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# Re-envisioning Theological Education and Formation for Mission, In-Context, Using Distance Education

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

RE-ENVISIONING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND  
FORMATION FOR MISSION, IN-CONTEXT,  
USING DISTANCE EDUCATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
DAVID W. WOLLENBURG

PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 1, 2006

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# DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

**DAVID WOLLENBURG**

**PRESENTED: MARCH 14, 2006**

**TITLE:**

**RE-ENVISIONING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND  
FORMATION FOR MISSION IN CONTEXT USING DISTANCE  
EDUCATION**

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On the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri where I work and study the thanks begins with Dr. Andy Bartelt, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean, whose encouragement and counsel have been invaluable. I must also include the many fellow faculty members who have lent their counsel and aid throughout this process. For research assistance special thanks go to Eric Stancliff, Public Services Librarian, who helped me to find materials and resources that I would otherwise have missed; Dr. Martin R. Noland, Director of Concordia Historical Institute, located on the St. Louis campus who helped to find historical materials I would otherwise have missed; and John Palka, Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology Curriculum Developer, who shares my interest in Distance Education and with whom I had many helpful conversations – his counsel and aid helped me many times to move off of a dead center orientation into fruitful work. Aaron J. (AJ) Neugebauer read this work and provided helpful editing.



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Administratively, I could not have done this work without Hannah Machado, Administrative Assistant for Distance Education at Concordia Seminary, who has helped to shape the DELTO program in addition to assisting me with the formatting not only of individual portions of this work, but the entire piece as a whole.

To almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all honor and all glory. Amen.

## **ABSTRACT**

Distance Education Leading To Ordination (DELTO) is a program of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) designed to prepare individuals for pastoral ministry. It is non-residential, and it is contextual, as those in the program are already engaged in ministry.

Three concerns about DELTO are addressed in this work: the first is that it is a “dumbing-down” of pastoral formation; the second is that it is not possible to form a spiritual community of support on-line; and the third is the need for the seminary faculty to have enough information to be able to confidently certify DELTO graduates for ordination.

This paper demonstrates the validity of DELTO for the formation of non-degreed pastors so that Seminary faculty can confidently certify them for ordination, and so that the Church will receive them as recognized pastors of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. I believe that sound distance education methods, using contextual pastor-mentors, can effectively meet the needs of the church as well as the expectations of the seminary.

DELTO was developed in response to the need in the Church for more pastors. Chapter One introduces the questions and the needs. The history of pastoral training and formation in the LCMS, including the move toward the use of distance education methods, is traced in Chapters Two and Three. Formation of community in the DELTO program is demonstrated in Chapter Four; and Chapter Five proposes the use of portfolio assessment as the means of providing faculty with the information needed to certify

DELTO graduates for ordination. Chapter Six summarizes the argument as it addresses the work of pastoral ministry

## CHAPTER 1

### NARRATIVE AND OUTLINE

It came as an unsolicited testimonial. It is hand printed on lined school paper, capitalization is random, and it is dated May 4, 2003. It reads:

*Dear Dr. (sic.) Wollenberg*

*This Letter is Being sent to you in RegARD of the Delto ProGRAM.*

*ApproximAtely 5 yeARs Ago, TRinity LutheRan ChuRch of MilleRville Township was faced with the bleak option of closing its' dooRs as ouR pAstoR wAs RetiRinG, AND No SuBstitutes could Be found. OuR BoARD President wAs InFoRMed that we could PossiBly get A Delto student; MR. ----- It wAS AGReed upon thAt he should Be given A try; AS OUR options weRe not gReAt.*

*This misfortune of Fate hAs perhaps Been the Best thing to hAve HAPPeneD At TRinity.*

*The Pastor is very well liked and AccepteD; gives excellent seRmons, conducts BiBle clAss (which is veRy well Attended), hAs BeinG in charge of 2 Block PARTy mission Festivals; his Lifestyle and fAmiLy seem well oRGAnized. In Addition, chuRch Attendance is good, contriButions ARE good, the oveRall Attititude of TRinity's membeRs is excellAnt.*

*TRinity hAs nothing But PRAise, ADmiRAtion, AND most HeARtFelt ThAnKs For The Delto PRoGRAM.*

*PleAse continue with this most woRthy PRoGRAM, AS theRe is A most definite Need FoR PAstoRS in ouR SyNod.*

*VeRY SiNceReLY*

*MemBeRs of TRiNity LutheRAn ChuRcH*

*----- Secretary*

This letter was sent by a congregation whose pastoral needs were being served by a man who was not ordained but was a student in the DELTO (an acronym for "Distance Education Leading to Ordination") program which I administer for Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

“Our pastor?!?” Exclaimed a fellow seminary professor, “he isn’t ordained, and he certainly isn’t ‘rightly called’ according to Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession. How can they call him their pastor? And who does he think he is that he would allow that? At best he is a deacon, but even they aren’t ‘rightly called.’”<sup>1</sup>

Views like this are not uncommon among members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). Still, as this letter attests, the DELTO program can meet the clergy needs of the LCMS both now and in the future in a quality way.

The LCMS faces a shortage of pastors as the following table illustrates:

**Table 1: Vacancies in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod  
From September 1998 to November 2004<sup>2</sup>**

Reporting Date of Congregations calling	Reporting Districts	A Sole Pastor	A Senior Pastor	Assistant Pastor	Vacant but not Calling	Total Vacancies
Sept 19-22, 1998	35	526	0	81	261	868
Nov. 18-20, 1998	35	493	0	99	261	853
Feb. 20-23, 1999	35	495	42	134	297	968
April 18-20, 1999	35	449	34	117	304	904
Sept 18-21, 1999	35	456	50	104	285	895
Nov. 17-19, 1999	35	474	50	99	289	912
Feb. 29 - March 2, 2000	35	526	50	147	294	1017
April 9-11, 2000	34	433	49	104	291	877
Sept. 16-18, 2000	33	462	50	97	289	898
Nov. 15-17, 2000	33	473	58	82	322	935
Feb. 17-20, 2001	35	503	45	107	322	977
April 22-24, 2001	35	480	50	91	328	949
Sept. 22-26, 2001	33	439	59	85	338	921
Nov. 14-16, 2001	34	433	59	90	337	919

---

<sup>1</sup> The Latin term is “*rite vocatus*,” it is interpreted as recognition by the “whole” church that God and the Church have called an individual to a particular ministry situation.

<sup>2</sup> L. Dean Hempelmann, St. Louis, MO, to LCMS Board for Pastoral Education and others, “Clergy Supply in 2005,” February, 2005.

**Table 1 - Continued**

Reporting Date of Congregations calling	Reporting Districts	A Sole Pastor	A Senior Pastor	Assistant Pastor	Vacant but not Calling	Total Vacancies
April 20-23, 2002	35	449	65	88	342	944
Sept. 21-25, 2002	34	405	56	74	357	892
Nov. 20-22, 2002	33	426	55	72	358	911
April 5-9, 2003	34	409	46	81	354	890
Sept. 18-20, 2003	35	350	46	61	354	811
Nov. 20-22, 2003	35	348	47	65	387	847
Feb. 6-9, 2004	35	356	54	83	387	880
Apr. 2004	35	354	59	73	392	878
Sept. 2004	35	315	39	47	409	810
Nov. 2004	35	312	43	56	408	809

At the November 2004, meeting of the Council of Presidents,<sup>3</sup> it was reported that there was a total of 809 vacant congregations in The LCMS: 312 of those are calling a sole pastor, 43 are calling a senior pastor, and 56 are calling an associate or assistant pastor – there are 408 vacant congregations that are not calling a pastor.<sup>4</sup>

It is this latter category, the “non-calling” congregations, that is the primary concern of this project. The above table demonstrates that while the total number of vacancies in the LCMS declined from 868 in September 1998, to 809 in November 2004, the number of congregations not calling has risen. Many of those 408 cannot afford a full-time pastor. Most are in decline. Many have “given up” the search for a full-time pastor.

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<sup>3</sup> The Council of Presidents, (hereafter referred to as the “COP”), is made up of the Presidents of the 35 mostly geographical Districts of The LC-MS, the President, and the five Vice-presidents of the Synod.

<sup>4</sup> L. Dean Hempelmann, St. Louis, MO, to LCMS Board for Pastoral Education and others, “Clergy Supply in 2005,” February, 2005. The reasons congregations are not calling vary.

DELTO is designed to meet the needs of these “non-calling” congregations. It also has in view the needs of new mission starts where there is no full-time pastor available. The brochure that describes this program states: “DELTO provides contextual theological education leading to ordination for men who provide pastoral service to congregations or in situations that cannot support a full-time pastor or missionary.”<sup>5</sup>

To this end, DELTO will also serve to facilitate the “***Ablaze!***” mission emphasis of the LCMS, which has as one of its goals “to begin 2000 new congregations by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation” (October 31, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

### ***Ablaze!***

The 62<sup>nd</sup> Regular Convention of the LCMS meeting July 10-15, 2004, in St. Louis, Missouri, adopted a series of six mission resolutions that supported the convention theme: “One Mission-***Ablaze!***” Resolution 1-01A stated that this theme

Sets before us God’s deep desire and passion to bring salvation to all people (Is. 49:6b) calling us to act urgently in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8)<sup>7</sup>.

These actions are significant for the DELTO program, and related distance education programs. DELTO is uniquely positioned to meet the goals of ***Ablaze!***

Resolution 1-05A of the 2004 Convention titled “**To Establish *Ablaze!* National Goals**” provides the most detail about this mission emphasis. Portions of that resolution are excerpted:

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<sup>5</sup> *What is DELTO?* Brochure describing the LCMS Distance Education Leading To Ordination program (LCMS Board for Pastoral Education, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> LC-MS World Mission, “Ablaze! Fan Into Flame! For the Sake of the Church!” <<https://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=8365>>, June 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *One Mission-Ablaze! 62nd Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Proceedings* (St. Louis, MO: LCMS, 2004), 119.

WHEREAS, LCMS World Mission has set the goal to begin 2,000 new congregations by the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation; and

WHEREAS, A united effort by individuals, congregations, schools, Districts, colleges, universities, seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs, Synodical boards, corporate entities, mission societies, and Synod departments is needed to accomplish the *Ablaze!* goals; and

WHEREAS, One of the best ways to reach new people and groups is to start new congregations; ... therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Synod in convention sets a national goal to begin 2,000 new congregations by the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod in convention requests individuals, congregations, schools, Districts, colleges, universities, seminaries, auxiliaries, RSOs, Synodical boards, corporate entities, mission societies, and Synod departments to work with the national mission office to accomplish these goals.<sup>8</sup>

The Synodical resolution does not address how these 2000 new congregations are to be served. However, the seminaries, along with other entities in the Church, were tasked, “to work with the national mission office to accomplish these goals.”<sup>9</sup> This tasking calls for new approaches to theological education, approaches that will supplement the traditional, residential programs. DELTO is positioned to provide a new approach, as this work will show.

