Another option: Assign each pastor a particular board or school committee such as spiritual life, parent relations, curriculum, extra curricular activities, staff, finance, building and grounds, etc.

When a school is the shared ministry of several congregations, the support and leadership of all the pastors will go a long way in ensuring that the full potential of the school will be realized.

## **Tension Points**

It's tough to draw up an organization chart for a Lutheran congregation. It just doesn't seem to fit other corporate or institution models. The pastor, after all, is more (and less) than a Chief Executive Officer. How does one draw an organization box that illustrates functions like shepherd, pastor, leader, presence, advocate? Every time a congregation attempts to put its organizational design into a formal line and staff structure complete with boxes and solid or dotted lines it runs into major problems.

The pastor wants to be pastoral supervisor of all the congregation's activities, yet also wants the school/center to finally be accountable to the board and to the congregation rather than to the pastor personally.

Unfortunately some schools/centers and some administrators resist the pastor's role and prefer to make all decisions without the benefit of the pastor's counsel and wisdom. What is needed is a shared commitment to a mission, a determination to sit down and write it out, a determination that congregation and school belong together, a determination that the pastor's role in the school is vital and enriching. Out of that commitment will come the appropriate statements and structures that will allow and enable the pastor to be what the school needs to fulfill its mission and ministry.

## **EXERCISE 5A**

### **(Pastor, Administrator, Congregation President)**

Ask the pastor, the administrator, and the president of the congregation to each write a one-page job description for the pastor's position. Using the resources listed above include the following topics:

1. General description of pastor's job
2. Pastor's duties in relation to the school
3. Pastor's relationship to the board governing the school
4. Pastor's relationship to the school principal/director

After each has written a job description, share the statements. Let them be a resource for writing the formal job description of the pastor. Compare this document with the congregation's constitution and letter of call to the pastor.

Let this be an exercise of seeking shared wisdom with a goal of having a statement that will facilitate the pastor's ministry in, with, and to the school.

## **CHAPTER VI: A NEW DAY**

It is probably safe to say that Jesus had a "bias" in favor of children. It is also known that the community called the church has a special opportunity and responsibility to care for the little ones. That is why many Lutherans have a "bias" in favor of early childhood education centers and congregation sponsored schools. There we meet Christ and Christ meets us.

This encounter is not only personal. It is communal. It requires a team. That team includes pastors and those who work daily in the congregation school or center ministry. So all must work together. This resource focuses heavily on pastors. It seeks to affirm their critical role in Lutheran schools and early childhood centers. It calls upon pastors to lend their wisdom and support especially to the school administrators.

Pastors are supported by tens of thousands of parents across our land who pay the tuition and fees enabling their children to enroll in a Lutheran institution. These parents believe that these centers and schools provide excellent age-appropriate care and education with Christian distinctiveness. One of the reasons parents believe this is because they know that a local Lutheran pastor is taking a personal and professional interest in the school/center where their children are receiving care.

School and center administrators and teachers want pastoral involvement in the school. They welcome the pastor's care, concern and ministry.

Pastors working through their schools can give to the world a rare gift. They help to give to the world educated young men and women who are prepared for the next step in their education journey. They possess valuable skills. They nurture lasting values. They have been blessed with the touch of the Great Good Shepherd. The calling of the pastor to serve the Lutheran school is a call that is accompanied by the power of God's presence and the presence of God's power. It's a call that is to be followed with great joy and blessing.



# Building a Healthy Preschool Director-Pastor Relationship

*Wanting to build healthy relationships between pastors and the church's preschool directors, this author asked directors "What do you want from your pastor?"*

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Melvin M. Kieschnick

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Congregations of the ELCA do ministry through more than 2,000 early childhood education centers (preschools) serving some 250,000 children and their families. It has been my privilege to visit many of these centers and to meet with hundreds of directors of this ministry. These directors, together with their staffs, represent a vital ministry to children, their families, the community, and the world.

"What do you want from your pastor?" is a question I've often asked directors. Or, I have worded it this way, "What are the signs of a healthy relationship between a director and the pastor?" The following is a summary of their comments. (Note: I also asked similar questions of pastors; their answers may be summarized in another article.)

## Recognizing One's Partner

1. Acknowledge me as a professional partner in ministry. An overwhelming number of early childhood directors in Lutheran congregations identify their work as "ministry." The focus of this ministry and even the mission of the center varies greatly.

The three most commonly identified mission elements are: (1) a care for children (which is age appropriate, safe, quality, and loving) and support for their families; (2) the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ with our children and their families, and inviting into our congregational community those who have no church home; and (3) service to our community by reaching out to and nurturing our youngest, most valuable, and vulnerable citizens.

Regardless of which of the three mission dimensions are foremost, directors see their work as professional ministry. They get upset when they are regarded as baby sitters or persons who couldn't make it professionally in the "real" world and have settled for working with young children.

Most upsetting of all is when the pastor or congregants see the preschool (or day care or nursery center) primarily as a source of funds to run or keep the church alive. Nothing (nothing!) upsets a director more than to be seen by her pastor as someone operating a "cash cow" for the congregation, whether that cash is described as rent, tithing, profit sharing, or any other euphemism.