### **Becoming an LCMS Pastor**

Because it is intended that this work be helpful to concerned individuals throughout Christianity who are working with pastoral formation programs, two idiosyncrasies of the LCMS system need to be noted at the outset. Others may do it differently, and for perfectly valid reasons. The LCMS does it this way.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



First, individuals may become pastors in the LCMS (and therefore “Members of the Synod”) in only two ways: either they must “be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the faculty of one of the seminaries of the Synod,” or they must receive the same declaration and recommendation “by the appropriate colloquy committee.”<sup>10</sup> This process is known as “certification,”<sup>11</sup> and this will be the term used throughout this paper.

Secondly, it should be noted that the LCMS does not allow the ordination of women. Indeed, the Bylaw describing the work of the “Colloquy Committee for the Pastoral Ministry” says that “only such male applicants shall be considered eligible to apply for colloquy.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore all references to pastors and students preparing for pastoral ministry in this dissertation will use the masculine gender. They are not intended to ignore or be insensitive to the fact that women clergy serve honorably and well in other denominations.

With those facts in mind we can go on to talk about DELTO.

### **A Brief Description of DELTO**

The purpose of DELTO is to prepare laymen who are serving in Word and Sacrament ministries at the request of their congregations for ordination. DELTO is a non-degree program offering a “Theological Diploma.” This theological diploma certifies

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<sup>10</sup> The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *2004 Handbook* 2004 Constitution, Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation as amended by the 2004 National Convention 10-15 July 2004, ed. Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary (St. Louis, MO, 2004), 52-53.

<sup>11</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Theology and Practice of the Divine Call*, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (St. Louis, MO: The LC-MS, 2003), 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. Emphasis added.

the determination of the Seminary faculty that the individual is eligible for ordination as a pastor in the LCMS.

Although its very name, DELTO, calls this a distance education program, it is probably more accurately described as falling into the category that Steve Delamarter and Daniel Brunner have described as a “hybrid program” made up of hybrid courses. He says, “These are courses that combine online and face-to-face experiences into a new model for teaching and learning.”<sup>13</sup>

The DELTO curriculum consists of 30 courses: 10 are delivered at the “local” or “District” level; the Seminary delivers the final 20.<sup>14</sup> The delivery system for the “Seminary 20” is WebCT. Course content is delivered by means of a video textbook consisting of approximately 10-12 hours of material combined with required readings. Learning activities include computer-mediated conversations (CMC’s), reaction papers submitted via WebCT, quizzes, and conversations with the student’s personal, local “Pastor-Mentor-Vicarage Supervisor.”

These “pastor-mentor-vicarage supervisors” are ordained pastors who serve in congregations nearby to the students and their parishes. These pastors are asked to work with the students throughout the course of study. In addition to supervising the students’ ministries, they agree to provide appropriate feedback to the student and to the seminary

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<sup>13</sup> Steve Delamarter, and Daniel L. Brunner, “Theological Education and Hybrid Models of Distance Learning,” *Theological Education* 40, no. 2 (2005): 145-61, 147.

<sup>14</sup> *What is DELTO?* Brochure describing the LCMS Distance Education Leading To Ordination program (LCMS Board for Pastoral Education, 2003).

on a regular basis in order to facilitate the formation process. They must have the permission of their own congregation to be engaged in this educational endeavor.<sup>15</sup>

The DELTO Pastor-Mentor serves as a guide, advisor, and tutor to the student. He serves to guide the student in pastoral formation, to advise the student regarding pastoral practices, and to tutor the student in formal studies. He provides feedback to the seminary on the student's progress.<sup>16</sup>

DELTO students are asked to meet with their mentor 2 to 3 hours a week for discussion of the week's learning material. The Pastor-mentor, in turn, is expected to:

1. Uphold the student in faith and life through encouragement, support and prayer.
2. Mentor the student in formal studies on a regular basis.
3. Work with the student to contextualize course content to his life and ministry.
4. Provide feedback on the student, as needed or requested, to the Seminary and District.
5. Encourage the student to remain in the program and remain diligent about his studies.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to these interactions, DELTO students are required to attend a series of residential seminars. The first is a three-day orientation seminar at the beginning of the program. As the program progresses they are required to attend at least one residential seminar on the campus of the seminary each year that they are in the program.

The Orientation Seminar is a three-day seminar designed to introduce the students and their mentors to, and prepare them for, DELTO course work. Participants are introduced to Concordia Seminary, the seminary faculty, the DELTO program and course structure, mentor work, DELTO policies and procedures, vicarage, graduation

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Admissions Criteria 7 and 8.

<sup>16</sup> Jan Case, and Peter Ave-Lallemant, "DELTO Pastor-Mentor Manuel," Concordia Seminary, St. Louis web site, <<http://www.csl.edu/DELTOManuel.doc>>, May 2003. 11. Accessed August 23, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> David Wollenburg, Director of DELTO, *DELTO Policy Manual* (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, 2004), 2.

requirements and procedures. Extensive time is spent training students and mentors to use WebCT and course study guides. Attendance at this seminar is required for all students and mentors.

The Annual Seminars are five-day seminars designed to allow students to explore several areas of theology and pastoral practice in-depth. They are also intended to integrate students into the life of the seminary even as they build a sense of community among the DELTO students themselves. Minimum tuition is charged for these seminars. Students are responsible for the cost of travel, room and board expenses. Mentors are encouraged, but not required, to attend these annual seminars.

### **What DELTO is Not**

It is important to say that DELTO is not traditional, residential pastoral education/formation. Nor does it intend to be. Indeed it is just the opposite, and therein is the problem for many who believe that the traditional, residential model is the only way to properly prepare individuals for pastoral ministry.

As Steve Delamarter has said so well, "believing communities did not just wake up at the beginning of the information age and begin to think about how to prepare people for ministry; they have been thinking about these things for millennia."<sup>18</sup> He calls the result the "classic paradigm of theological education." This assumed model believes:

...the best setting for ministry preparations is (1) *full immersion* for at least three years in a (2) *residential program* in which senior members of the community instruct, inspire and form junior members primarily through (3) *lecture-based pedagogies* and where students learn the art of theological reflection through (4) *face-to-face community discourse*, (5) *library research* and (6) *writing*.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Steve Delamarter, "A Typology of the Use of Technology in Theological Education," *Teaching Theology & Religion* vol. 7, no. 3 (July 2004): 134-40, 135.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* (His emphasis).

This is what current clergy and laity alike envision when they consider theological education. Since DELTO doesn't live up to this expectation, the history of the program is littered with dropouts, unfulfilled dreams, controversy, and questions about the quality of preparation for the pastoral ministry that DELTO can provide.

Many clergy and laity view DELTO as "necessary" in order to "meet the needs of the church." For others it is something to be tolerated. And still others see it as an abomination. The current work will not convince everyone of the legitimacy of DELTO and DELTO-like programs, but it is my prayer that it will contribute to a larger appreciation and acceptance of the project.

### **A Brief Background of the Present Project**

DELTO was begun in the mid-1990's as a means of providing theological education to laymen already serving in "word and sacrament" ministries.<sup>20</sup> An "Oversight Committee" was established by the LCMS in the summer of 2001, to "fix DELTO."<sup>21</sup> I serve as a member of that committee and also its secretary.

There were multiple issues to address; namely, admission requirements, theological issues, and nomenclature (what to call the students and graduates). Some of those issues are revealed in the following letter of recommendation for a student desiring to enter the program dated 19 June 2003:

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<sup>20</sup> More details of the history of the DELTO program, including the "need" it was designed to meet will be presented in Chapter 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Convention Proceedings, 61st Regular Convention The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 2001), Resolution 3-08B, 111.

*To Whom It May Concern,*

*Please know that the congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church is, by vote, unanimously in favor of .... entering the DELTO program. As a congregation we are satisfied with Deacon<sup>22</sup> ..... 's ministry to the congregation and the community. We do not believe that ordination will make him any more a pastor to us, but we understand that it is necessary for Deacon .... To feel equal to his peers in the church. We hope we can help him, and ourselves, to achieve respectability in the eyes of our brethren.*

*Yours truly,  
Congregational Chairman*

This letter illustrates a multilayered problem. The men who graduate from the DELTO program desire recognition by the church, and the congregations they serve have the same desire. These congregations recognize that they are not just "congregational" on their own; they are also a part of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. They are connected by choice and they wish that connection to be recognized by the whole church body. These congregations feel that they need both: Membership in the LCMS, and a certified and ordained DELTO pastor in order to survive. It is the legitimacy of DELTO graduates that is questioned by many clergy and laity alike.

It should be noted, however, that this is not a problem that is unique to theological education. A 2005 article in "The American Journal of Distance Education" makes the point that even those who earn "online doctoral degrees" from recognized and reputable institutions have difficulty finding positions with those same institutions. Some of the problems expressed were:

A number of respondents expressed concern about the quality of the education received in this format. ...For at least some of the search committee chairs, a degree earned online was not of sufficient rigor and would be regarded as suspect. ... (And) References to

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<sup>22</sup> See: *Convention Proceedings, 57th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1989). Resolution 3-05B. This Convention of the LCMS established the title "deacon" for men serving temporarily in Word and Sacrament ministry "in exceptional circumstances or in emergencies." It said, "This title would distinguish him from an ordained pastor." These 'Wichita Deacons' were the original target of DELTO.

(face-to-face) interaction with faculty and fellow students, a known shortcoming of online courses (sic), were among the most frequent comments.<sup>23</sup>

A 1981 report of The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the LCMS helps to put the concern about the credibility of DELTO graduates and their recognition as pastors by the whole church in focus:

We stress the fact that ordination is the declaration of the whole confessional fellowship ... Various ways can be found to establish this approval of the whole church. Presently the certification of suitability for the ministry by the faculty members who have taught the candidates and the assigning of first calls by the Council of Presidents is workable and does express the transparochial nature of the ministry.

...

Confusion and chaos result when congregations or agencies act unilaterally in deciding who may fill the office of the public ministry ... For a congregation to ignore or ride roughshod over the concern of the rest of the church in establishing its ministry (*without the recognition of the rest of the church of its pastor*) is a sin against the brotherhood and may even be a schismatic act in that it ignores the transparochial aspect of the "regularly called" (AC XIV).<sup>24</sup>

Essentially the Oversight Committee has said, "If they talk like pastors, act like pastors, and are viewed as pastors, let's call them 'Pastor' upon graduation." So the goal remains certification for ordination. "In the meantime," the Oversight Committee has said, "since the students are already engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry while still in training, we will call them, 'Vicar,' for the final two-thirds of their training."

In the LCMS a "vicar" is normally a third year seminarian who returns to complete his final year of training following the vicarage year. In some instances men complete all of the academic requirements prior to vicarage. They are then assigned a "deferred vicarage," which is generally in a situation where the congregation is vacant.

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Adams, and Margaret H. DeFleur, "The Acceptability of a Doctoral Degree Earned Online as a Credential for Obtaining a Faculty Position," *The American Journal of Distance Education* Volume 19, No. Number 2 (2005), 80-81.

<sup>24</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the LC-MS, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature* (St. Louis, MO: The LC-MS, 1981), 30-31.

The Deferred Vicar then does everything that the pastor would normally do but under the supervision of an area pastor. Following the year of deferred vicarage these men are normally called into the office of the Public Ministry in that place. The CTCR said it this way:

Vicars and interns are students. In order to gain experience they are assigned to work in congregations. ... They are not in the office of the public ministry. ... They are not “called.” They may perform some functions of the office of the public ministry upon assignment and under the guidance of a pastor. ... Also in the case of “deferred vicarages,” when a ... student is assigned to a congregation that has no pastor, specific supervision should be provided, usually by the District president, a circuit counselor, or someone assigned in an orderly fashion. Functions that such vicars may perform should be agreed upon by the supervision pastor and the congregation.<sup>25</sup>

DELTO vicars are understood to be serving a deferred vicarage that is also “concurrent.” This designation recognizes that they are providing pastoral services to a congregation while still in training. It also recognizes that they are expected to remain in that position following graduation from the program. This is in accord with point four of the Admissions Criteria, which states:

An applicant must be in, or entering, a Word and Sacrament ministry where no seminary prepared pastor is available and where his presence and ministry is expected both during and after the completion of the program.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Purpose of this Dissertation**

Attitudes are changing and the acceptance of DELTO graduates is growing in the LCMS as a result of the work of the Oversight Committee; the terminology of “concurrent vicarage,” introduced by DELTO, has been accepted by the Synod and is now used in other non-traditional programs as well. Questions of “equality,”

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., *What is DELTO?*



“authenticity” and “legitimacy” remain. By looking at the history of pastoral preparation in the LCMS, the current structure of DELTO, and the opportunities which distance education provides for community building and assessment for certification,<sup>27</sup> I intend to:

**Demonstrate the validity of DELTO for the formation of non-degreed pastors so that Seminary faculty can confidently certify them for ordination and the Church (laity and clergy alike) will receive them as recognized pastors of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.**

**I believe that distance education methods, using contextual pastor-mentors, can effectively meet the needs of the church and the expectations of the seminary.**

### **Frequent Objections to DELTO**

Three frequent objections to DELTO will be addressed in order to make this point. First is the concern about academic rigor noted by Adams and DeFleur in their article in *The American Journal of Distance Education*, cited earlier.<sup>28</sup> This is a question that has also been raised by fellow clergy and seminary faculty who tend to characterize DELTO as a “dumbing-down” of pastoral formation. DELTO is, in reality, a return to an earlier and more practical method of pastoral preparation.

The second objection to be addressed is the question of the formation of community in a distance education format and the lack of what Steve Delamarter has identified as “face-to-face community discourse.”<sup>29</sup> This objection has been raised in meetings of the LCMS DELTO Oversight Committee, and to me personally as Director of the DELTO program. It will be shown that community development takes place in DELTO as a result of both online and residential retreat discourse.

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<sup>27</sup> Specifically portfolio assessment.

<sup>28</sup> Adams and DeFleur. 80-81. And page 11 above.

<sup>29</sup> Delamarter. 135. And page 9 above.

Thirdly, the question of the ability of the seminary faculty to certify the readiness of DELTO graduates for ordination will be discussed. Portfolio assessment will provide the faculty the information needed for certification. Certification raises the overall question of student and program evaluation. Each of these issues will be explored in some detail in the paper that follows.

### **The Framework of the Discussion**

In answer to the objection that DELTO represents a “dumbing-down” of the pastoral ministry, Chapter Two will show that the LCMS, from the very beginning, has met the need for pastoral ministry using a “two-track” system of pastoral formation best defined as “practical” versus “theoretical” theological training.

During the middle-third of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the two seminaries that had developed in the LCMS began more and more to mirror one another. In the late 1960's, the “practical” seminary ceased to exist with the advent of the Master of Divinity degree as the standard for seminary training. The two seminaries of the LCMS remained separate institutions both of which now offered the Master of Divinity degree as the primary focus of their program of preparing pastors for the church; but now, more and more the programs mirrored one another as schools of theology.

It is worth noting that the adoption of the Master of Divinity degree as the basic degree for seminary training was done at the urging of the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS, now simply ATS), the national accrediting association for Seminaries. The resulting emphasis was more on graduate theological education than on pastoral formation. All this happened at a time when the LCMS, along with other “main-line” denominations began to experience a severe decline in membership.

Chapter Three will point out that concurrent with the move toward graduate theological education there developed an emphasis in the LCMS on “lay ministry.” This resulted in the adoption of TEE (Theological Education by Extension) as a method of preparing people for work in missions and in established congregations unable to afford to call a pastor. The history of the TEE movement will be examined along with some of its presuppositions and emphasizes.

The beginnings of DELTO and related programs will be traced as they grew out of TEE. The purpose here is to demonstrate the pressing need for the renewal of a “practical” track of pastoral preparation along side of renewal in the residential programs. It will also show that there is a growing desire in the LCMS for a return to practical theological training as a means of providing pastors for the church. This is in line with the general call for renewal in theological education that is being heard in North America.

Because one of the most frequently cited reasons for rejecting distance education as a legitimate method of theological formation is that it lacks the sense of community that residential programs foster,<sup>30</sup> Chapter Four will address the issue of community in DELTO. It will address the question of spiritual formation and the development of a theological community in a distance education program as it explores the scriptural foundations of communities of faith.

Community is very much a part of the DELTO program as it proceeds from the very nature of what it means to be a member of Christ’s Church. Those who are in DELTO experience “community” and spiritual formation: It happens as they apply the

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<sup>30</sup> See Steve Delamarter, “A Typology of the Use of Technology in Theological Education,” *Teaching Theology & Religion* vol. 7, no. 3 (July 2004): 134-40, 135.

lessons of their theological training to the ministry in which they are engaged; and it happens as they bring questions from their daily ministry to the virtual classroom. At the same time, they are supervised and mentored, encouraged and corrected by a seasoned pastor-mentor-vicarage supervisor.

Another frequently raised reason for rejecting distance education as a means of theological formation is the inability of the faculty to adequately know the DE student and so be able to “certify,” or attest to, his readiness for Ordination by the whole church. Chapter Five argues that it is possible for the faculty to know these men because of two elements of the DELTO program. The first is the yearly residential seminar which students are required to attend. The second is the use of student portfolios for assessment. Individual student portfolios document the theological development of the student as individual pieces are added. The same portfolio can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the student’s ministry as judged by his pastor-mentor-vicarage supervisor who will submit yearly vicarage reports to the seminary. As background to this discussion, Chapter Five will first introduce the reader to the general area of assessment in education.

Finally, Chapter Six will argue that although practically trained pastors may not provide theological leadership in the church, they do meet the needs of congregations for pastoral ministry. They do this as they care for the souls under their care, reach out effectively to unbelievers, and raise up others who will enter the residential theological training programs of the church.

Biblical and theological themes relating to this project are addressed in each chapter of this dissertation. There is not, therefore, a separate chapter which addresses

these questions. It simply makes more sense to include these references through out the paper.

While this dissertation focuses on the particular culture and needs of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, it is my intention that it can provide a framework for others, in other denominations, to develop their own programs of theological education using distance education methods.

## CHAPTER 2

### PASTORAL FORMATION: PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL

This chapter will demonstrate that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) has, from its very beginning, met the need for pastoral ministry by using a “two-track” system of pastoral formation best described as a “practical” versus a “theoretical” track of theological training. This system was developed partially as a result of what Steve Delamarter has called, “the church ... thinking about these things for millennia,”<sup>1</sup> and partially in response to the needs of an immigrant church. But, the two-track system effectually ended in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, as the two seminaries of the LCMS began offering essentially identical programs of “graduate” theological education. But the need for “practical” theological training continues. The DELTO program seeks to fill that need.

Programs leading to ordination by “certification” without the Master of Divinity degree, including DELTO, do not represent what some believe to be a “dumbing-down” of preparation for the pastoral ministry. They are, rather, a restoration of the historic model of pastoral formation in the church, and most specifically, the LCMS. But first a word about the use of the terms “practical” and “theoretical” to define these two approaches to pastoral formation.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Delamarter, “A Typology of the Use of Technology in Theological Education,” *Teaching Theology & Religion* vol. 7, no. 3 (July 2004): 134-40, 135. (See page 7 of Chapter 1).

### What the terms “Practical” and “Theoretical” Represent

The first institution owned and controlled by the LCMS was “the practical seminary,” Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. This seminary spent the majority of its existence (1875-1975) in Springfield, Illinois, before moving back to Ft. Wayne, in 1976, where is it located today.<sup>2</sup>

The original purpose of the “practical” seminary was defined as, “the training, as quickly as possible, of preachers and pastors for (the church).”<sup>3</sup> When its founder, Wilhelm Loehe, deeded the seminary to the Synod in 1847, he wrote, “It should not be a theological institution in the usual sense of the word, but a nursery (*Pflanzschule*) for preachers and pastors, whose study would be a serious preparation for the office itself.”<sup>4</sup>

Qualification for admission was defined in this way:

Only those young people who not only possess the natural gifts required for the office of the ministry, but who have also been equipped with the needed rudimentary education and in whom a good foundation in knowledge of the saving truth has been laid, will be admitted.<sup>5</sup>

Both the purpose, and the preparation required of the students of Concordia Theological Seminary, in those early years were designed to meet the practical needs of day-to-day pastoral ministry in the congregations and in the mission fields of the church.

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<sup>2</sup> Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod 1847-1947* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 117.

<sup>3</sup> Erich H. Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets: The Anatomy of a Seminary, 1846-1976* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri (the “theoretical” seminary), began life as Concordia College in Altenburg, Missouri in 1839. When ownership of Concordia Seminary was transferred to the LCMS in 1850, the articles of transfer stipulated:

That the institution remain what it is, namely, a college offering courses preparatory for the study of theology and for the training of teachers of elementary and secondary schools, together with a seminary (theological) in which students receive a theoretical training in theology.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the “theoretical” seminary historically endeavored “to give men (a) broad basic education and training (to) enable them to function in a proper way as theologians of the church, regardless of the ministry to which they should be called.”<sup>7</sup> In later years the key to this theoretical training in theology was the pre-theological preparation of the student. Entering students were expected to have:

A high level of understanding of the history and literature of the Bible ... a broad liberal arts education ...the ability to use the languages of the Word as it was given to us by God through the holy writers ... Greek for the New Testament and Hebrew for the Old Testament ... Latin to help him study the writings of the early church and of the Reformation; German, to help him unlock the treasures of the great Lutheran teachers.

... In addition he should have the usual courses in the historical development of mankind and some elementary courses dealing with the social, economic, and political problems of the day...and an adequate understanding of the biophysical world (natural and social sciences).<sup>8</sup>

The point is that the terms, “practical” and “theoretical,” have historically been used to define differing levels of preparation for theological training. They also define the

<sup>6</sup> Walter A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod 1847-1947* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 118. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>7</sup> Karl. L. Barth, “Concordia Seminary - A Theological Seminary,” in *Light For Our World: Concordia Seminary 150 Years*, ed. John W. Klotz (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 1989), 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur C. Repp, “Pastoral Training of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,” in *Toward A More Excellent Ministry*, Ed. Richard R. Caemmerer and Alfred O. Fuerbringer (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 63-78. 67-68.



depth and content of theological education. "Practical" training is designed to train men as "quickly as possible" for the pastoral ministry,<sup>9</sup> while the "theoretical" training is designed to prepare men to "function ... as theologians of the church."<sup>10</sup>

We now turn to the circumstances that caused the LCMS to develop dual, but parallel, tracks leading to service in the public ministry of the word.