"Be my partner in this ministry, not my boss" is what the directors stress. This ministry needs the unique gifts and support of both pastor and director. Centers do not need pastoral micro-management of fees collection, facilities management, or family relations.

Yet directors earnestly seek pastoral partnership. They respect their pastors' unique expertise, role, and counsel.

## Be Visible

2. Be there! When thinking of their pastors, many preschool directors affirm Woody Allen's profound insight that 50 percent of success is just showing up. One of the most valued behaviors of a pastor is her visibility in the preschool.

Directors love it when the pastor comes to the school and chats with staff, kids, and parents. The pastor's presence at special events, programs, and parties is always appreciated, especially when the pastor is not only up-front but also makes an extra effort to converse with the parents and other guests. Their request of their pastor is, "Please show up." Sometimes "being there" is more private than public. Directors face significant challenges daily. These range from upset parents to inadequate assistants to hard-to-manage youngsters to unexpected visits from city health inspectors. On those days the director who can go to the pastor and talk it all out and who knows such conversations are possible--is a director who says, "I love my pastor."

Organization charts showing lines of responsibility and accountability for the early childhood education ministry differ greatly from congregation to congregation. Regardless of which board, committee, or council supervises the preschool, the director looks to the pastor as a principal advocate who will be there for the director when decisions about the program are made.

"I know that my pastor has access to decision making in the church. Decisions may well affect my ministry, but I am not officially a part of the decision-making group. That's when I depend on the advocacy of my pastor. It's a wonderful feeling to know that he or she will be there for me," directors have said to me.

### **Turf Agreement**

3. Let's be clear on and agree about turf issues. Sometimes "turf issues" refer to actual physical turf. Can preschool rooms be used for Sunday School? Who gets priority to the kitchen? Can we expand the preschool into the parlor where the sewing circle makes quilts for Lutheran World Relief? Should we heat the whole sanctuary just for a 20-minute preschool chapel gathering?

More often, however, turf issues relate to organizational structure, goals, responsibility, ownership, daily operations, decisions about enrollment, and other concerns.

I have yet to find a director who does not acknowledge that the pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation and all its ministries. Some can even quote the model ELCA constitution for congregations: "The pastor shall supervise all schools of this congregation."

Some directors occasionally have "too strong" a sense that this is my school and my ministry. This is especially true when one individual actually began the ministry, usually promising that "it won't cost the congregation anything." The ministry grows and a shift has to occur from it being "my" ministry to the "congregation's" ministry.

Insightful directors acknowledge that pastors have to be concerned about all the ministries and all members of the congregation.

"I really respect my pastor and the pastor respects me," says a director. "The pastor lets me operate the preschool once our policies have been approved by the appropriate church board, and I would not presume to try to tell him how to carry out pastoral duties."

"And, oh yes, I just remembered, in public I always call him by his title and name and he identifies me by my surname, Ms. Paint."

### **Spiritual Direction**

4. Be my pastor. "Be my pastor even though you're not my pastor" is how one Methodist director of a Lutheran preschool stated it. She was echoing a common request. Directors look to the pastor for personal spiritual direction. They want the pastor to hear their joys and confessions, to pray with them and to occasionally lead worship for them.

"Be my pastor in helping us put together the 'religion' curriculum," is a concern I've often heard. The type and extent of formal religious content and expression vary greatly in Lutheran preschool operations. Yet almost every director with whom I've spoken welcomes pastoral input into the process.

Some keep it very general, just attempting to instill a sense of trust or awe. Others get quite specific with Bible stories, songs, and drama. Worship may range from simple talks to teaching even young children about the liturgy, church festivals, and rituals. In every case, the pastor is seen as a valuable resource.

Many teachers and assistants do not come from the Lutheran tradition. They look to the pastor for what Lutherans teach and how Lutherans do things. Some centers have Bible study, staff or center worship experience, Jesus time, chapel, and religious pageants. Always the pastor's sensitive and knowledgeable input is welcome.

Often preschoolers and their families face situations calling for pastoral counseling and support. The director tells the pastor about the need. When the pastor responds with a pastoral visit, consultation, prayer, or telephone call, holistic ministry occurs and the unique mission of a Lutheran preschool program is enhanced. The director, too, is affirmed and pastor-director ties are strengthened.

"Pastor, pastor!" the children holler, wrapping their arms around the pastor's legs.

"That's my pastor!" yells the preschooler as she spies her pastor in the grocery. The child likely worships in a Catholic church (or none at all), but the pastor of the church operating her preschool is the one she identifies as "my pastor." Pastors and directors must, of course, know when to be in-role and when to de-role. Yet, wherever there are harmonious and satisfying school-congregation relations and wherever the school is effective as a ministry of the congregation, one knows that the director will proudly and thankfully point to the pastor and proclaim, "You're my pastor and I'm grateful."

Melvin M. Kieschnick served Lutheran schools nationally and internationally for 40 years. An associate in ministry, Kieschnick is now retired.

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