### **The Beginnings of the LCMS and the "Theoretical" Seminary**

The history of the nineteenth century is the history of the maturing of the United States of America as a nation. During this time the "frontier" virtually disappeared, commerce and transportation systems developed and the population grew from 5,308,483 to 75,994,575, as a result of waves of immigrants.<sup>11</sup> It was during this period that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was formed in response to "the tide of Lutheran immigration (that) was beginning to surge,"<sup>12</sup> and the need to call and recall these immigrants to faith.

The founders were also concerned for doctrinal and confessional purity, a concern that can be traced to the early years of the 19th century and events in Germany. This latter concern affected not only the political life of Germany but also the spiritual lives of its citizens and, consequently, the history of the LCMS.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Heintzen, 37.

<sup>10</sup> Barth, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Those concerns are mentioned here because they help us understand some of the tensions that exist yet today in the LCMS concerning the office of pastoral ministry.

The year of the 300th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, 1817, was significant for Lutherans all over the world, but especially so for those in Germany. Lutheran historian Abdel Wentz notes that, "The formation during that year of the Prussian Union of Lutheran and Reformed churches by royal decree,"<sup>14</sup> caused great distress for those Lutherans who wanted to maintain their confessional identity.

In Dresden an influential Lutheran pastor, Martin Stephan, "a powerful preacher and a man of remarkable personality and great organizing ability,"<sup>15</sup> gathered a group of followers who emigrated to St. Louis, and Perry County, Missouri, (about 110 miles south of St. Louis) arriving in February of 1839. We are told that, "In Stephan's company there were five other ministers, ten candidates for the ministry, a number of teachers and professional men, merchants, craftsmen, laborers, and farmers - a total of 612 souls."<sup>16</sup>

Three of those candidates for the ministry, Theodore J. Brohm, Ottomar Fuerbringer, and J. Friederic Buenger, worked during the summer of 1839 to build a log cabin in which to house Concordia College which eventually became Concordia Seminary. The course of study was modeled after that of a German *Gymnasium*.

Brohm, Fuerbringer, and Buenger, along with Pastor C. Ferdinand W. Walther, proposed to offer "Religion, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Physics, Natural History, Elements of Philosophy, Music,

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<sup>14</sup> Abdel R. Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 92.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Drawing.”<sup>17</sup> And so were sown the seeds of the theoretical seminary – Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime Pastor Stephan had fallen into disgrace because of “the sins of fornication and adultery, ... and of prodigal maladministration of the property of others, [and] ... false doctrine.”<sup>19</sup> He was defrocked and on May 31, 1839, “Stephan stooped over a cane ... was conducted to the waiting ferry. [And] ... rowed across the Mississippi River” to Red Bud Illinois.<sup>20</sup>

In the disgrace and confusion that followed, the leadership of the Missouri Lutherans fell to the youthful C. F. W. Walther. From 1839 to his death in 1887 the history of Missouri Lutheranism is closely identified with the story of Walther’s life.<sup>21</sup>

Following Stephan’s banishment, “Some of the pastors, Walther among them, began to doubt their call to the ministry. (And) many of the colonists ...doubted that they were really Christians or that the true church of Christ existed among them at all.”<sup>22</sup>

Walther put it this way in a May 4, 1840, letter to his brother:

The chief questions with which we are now concerned are these: are our congregations Christian Lutheran congregations, or are they sects? Have they the power to call and to excommunicate? Are we pastors, or are we not? Are our calls valid? ... Is it possible for us to have a divine call, since we have forsaken our call in Germany and run away?<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> W. H. T. Dau, *Ebenezer: Review of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Three Quarters of A Century* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 229-230.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>19</sup> Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 418.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

<sup>21</sup> Wentz, 111.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, 46.

To answer these questions a public debate was held April 15, and 20, 1841, in Altenburg (Perry County), Missouri. Walther presented and defended "the Scriptural view of the doctrine of the Church and the ministry."<sup>24</sup>

He successfully maintained that the church consists of an invisible communion of saints, that where the true faith is, there the true church is. ...Consequently, he maintained, these congregations of the colonists must be regarded ... as part of the true church of Christ, and as having full authority to call pastors.<sup>25</sup>

Abdel Wentz, says, "This not only eased the minds of the colonists but also established the fundamental principles of church organization which characterize the Missouri Synod to this day."<sup>26</sup> Later, when as a result of Walther's work and publications the LCMS was formed in 1847; Walther became its first president and leading theologian.

The Altenburg crises and debate, along with Walther's later work, *Kirche und Amt* (translated as *Church and Ministry*),<sup>27</sup> are, I believe, at the heart of the debate which continues in the LCMS today concerning the pastoral ministry: who should be ordained and the relationship of pastors to congregations. The result is that these questions also contribute to the question of whether the preparation of pastors should be primarily "practical" or "theoretical."

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>25</sup> Wentz., 112.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Carl F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987).

### The Beginnings of the Practical Seminary

About the same time as the Lutherans from Dresden were immigrating to the United States, a man by the name of Wilhelm Loehe, was being prepared to affect the future of this fledgling American church even though he himself never visited the United States.<sup>28</sup> “When he was ordained in 1831 Wilhelm Loehe was an absolutely convinced, Biblically-oriented, confessionally-bound Lutheran ready to give himself to the pastoral ministry.”<sup>29</sup> Eventually he became the pastor of the Lutheran church in the village of Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, where he stayed for the remainder of his ministry. There “the village pastor’s reputation grew” to the point that “his sermons were published throughout Germany and even reached America.”<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, in the United States, the Rev. Friedrich C. D. Wyneken, a graduate of the universities of Göttingen and Halle, had begun his work as a missionary.

Using Fort Wayne, Indiana, as a base, Wyneken made Gospel forays into northwestern Ohio, southern Michigan, and northern Indiana, (where) he searched out the lost, lonely, and straying among the scattered German settlers.<sup>31</sup>

During a four month mission trip in 1834, Wyneken “organized three congregations, preached 58 times, baptized 68 children and two adults, confirmed one, administered the Lord’s Supper to about 180 persons, married one couple, buried one,

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<sup>28</sup> A.M. Bickel, *Our Forgotten Father: A Biography of Pastor William Loehe* (Napoleon, Ohio: Author, 1997), 27.

<sup>29</sup> Heintzen, *Love Leaves Home: Wilhelm Loehe and the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>31</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*, 18-19.

and collected \$16.50.”<sup>32</sup> But he felt helpless in the face of the enormity of the task and so began to issue tracts and pamphlets appealing for help, which carried his words back to Germany.<sup>33</sup>

In Germany, Pastor Loehe read one of Wyneken’s pamphlets, titled *An Appeal for the Assistance of the German Protestant Church in North America*. In this pamphlet Wyneken told in graphic detail how German immigrants were dying in the American wilderness without the consolation of the Gospel.<sup>34</sup> This, in turn, caused Loehe to issue his own appeal for money and “any pastor, ministerial candidate, or school teacher to volunteer for immediate service in America.” The response was immediate, the money poured in, but there were no volunteers.<sup>35</sup>

Then two men came to Loehe: Adam Ernst, a young shoemaker who had little formal education, and George Burger, a weaver who was near-sighted and awkward.

So the Neuendettelsau parsonage became also a seminary to train missionary schoolteachers for America. Pastor Loehe set up a one-year crash course that one graduate later referred to as ‘the Neuendettelsau purgatory.’ It consisted of a quick overview of English and history, the Lutheran Book of Concord, Christian doctrine, Bible history, the beliefs of American denominations (especially Methodism, the source of greatest competition), pastoral theology, catechetics, homiletics, liturgics, and practical experience (in teaching, conducting services, and visiting the sick). As Loehe noted, he was not training theologians but readying men for an emergency situation.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Quoted from the *Minutes of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania* of 1839.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>34</sup> Heintzen, *Love Leaves Home*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 18.

Wyneken visited Germany in 1841 where he made personal contact with Loehe. During that visit Wyneken pledged his wholehearted support to Loehe. "After 18 ...months in Germany, Wyneken returned to New York on June 18, 1843, with bag, baggage, and promises. Not the type to wait for others to act, he began in 1844 to train two young men in his Fort Wayne parsonage."<sup>37</sup> The theological training for these men, whom had both previously taught school, chiefly emphasized preaching and catechizing.<sup>38</sup> Wyneken, who became the second president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,<sup>39</sup> left Ft. Wayne, in 1845 to become pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Baltimore, Maryland.

His successor, Wilhelm Sihler, who became a "founder, professor, and president of the practical seminary in Fort Wayne, ... also resumed in his parsonage the theological training of the two students," whom Wyneken had begun to prepare for the pastoral ministry.<sup>40</sup> What is noteworthy in light of the events to follow is that Sihler, the "son of a Prussian military officer (had) a doctorate from the University of Berlin and (had been) an instructor at Dresden."<sup>41</sup> He had come to America in 1843 in response to Wyneken's appeals for help in mission work among the Germans, and later became the first First-Vice President of the LCMS.<sup>42</sup>

The progress of the two students,

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<sup>37</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*. 20.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Wentz, 115.

<sup>40</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*, 21-23.

<sup>41</sup> Wentz, 116.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

...made a deep impression on Sihler and suggested to him the great potential for the church, of a body of pastors with minimal practical training, who could be put into the field quickly, yet would serve effectively. A seminary to train such pastors on American soil was the desperate need of the hour. But to whom could he turn for help? Wilhelm Loehe. Wyneken had already ... called Loehe's attention to the need for a seminary of sorts. Sihler himself before leaving Germany had visited Loehe and discussed thoroughly the American mission projects. Accordingly, Sihler now proposed to Loehe the founding of a school for the training of orthodox Lutheran pastors on American soil.<sup>43</sup>

These three men, Loehe, Wyneken, and Sihler, all classically trained pastors and theologians, had a passion for mission work: the need to spread the Gospel to those in the America who had either fallen away or who had never had the opportunity to learn the truth of the Gospel. "A seminary was the key to an indigenous ministry."<sup>44</sup>

At the urging of Sihler "to establish a seminary on American soil so that the young missionaries, instead of receiving their entire theological training in Germany, might obtain some of their education in America and thus become acclimated to the local conditions,"<sup>45</sup> Loehe responded with enthusiasm. And a seminary was born.

Eleven young men, accompanied by Candidate K. Roebbelen who was to assist Sihler in their training for mission work in our country, arrived at Fort Wayne in September 1846. These eleven young men, sent by Loehe, were the first student body... Parenthetically it should be stated that the term 'practical' in this connection refers to a course of instruction designed to equip the student for the practical work of preaching as well as pastoral care and leadership in the congregation. Such a course omits wholly or in part the study of the original languages of the Bible and certain other subjects taught in the so-called theoretical seminaries such as our Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Blessing*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.



And so the stage was set for an on-going discussion over the type of preparation needed for pastors of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It is a discussion that parallels the internal struggles over an understanding of what it means to be a pastor and to be “in ministry.” It is a debate that continues yet today and so is worth a cursory examination in this chapter.

### **The Formation of the LCMS and its Break with Loehe**

In 1844, C. F. W. Walther, by now the president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and pastor of a number of congregations in that city, began the publication of a newspaper titled “*Der Lutheraner*.” Its purpose was “to defend the church of the Reformation against attack and to expound the doctrines and principles of Lutheranism.”<sup>47</sup> Lutherans all across the United States read it and received its message. The result was the formation of what is today known as The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The Centennial booklet of Concordia Theological Seminary summarizes the event this way: “The “German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States” was organized at Chicago April 26, 1847. The charter members were the Loehe-men and the Saxons who had come to Missouri in 1839.”<sup>48</sup>

But the question of the relationship of the Church (congregations) to the Ministry (pastors), led to continued discussions between Walther and Loehe. The opposing views expressed by the two men who were most responsible for the founding of the two Seminaries of the fledgling church, represent at least some of the questions that continue to contribute to the question of whether a “practical” theological education continues to

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<sup>47</sup> Wentz, 112.

<sup>48</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Blessing*, 13.

be in the best interest of the Church today. It must also be said that at times each side seems to argue for the other's position.

In 1851 Loehe published a book titled *Kirche und Amt: Neue Aphorismen*,<sup>49</sup> while Walther, in 1852, issued his *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Prage von Kirche und Amt*.<sup>50</sup> "In general, both books were reaffirmations of views which had previously separated Pastor Loehe and the Missouri Synod on the doctrines of church and ministry."<sup>51</sup>

Professor John H. C. Fritz, who served as Dean of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1920-1940, summarized those differences in this way in 1922:

(Loehe) did not believe that every Christian has all the rights and privileges of the Office of the Keys, not that the Christians, as spiritual priests, transfer their rights, when calling a pastor, to such pastor for public administration, and that in this wise the office of the ministry is established in a congregation, and that, therefore, the office of the ministry is derived from the spiritual priesthood of believers.

Not through the local congregation, said Loehe, but through the Church, that is, through the congregation and the clergy, the Lord calls and ordains men for the ministry. Loehe believed that the clergy is entitled to a voice in the calling of a pastor, and he was not satisfied to admit that ordination was simply a church ceremony, which publicly attested to the validity of the call.<sup>52</sup>

Put more clearly, Loehe believed that the congregation derives from the ministry and that the pastor establishes the congregation. Ordination establishes the call, and confers the office. His view allowed for the formation of clergy by other clergy to whom these new pastors would continue to be accountable and from whom they would continue

<sup>49</sup> *The Church and the Ministry-New Aphorisms*

<sup>50</sup> *The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and Ministry*

<sup>51</sup> Heintzen, *Love Leaves Home*, 63.

<sup>52</sup> Fritz, John H. C., *Missouri and Iowa*. In W. H. T. Dau, *Ebenezer: Review of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Three Quarters of A Century* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 164.

to receive direction in their ministry. At the same time it would also seem to point to the need for a more “theoretically” trained clergy who would supervise these “practically” trained men.

Walther, on the other hand, “vigorously opposed any notion which might make the ministry a ‘peculiar order set up against the common estate of Christians.’ He asserted the right of the congregation to establish the office.”<sup>53</sup>

Pastor Walther insisted: “We do not tolerate the slightest encroachment on the office of the ministry by the congregation. Among us the pastor does not lord it over the congregation, nor the congregation over the pastor, but both are ruled by the Word of God.”<sup>54</sup>

Thesis VII and VIII of Walther’s *Church and Ministry* read:

**VII.** The holy ministry of the Word is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and all church power, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office in the name of the congregation.

**VIII.** The pastoral ministry is the highest office in the church, and from it stems all other offices in the church.<sup>55</sup>

Walther’s view, which continues to be the official position of the LCMS, appears to call for a “theoretically” trained clergy as those who hold “the highest office in the church.” And yet Thesis X says, “To the ministry of the Word, according to divine right, belongs also the duty to judge doctrine, but laymen also possess this right. Therefore, in the ecclesiastical courts and councils they are accorded both a seat and vote together with

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<sup>53</sup> Baepler, *Love Leaves Home*, 64.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Carl F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 22.

the clergy.”<sup>56</sup> So it is also evident that Walther believed that those who were less than “theoretically” trained also possess the facility to judge (and teach) pure doctrine.

The differences eventually led Loehe, through his followers in America, to establish a new synod, the “Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa,” organized in August 1854.<sup>57</sup> And so the split was accomplished.

But the legacy of Loehe, his emergency workers and support of the practical seminary lived on through the influence of several men: Pastor Sihler, as First Vice President of the LCMS and President of the Ft. Wayne Seminary, and Pastor Wyneken, one of the founders of that Seminary who had become Walther’s successor as the second President of the Synod in 1850, following Walther’s appointment as President of the St. Louis Seminary. The question continued, “What to do with the two seminaries and their differing approach to the preparation of men for the pastoral ministry?”

### **Geographical and Educational Moves: The Two Seminaries Joined**

From the beginning of the Synod (1847) there had been an expressed desire to combine the two Seminaries in the interest of unity. In 1860 President Wyneken appointed a committee to study the matter. Led by Dr. Sihler, the president of the Ft. Wayne Seminary, the committee listed seven reasons for combining the two seminaries. The reasons were accepted by the Synod in Convention in 1860, and the transfer was to take place, if possible, by September 1, 1861.<sup>58</sup> The reasons listed by Sihler’s committee were:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Heintzen, *Love Leaves Home*, 235.

<sup>58</sup> Carl S. Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower* (St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 1965).

1. The advantage of a larger faculty would further the cause of pure doctrine.
2. The professor's gifts could be better used, permitting greater concentration and higher quality of instruction.
3. Greater uniformity in teaching methods would result by new professors learning for the experience of their older colleagues.
4. Individual students could be guided and appraised better in a combined institution.
5. The older students from Ft. Wayne with their more mature Christian experience could exert a beneficial influence over their younger, college trained brothers while the younger students would stimulate the practical men to greater academic effort.
6. An enlarged faculty would facilitate the task of writing and editing, and the combined faculty would command a greater respect from the Church.
7. And "last but not least, one combined seminary could live more cheaply than two."<sup>59</sup>

When Loehe was notified of the proposed transfer he observed that the move would assure the institution's continuity but might endanger the primary purpose of the practical seminary. Sihler observed years later that all had not gone as he had hoped and it may have been better had both schools been permitted to remain at their original locations.<sup>60</sup>

The outbreak of the Civil War in April of 1861, lent urgency to the move since Missouri, unlike Indiana, granted theological students exemption from military service. At the same time, Indiana offered a safer haven for the youth of the St. Louis Gymnasium, which served as a preparatory school for the theoretical Seminary. So the Gymnasium was moved to Ft. Wayne and "the practical seminary was brought to St. Louis."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 41. And Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophet*, 55. (It is interesting to note the "spin" that each author places on these events depending upon their orientation.)

<sup>60</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophet*, 55.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 56.

The histories of the two seminaries, Meyer's *Log Cabin to Luther Tower*, published in 1965, and Heintzen's *Prairie School of the Prophets*, published in 1989, present two different views of the results of that first year. These reports reveal the tension that has existed over the years between the "practical" and "theoretical" tracks of preparation for pastoral ministry. Meyer reports:

There were only 36 students at the St. Louis Concordia in 1861-62. At the close of the school year, ...only six were sent out as pastors. The theoretical Seminary that insisted on the intensive plan of preparation contributed none of these six graduates. But the need for pastors was exerting a great pressure on the leaders of the seminaries and of the Synod.<sup>62</sup>

Heintzen, on the other hand says,

The newly arrived practical seminary was the larger of the two divisions, and the combined enrollment in 1861-62 was only 36. At the close of the school year six graduates entered the ministry, all from the practical division. At the beginning of the 1862 school year, there were 28 in the practical division and 13 in its proseminary. In view of the dire needs of the church, recruits were few.<sup>63</sup>

Men recruited for the practical "division" from Germany met the needs of the church. Meanwhile the "proseminary," or "pre-seminary," still located in Ft. Wayne, eventually began to send more men to the theoretical seminary. But the tensions remained, as did the difference in the number of graduates. Baepler notes, "By 1872 the theoretical seminary at St. Louis had graduated 130 candidates for the ministry, while the practical seminary at Fort Wayne-St. Louis had prepared 298 men as missionaries and pastors."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Meyer, 44.

<sup>63</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophet*, 57.

<sup>64</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, 127.

And some maintain that it affected the direction of the Synod. “For the next 30 years, because of the difference in the number of graduates, the ministers who claimed the practical seminary as their alma mater would have a majority voice in the affairs of Synod. There is no evidence that they formed a bloc, ... [but] they did determine the [theological] stance of Missouri, emphasizing orthodoxy rather than scholarship and orthodoxy as Walther wished.”<sup>65</sup>

In a strange turn of events, it was that emphasis on “orthodoxy rather than scholarship” that actually led to the elimination of the “practical” track, as the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate. It also contributed, at least in part, to the loss of a missionary emphasis in the LCMS.

#### **Another Move and More Changes: The Two Seminaries Separated**

With the two Seminaries combined and more and more students in attendance, The Synod soon faced a housing problem. It became a question of either erecting additional buildings as a part of the south St. Louis campus, or of moving the practical seminary to another place. The matter was decided when property and a building erected in 1854 by the North Illinois Synod in Springfield, Illinois, became available to the Synod. Thus the Convention of the LCMS in 1874 elected to separate the two seminaries “organically” and move the practical seminary to Springfield, Illinois.<sup>66</sup>

There is general agreement that while the purpose of this move was, on the surface, a purely practical one designed to relieve the housing problem, there was also a deeper motive involved. “The practical seminary with its reduced training program had

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<sup>65</sup> Meyer, 63. Parentheses added.

<sup>66</sup> Baepler, *A Century of Blessing*, 21-22.

been able to produce many pastors equipped to perform basic, routine work in parish. But Walther (and the Synod) was not minded to settle for numbers at the expense of academic training.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed the histories of both seminaries report a private letter of Walther’s to a pastor C. M. Zorn, dated 23 November 1876:

Just between you and me, the larger number of so-called “practical preachers” in our synod has always been our weak side, since more and more of these have been added, who, before they entered the theological seminary, were not only devoid of practically all mental development but also weak in both ability and character. They are in danger of becoming our Achilles heel. In their ignorance they often see heresies where nothing of the sort exists. I merely plead with you, have patience with the dullards, but so far as the unclean (*unlauteren*) ones are concerned, when it becomes evident that they are such, make short shrift of them.<sup>68</sup>

The combining of the two seminaries at St. Louis in 1861 and the transfer of the Concordia Gymnasium to Fort Wayne, followed by the separation of the two seminaries in 1875, established the direction of Synod’s system of preparing men for pastoral ministry. Theological education in the LCMS was to become more and more focused on “theoretical” training versus “practical” training. The final demise of the practical track of seminary training did not come until almost a century later, but the dye was caste.

With the transfer of the “gymnasium department” to Fort Wayne, Indiana, a preparatory institution was for the first time assigned a separate geographical location, faculty, and administration that were distinct from the theoretical seminary. For the next 20 years it was the Synod’s only gymnasium, but it was not the last.

Indeed, it was only the beginning:

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<sup>67</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*, 66.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 67, and Meyer, 43.



When in 1881 the state of Indiana amended its charter and officially designated this institution as Concordia College, it confirmed the pattern under which the Missouri Synod would eventually establish 11 other similar institutions as feeders for its major theological (and theoretical) seminary in St. Louis.<sup>69</sup>

The Concordia College, preparatory system of the LCMS had been born.

### **What the “System” Meant for Theological Education**

The Concordia College system was unique in American history. The course of study was typically 6 years in length. “In relation to the more familiar pattern, however, the first four years, *sexta* through *tertia*, offered work of high school level and the final two years, *secunda* and *prima* were analogous to a junior college.”<sup>70</sup> The graduates of these preparatory schools were all expected to matriculate to the St. Louis, Seminary, where they received a seminary (or theological) diploma upon graduation following an additional four years of academic work.

This theological diploma, which is still issued today, attests to the readiness of the graduate for ordination as a pastor of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The only difference between the diplomas issued in St. Louis and those issued in Springfield was the name of the institution and the signatures of the professors.

### **Some of the Differences Between the Seminaries**

Still, the course of study at the two institutions was markedly different, as was their self-image. Because of the Springfield seminary’s own understanding of its unique role of promoting “pastoral and missionary objectives,” its entrance requirements were

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<sup>69</sup> Richard W. Solberg, *Lutheran Higher Education in North America* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 149.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

much less rigorous than that of its sister seminary.<sup>71</sup> But the more rigorous entrance requirements of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis still did not satisfy many of the clergy in Synod, as we will see later.

The enrollment trends at the turn of the century tell part of the story: The St. Louis enrollment began to grow even as the Springfield enrollment continued downward following their record year of 1893-94, when the figure “was just under 300.”<sup>72</sup> By September 1915 the Springfield enrollment had dropped to 201, while in St. Louis it had climbed to 328.<sup>73</sup> The prep school system was paying off as it produced a growing enrollment at the St. Louis Seminary. In 1896 Synod had imposed a ceiling of 175 on the Springfield enrollment and so its enrollment numbers declined as St. Louis’ numbers rose.<sup>74</sup>

No enrollment ceiling existed in St. Louis. During the 1919-20 school year there were a total of 383 students enrolled, and the Seminary was running out of room even at its, by now expanded, campus in South St. Louis. As a sign of support for the work being done at the St. Louis Seminary, “The 1920 convention of the Synod voted to build a new plant (in Clayton, Missouri, a suburb just outside the boundaries of St. Louis), which was dedicated in 1926.”<sup>75</sup> It is a campus of “gothic grandeur” befitting the high intentions of

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<sup>71</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*, 114.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>75</sup> Meyer, 144.

its supporters. These high intentions included a continual “upgrading” of the curriculum as the St. Louis Seminary moved more and more in the “theoretical” direction.

### **“The System” is Upgraded**

Beginning about this time it is reported that, “more and more people asked questions about the LCMS pre-ministerial system. A few clergy wanted to know why they could not have a B.A. besides a seminary diploma.”<sup>76</sup> The move was on to upgrade the education of those who were preparing at the theoretical seminary.

Discussion at the 1923 Convention of the Synod indicated enough interest in the subject to encourage the preparatory school professors to restudy the question. “So at their meeting in Lombard, Illinois, in June 1925, the Professors’ Conference resolved to petition the Synod to add two years to our junior college course, thus extending it to a senior college and placing it on a par with our American colleges.”<sup>77</sup>

The reasons the professors gave are instructive in that they indicate a trend that led eventually to the full demise of the practical track of preparation for the ministry of the LCMS. The reasons included these three:

1. That our students may be better prepared for the study of theology and for the office of the ministry.
2. That our future pastors may attain a greater knowledge and with perfect right may be considered college graduates (A.B. degree). ...and...
3. That pastors who must also teach school may, on the basis of their credits, receive a state certificate of teaching.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Edgar Walz, *Diamond Bricks Live On In The Scandinavian Village* (Freeman S. Dakota: Pine Hill Press, Inc, 1998), 40. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 41.

What ensued was a several decades long discussion of what to do as the “clamor for an expanded pre-theological course continued.” Finally, “At Synod’s Centennial Convention of 1947, held at the Palmer House in Chicago ... the Board for Higher Education recommended that Synod establish a two-year senior college (junior and senior years) as an additional unit in the professional training of ministerial students.”<sup>79</sup>

The recommendation met with a storm of objections. The faculties of the junior colleges argued that such a move would throw the Synod “out of step” with the generally accepted policies of education in the United States. Whoever heard of a two-year senior college? Still the convention voted to establish just such a school. Then came the question of where to locate this Senior College.<sup>80</sup>

In 1953 the decision was made to close the junior college in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, sell the land and purchase a new site on which to build a new campus.<sup>81</sup> A 187-acre tract was purchased and Eero Saarinen<sup>82</sup> was chosen as the architect for the new campus. Ground was broken in May, 1954, and in September, 1957, the first year class began at Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne, Indiana.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> John W. Behnken, *This I Recall* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 70.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>82</sup> Oscar T. Walle, *Lest We Forget-Lest We Forget* (Springfield, IL: Self Published, 1978), 20. (Eero Saarinen had been a consultant on the design of the Air Force Academy and an award winning designer of various campuses.)

<sup>83</sup> Walz, 60-62.

On March 29, 1962, the North Central Accrediting Association accredited the Senior College. Which led in turn to regional accreditation of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and it began to offer the B.D. degree to its graduates.<sup>84</sup>

From 1959 forward, the only students who matriculated to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, came from Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. And, unless a student opted *not* to enter the ministry following his graduation from the Senior College, his only option was to enroll at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (Springfield was prohibited from accepting Senior College graduates). And so the goal of "theoretical" training for pastors in the LCMS took a huge step forward

By 1959, the "system" was complete, and its emphasis had grown beyond the theological diploma to the point where the Bachelor of Divinity degree had become the standard first professional degree for LCMS Pastors. Even Springfield was making plans to offer the B.D. as early as 1959, as it asked the synod to "declare that a bachelor's degree be a requirement for registration and to institute a B.D. program."<sup>85</sup>

Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois continued to prepare men of various backgrounds. But "almost imperceptibly, the seminary was reshaping and strengthening itself for the future."<sup>86</sup> It expanded its curricular offerings and faculty, and

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 154-155.

<sup>85</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*, 196.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 195.

increased its enrollment to 433 by 1959.<sup>87</sup> And it was “beginning to look more like the St. Louis seminary every day.”<sup>88</sup>

By 1967, “the Springfield seminary had become a functional part of the Synodical system (and) the New York Convention of that year made it an integral part.”<sup>89</sup> The Board for Higher Education of the LCMS, in its report to that convention said, “In the United States professional theological study is post baccalaureate. Both seminaries do and should work at this level.”<sup>90</sup>

And then there came this unexpected move on the part of the Synod: The 1967 convention adopted the following Overture.

WHEREAS, Our Springfield seminary now grants the Bachelor of Divinity degree; and

WHEREAS, The Springfield seminary is at the point of qualifying for accreditation in the American Association of Theological Schools; and

WHEREAS, It is desirable that the young men of our church be free to attend the seminary of their choice, as in the case of students attending the Synod’s teachers colleges; therefore be it

*Resolved that*, the Synod declare that the graduates of the Fort Wayne senior college are free and without restriction in attending either the Springfield or the St. Louis Seminary.<sup>91</sup>

The “system” that had favored the “theoretical” seminary in St. Louis over the “practical” seminary in Springfield was breached, and “practical” theological preparation for the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 204. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>91</sup> *Proceedings, 1967, 142.*

pastoral ministry was essentially at an end. But then came another “upgrade,” and this one was precipitated by changes on the American scene of theological education.

### **From B.D. to MDiv. - another “Upgrade”**

The book, *The Advancement of Theological Education*, was published in 1957. This book was a follow-up to an extensive survey conducted by the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS), the predecessor of today’s ATS (Association of Theological Schools),<sup>92</sup> of its member institutions and some other schools as well. The findings are not as important as the observation throughout the work that the presumed divinity degree is clearly and universally the B.D.<sup>93</sup> The effect of this presumption on the seminaries of the LCMS has already been documented above, but there was more to come.

Charles Willard, Director of Accreditation and Institutional Evaluation for ATS, and a former theological librarian, responding to a list serve question regarding the move from the B.D. to the M.Div. described, in a December 2004, e-mail, the following development:

At the June 1966 Biennial Meeting the [ATS] voted to "adopt the recommendation [of its Commission on Research and Council] that the Association 'commend the adoption by each member school of either of the following alternatives as suitable recognition of the basic professional education of the ordained ministry: (1) retention of the B.D. nomenclature for the basic theological degree [or] (2) the adoption of a master's designation for the basic theological degree [and] to adopt the recommendation that 'the designation for this basic master's degree be Master of Divinity.'" <sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The ATS is the national accrediting agency of Theological Schools and Seminaries in the United States, its opinions are therefore formative for the way in which these schools structure their programs.

<sup>93</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams and James M. Gustafson, *The Advancement of Theological Education* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

<sup>94</sup> Charles Willard <Atlantas listserve>, December 3, 2004.

Thus the M.Div. was being put forward as a replacement for the B.D. designation. *The Fact Book on Theological Education 1970-1971* indicates that by that year, two-thirds of the enrollments for 3-year degree programs among accredited member institutions were in M.Div. programs rather than B.D.<sup>95</sup>

And so in 1971, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, stated the following in its report to the Synodical Convention in Milwaukee:

**B. Change in Degree Nomenclature**

The American Association of Theological Schools has adopted the position that assumes that the Bachelor of Divinity degree is no longer appropriate as the first theological degree and that the B.D. will be discontinued. AATS further assumes that the Master of Divinity is an appropriate, recognized degree for ordination for ministry.

With the concurrence of the Board for Higher Education, the Board of Control authorized the implementation of this change in degree nomenclature so that with the present academic year our graduates will receive the M.Div. degree instead of the B.D. Appropriate measures are now being formulated which will enable former B.D. recipients to convert their degrees to M.Div. degrees.<sup>96</sup>

Similarly, in the same 1971 Convention Workbook, the report from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, contains this statement: "The class that will vicar next year will be the first to receive the new master of divinity (M.Div) degree, which will replace the old B.D. degree."<sup>97</sup>

The break had been made. No longer was the emphasis on the "theological diploma," as the first professional degree. Beginning in 1971, in St. Louis, and 1974, in Springfield, the emphasis of the program of pastoral education was viewed as graduate or

<sup>95</sup> *The Fact Book on Theological Education 1970-71* (Dayton, Ohio: American Association of Theological Schools, 1971), 39.

<sup>96</sup> Sent to Reconcile: Convention Manual (Reports and Overtures), 49th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, July 9-16, 1971 (St. Louis, MO, 1971), 288.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.



“theoretical” theological education. The intentionally “practical” track of preparation for the pastoral ministry had disappeared from the seminaries of the LCMS forcing virtually all candidates to follow the longer, more demanding “theoretical” track of preparation.

### **Final Changes: Synod “Blows Up”**

There is not time or space to go into what happened in the following years in any detail. But a doctrinal controversy over Biblical interpretation that had been brewing in the Synod since sometime in the 1950’s exploded in the early 1970’s. As a result, on February 20, 1974, most of the faculty and students of Concordia Seminary “walked out” and formed a new Seminary named “Seminex,” meaning “Concordia Seminary in Exile.”<sup>98</sup> Eventually a large number of pastors and congregations of the Synod left; formed their own organization, and eventually became a part of today’s Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).

These events left a large scar on the remaining members of the LCMS, and many of those scars have not yet healed. These events also resulted in an immediate drop in membership. However that alone cannot account for the continuing decline of membership that the Church continues to experience. Equally important I believe was the loss of missionary vision that either led to or resulted in the loss of the “practical” track of ministerial preparation just outlined.

### **Final Changes: Educational Restructuring**

As the seminaries were moving toward the M.Div., an increasing number of students at the Senior College in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, were stating their intention to apply

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<sup>98</sup> Frederick W. Danker, *No Room in the Brotherhood* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton Publishing House, Inc, 1977), 302ff.

to Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, upon graduation.<sup>99</sup> At the same time the Senior College was experiencing a decreasing enrollment because many of the Junior Colleges of the Synod were expanding to four-year programs.<sup>100</sup> In the midst of this, the President of that institution, Martin J. Neeb, Sr., who had been instrumental in the founding of that institution, retired in 1972.

Then, in another “surprise move,” following the 1974 “walk-out” in St. Louis, the Synod in Convention in 1975, resolved to move the Springfield seminary back to Fort Wayne on the “beautiful campus of Concordia Senior College, whose program was to be phased out.”<sup>101</sup> Needless to say there was much consternation in Ft. Wayne and throughout the Synod, but the deed was done and the move took place on July 1, 1976, and “the two schools occupied and operated on the Ft. Wayne campus during 1976-77.”<sup>102</sup>

The Senior College, which had been so instrumental in moving the Synod’s preparation of pastors from a two-track system of “practical” vs. “theoretical” formation to a single system of graduate education for pastors, was no more. But the shift had been made and I believe that the Church has suffered as a result of that process.

### **An Observation about Practical Training and Outreach**

As Table 2 shows, the LCMS reached its peak membership in the early 1970’s, just about the time of both the “walk-out” and the closing of Concordia Senior College,

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<sup>99</sup> Walle, 103.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>101</sup> Heintzen, *Prairie School of the Prophets*, 211.

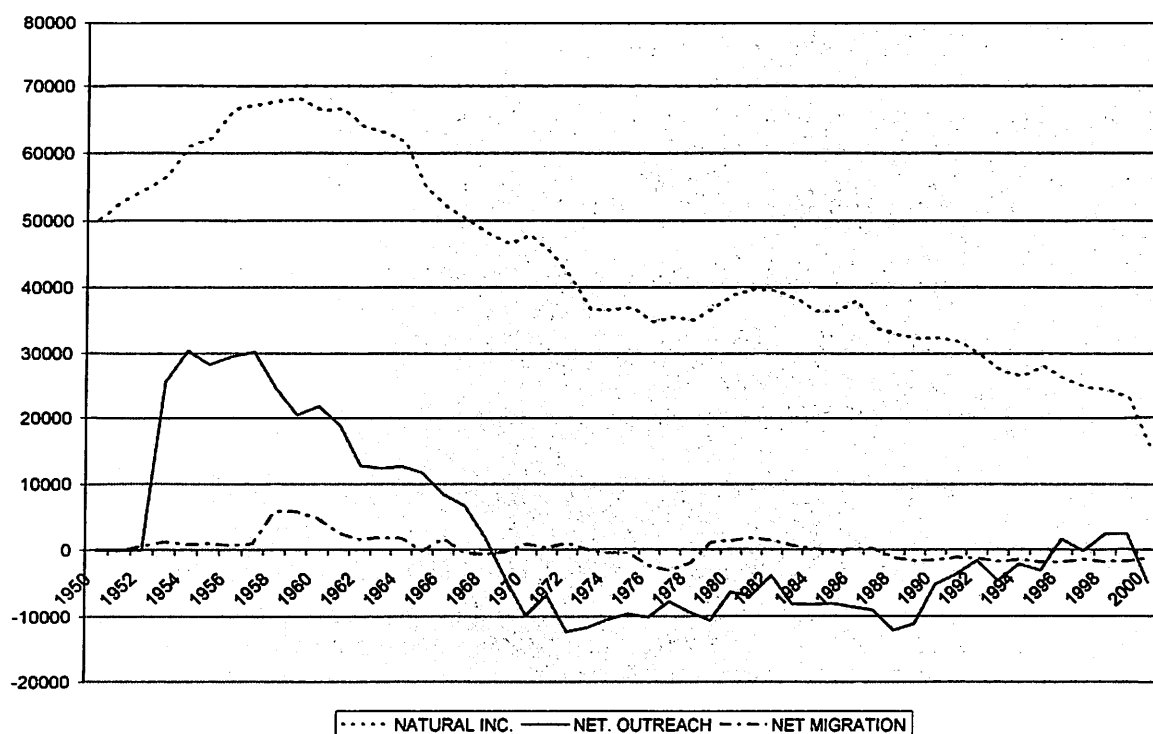
<sup>102</sup> Walz, 102

Ft. Wayne, Indiana. These events, in turn follow the demise of the “practical” training route for pastoral education in the LCMS and one cannot note any of these events without also noting the others.

John O’Hara, Director of the Office of Statistics of the LCMS who provided this table, noted in the e-mail which accompanied it: “As you can see, the primary source of our membership growth was natural increase, driven by the baby boom birth rate for white females in the 1950’s and early 1960’s. Virtually all U.S. mainline denominations show similar trends, i.e., growth rates tied to the white birth rate.”<sup>103</sup>

**Table 2**

**LCMS MEMBERSHIP CHANGE BY COMPONENT**



Source: John O’Hara, Director of the Office of Statistics, LCMS<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> John O’Hara <john.ohara@lcms.org>, "Peak Membership," 22 December 2004.

While I agree with that assessment, I do not believe it tells the whole story. It must also be noted that the table shows that the “Net Outreach” of the LCMS since 1950 was the strongest in the late 50’s, when the “practical” seminary in Springfield was still fulfilling its original purpose and its graduates were still filling the pulpits of the LCMS.

Since about 1969, when practical pastoral formation entered rapid decline in the LCMS, the “Net Outreach” of the LCMS has been below even the 1950 level for all but about three years (1997-2000). Other figures show that during the period 1982-2002, the number of “Pastors, missionaries, and teachers” in the LCMS has *dropped* from 5,840 to 5,373, while the number of vacant parishes *grew* from 586 to 1,175, and the number of graduates of the seminaries entering the ministry *fell* from 351 to 157 per year.<sup>105</sup> Based on current enrollment these numbers are changing as the number of graduates is increasing, but it does not appear that the current trend is significant enough to reverse the demographic slide of the LCMS without additional intervention.

### **Pastoral Formation: A Changed and Changing Enterprise**

In this chapter we have explored the fact that while the current emphasis in the LCMS is on “theoretical” vs. “practical” education, the history of preparation of men for pastoral ministry in the LCMS has historically included both approaches. As the shift was made from a two-track system to an almost exclusive emphasis on the “theoretical” way of preparing men for ministry we have also seen that what was lost was an emphasis on outreach which resulted in a decline in denominational membership.

If the LCMS is to grow again another shift must take place. It is the position of the author that the church must return to an emphasis on “practical” preparation of men

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<sup>105</sup> The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Department of General Services, Office of rosters and Statistics, *The Lutheran Annual 2004* (2003), 722

for the pastoral ministry along side of its current and commendable emphasis on “theoretical” preparation. DELTO, and related distance education programs, must be expanded if the church is to do a better job of reaching out to others.

Such a move, rather than representing a “dumbing-down” of the pastoral ministry, would be a return to the historic stance of the church when it comes to the training of individuals for pastoral ministry. While there are certainly some theological concerns inherent in such a move, it is needed if the church is to again reach out to those who are in need of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, immigrants and resident alike.

The church itself knows this. Concurrent with the shifts in theological education briefly outlined here there has been a movement in the LCMS that has focused on the theological training of laity as a way of preparing them to meet the evangelistic and pastoral needs of the church.

This movement involves an emphasis both on lay training and on the use of the methods of a movement known as Theological Education by Extension (TEE). The next chapter will explore these emphases in order to discover how they have led to the current distance education project of DELTO. In so doing we will discover that there is a pressing desire on the part of the church for the renewal of a “practical” track of pastoral preparation along side of the current, historic, residential, “theoretical” programs.

### CHAPTER 3

## THE INFLUENCE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION ON THE LCMS

The following e-mail was received on Tuesday, April 12, 2005. Its reference to TEE, lay ministry, pastoral ministry, and DELTO points us to the need for this chapter in our discussion of distance education in the LCMS.

*Professor Wollenburg*

*I live in ----- and am currently a student in Concordia ..... 's TEE program in Lay Ministry. As part of the program this semester, I have worked through a fairly intensive analysis of life gifts, spiritual gifts, values, etc.--this analysis has confirmed for me that I am being called into the pastoral ministry.*

*As part of this Lay Ministry training, the pastor of my congregation has directed my engagement in a number of ministries: I have been our congregation's primary catechist, I (attempt) to direct our shut-in ministry, and I teach an adult Bible class. These activities occupy approximately twenty hours a week. In short, I am fairly involved in the ministerial activity of our congregation.*

*Is this the profile of a DELTO student? I am interested in DELTO and know that the first ten classes of the TEE program can serve as the first ten classes of the DELTO program. Please advise me as to what my initial steps in pursuing this should be?*

*Thank you—Joe*

The 2001 Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod called for the formation of an “Oversight Committee” to “revise DELTO.”<sup>1</sup> When that committee was appointed I became its secretary at our first meeting on December 18, 2001. We have

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<sup>1</sup> *Convention Proceedings, 61st Regular Convention The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, July 14-20, 2001), 139. (The actual title of resolution 3-08B is “To Address Needs and Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Specialized Situations.”)

struggled often, but have also been able to bring about some real changes to the DELTO program. These changes will be outlined later.

DELTO is an acronym for “Distance Education Leading To Ordination.” It is therefore involved in theological education and pastoral ministry. At the same time many DELTO students come out of a background of lay ministry where they have received their training by means of TEE.

TEE is an acronym for “Theological Education by Extension.” Presbyterian missionaries in Guatemala developed TEE in the 1960’s as a way to prepare people who were not able to attend the seminary for localized ministries. The Board for Mission Services of the LCMS has used TEE to train indigenous pastors in “foreign” mission fields since the late 1970’s. In 1979, a Board for Missions report called TEE “a tremendously important open door.”<sup>2</sup> It is the format used by the Hispanic Institute of Theology (HIT) of Concordia Seminary,<sup>3</sup> as will be shown in this chapter.

TEE is much more than simply a new way of delivering theological education. It can properly be called a “movement,” and it has changed the way many seminaries think about their work today. This change is not primarily because of the *methods* of TEE itself so much as it is about the understanding of the mission and preparation for ministry which TEE represents.

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<sup>2</sup> August R. Suelflow, Editor, *Heritage In Motion: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1998), 378, 388-9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 389-90

This chapter will point out that concurrent with the move toward graduate theological education documented in chapter 2, an emphasis on “lay ministry” also developed in the LCMS. This was the result of the successes of the TEE movement that excited those who heard about its preparation of people for mission work as well as work in established congregations.

The history of the TEE movement will be briefly sketched along with the presuppositions and emphasizes of the movement. It will be shown that TEE has contributed to a renewed discussion of the shape also of residential theological education in the United States.

Some of the theological presuppositions of TEE differ with doctrinal positions of the LCMS and these will also be noted. The Synod dealt with those concerns as it began to be involved in lay ministry training. The move toward lay ministry training led to the beginnings of DELTO and points to a growing desire in the LCMS for a return to practical theological education as a means of preparing pastors and missionaries. It is expected that these developments will lead to discussions also about the “shape” of residential (theoretical) theological education in the LCMS. We begin with a discussion of TEE.

### **Theological Education By Extension (TEE)**

Theological Education by Extension has been variously defined. At the International Council of Accrediting Agencies Consultation held in Cyprus, in 1984, Kenneth Mulholland, a leader in the movement, having served as a theological professor in both Honduras and Costa Rica said: “TEE ... is simply decentralized theological



education. It is a field-based approach that does not interrupt the learners' productive relationships to society."<sup>4</sup>

F. Ross Kinsler, who served for thirteen years on the faculty of the Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala, where the TEE program was developed, shows us some of the thinking behind such "decentralized theological education" when he says, "The mandate for theological education is to motivate, equip, and enable the people of God to develop their gifts and give their lives in meaningful service."<sup>5</sup> He then adds, "TEE is that model of theological education, which provides systematic, independent study, plus regular supervised seminars in the context of people's varied life and work and ministry."<sup>6</sup>

Presbyterian missionaries James Emery and Ralph Winter, working in the southwestern corner of Guatemala in 1963, developed the initial concepts of TEE.<sup>7</sup> The book *Ministry by the People*, edited by Kinsler, and published by the Programme on Theological Education of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1983, includes reports from: Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, North America, Asia and Australia, and Europe (including the UK).<sup>8</sup> By 1984, TEE "had circled the globe."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Youngblood, Editor, *Cypress: TEE Come of Age* (Exeter: Paternoster Press on behalf of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the International Council of Accrediting Agencies, 1986), 9.

<sup>5</sup> F. Ross Kinsler, Editor, *Ministry By The People: Theological Education by Extension* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), ix.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph D. Winter, Editor, *Theological Education by Extension* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1969), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Kinsler, *Ministry by the People*, Table of Contents.

<sup>9</sup> Youngblood, 9.

The reports contained in the WCC report demonstrate not only the rapid growth of TEE, but also the energy and excitement this movement generated for the formation of pastors on the mission fields of the church. TEE developed new, growing churches, and those churches needed pastors. The Presbyterian Seminary founded in 1938 in Guatemala City was not meeting this need. It was, in fact, determined that the need could not be met by a residential seminary.<sup>10</sup>

This is significant because it points to a change in the way of thinking about pastoral preparation. Kenneth Mulholland listed the reasons at the WCC Cyprus Council:

1. Many residential seminary graduates either never entered the pastoral ministry or else left it to enter non-church-related occupations. "Once accustomed to urban life, many students of rural backgrounds did not return to ... the depressed areas from which they had come." So there was a need for training that could be done in the context of the ministry to be performed.
2. Even though, in 1962, the Seminary was moved to a more rural area, "The genuine leaders in the rural area could not go even a few miles to attend a residence program because of job and family responsibilities."
3. A kind of correspondence course format was adopted which included lengthy reading assignments, but "these were simply not being digested ... by the less academically oriented students." So the concepts of workbooks, programmed instruction, open education, and regional seminars were introduced.
4. The varied academic and sociological backgrounds of the local leaders who were enrolled were addressed by a basic curriculum augmented by additional work for the more academically advanced students.<sup>11</sup>

This is a profound change in the way seminary training was conceived and delivered. TEE is in no way a residential program; indeed everything possible is done to keep the training local, including the occasional seminars. Its purpose is to train local

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<sup>10</sup> Winter, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Youngblood, 11-13.

leaders of congregations, locally. The leaders are chosen by those congregations in the context in which they serve. TEE is more concerned with competencies than with academic achievement.

The TEE movement has introduced (or, some would say, “re-introduced”) a way of thinking about theological education and pastoral training that is significantly different from the traditional academic and residential model of seminary training. So different, in fact that it has resulted in widespread calls for what Robert Banks defines as a “Reenvisioning (of) Theological Education,” in his book by that name wherein he explores a “missional alternative to current models.”<sup>12</sup>

TEE has caused this discussion by making formal theological training available to persons to whom it was previously unavailable. Its success has raised the issue of educational methodology in theological education. The perception grew that TEE strengthened and grew the church. It was therefore linked from its beginnings to missions and the church growth movement as it “brought to the forefront the question of leadership selection.”<sup>13</sup>

A brief discussion of TEE’s contribution to the question of the restructuring of theological education follows. We will return later to the topic of mission and church growth. Ultimately, this is the topic that is driving both the TEE movement and discussions about restructuring theological education.

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Youngblood, 12-16.

### **The Changing Scene in Theological Education**

Robert Ferris, in his book *Renewal in Theological Education*, documents the fact that since about 1930, “efforts toward evaluation and redirection of theological education have formed a sub-theme for the programs of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada”. He expresses disappointment with almost every effort cited – from the work of H. Richard Niebuhr and “The Study of Theological Education in the United States and Canada,”<sup>14</sup> in the 1950’s, to the work of Edward Farley beginning in the 1970’s. Of the latter he says, “Farley’s proposals for renewal are disappointing, to say the least,” because, he continues, “Farley is unsurpassed as a diagnostician. What remains to be developed is a compelling prescription to cure the disease.”<sup>15</sup> That was in 1990, Farley has since said more, as we will see.

Ferris is most helpful when he says:

Tragically, the case for TEE was argued with great vehemence, almost always by contrasting the strength of TEE with “inappropriate” and “ineffective” patterns of “residential” seminaries. As a result, the debate was polarized, and what began as a promising adventure in renewal of theological education was reduced to a sectarian debate.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 108. This is Niebuhr’s report of the study by the AATS. It is also the source of the description of residential seminaries (theological schools) as the “Intellectual center of the Church’s life.”

<sup>15</sup> Robert W. Ferris, *Renewal in Theological Education: Strategies for Change* (Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, 1990), 7-20.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

He is wrong in that the discussions have not ended, but he is also correct in pointing out that we dare not allow the discussions to become sectarian. "My basic proposal is this: Renewal must be viewed as an ongoing quest to make ministry training more Biblical."<sup>17</sup>

The effect of TEE and its successes has "been to focus dissatisfaction with (past) patterns of training for ministry and nourish the hope that more effective strategies exist."<sup>18</sup> Charles J. Conniry, Jr., of George Fox Evangelical Seminary does an excellent job of sketching the themes of what he calls the "two extremes," in an article in the publication *Theological Education*.<sup>19</sup> He notes that the two extremes are the tendencies to teach either the classical disciplines in isolation from practical concerns (theory without practice), or to teach the "practical" disciplines without reference to the theoretical underpinnings of theology. He continues:

Accordingly, modern theological education failed to be praxis-centered because it focused either on theory without practice or on practice without theory. Graduates of modern seminaries went away with a bevy of academic facts about the Bible, theology, and history *and* a collection of practical facts pertaining to the day-to-day work of ministry, but rarely were these facts in either case accompanied by an explication of the theoretical rationale needed to determine *how best* to apply what was learned.<sup>20</sup>

Conniry's goal is to show how the Doctor of Ministry program can be a "praxis-centered" program. What he says is also applicable to the discussions concerning theological education in general, and distance education programs in particular.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>19</sup> Charles J. Conniry, Jr., "Reducing the Identity Crisis in Doctor of Ministry Education," *Theological Education* 40, no. 1 (2004), 137-152.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 137-8. (Conniry's emphasis)

The “praxis-centered” emphasis is basic for the current thinking of Edward Farley. He writes:

The world of the seminary and the popular piety of the congregation rarely engage: not in the sermon, not in the educational program, not in the liturgy. The result is that the congregation, even when moderately inclined, retains an ethos closer to the nineteenth century than to the changes that displaced the tenets of fundamentalism. ... A variety of reasons figure into this (including) the inattention of congregations and their leaders to adolescent and adult education as a genuine theological education.<sup>21</sup>

His point is that first in the seminary, but then also in the congregation, pastors and people must be encouraged to engage in theological reflection. “What does my faith mean for the situation in which I find myself?”<sup>22</sup> Unless pastors are trained to ask, and then answer, that question, faith and life become separated. And so Farley argues for “a practical theology of popular religion.”<sup>23</sup>

Praxis is the “thinking that arises when faith self-consciously engages its various contexts...a thinking that subjects specific situations in the church to Gospel.”<sup>24</sup>

Conniry says it this way:

In theological education, praxis must inform *both* academic and practical fields. Theoretically based fields like biblical studies, Christian history, and systematic theology require grounding in praxis so as not to be abstracted from churchly life. When such disciplines are not thus informed, the educational process often falls into ... teaching academic subject matter without any regard for the practical concerns of ministry.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Edward Farley, *Practicing Gospel: Unconventional Thoughts on the Church's Ministry* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), x-xi.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, 44-57.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> Conniry, 142.

Robert Banks, arguing from the perspective of TEE, engages in the kind of rhetoric that makes this discussion difficult when he says, “What is primarily lacking in seminaries is in-ministry formation.”<sup>26</sup> While Banks’ words appear to ignore the programs of field education and vicarage (internship) that are in place in most residential seminaries, they do hold some truth. But they also set up a kind of animosity or suspicion between residential programs and the dispersed programs of ministerial formation that is neither necessary nor helpful

For the purposes of this present work, the distance education programs leading to ordination of Concordia Seminary are viewed as complimentary of, and informed by, the residential programs of the seminary. The residential programs and the distance education programs by working together have much to offer the church. The residential programs offer a depth of scholarship that is unparalleled, while the distance education programs add a dimension of “real-time engagement” in ministry that the residential programs cannot provide. Both can be strengthened as they work together toward the same goal.

That goal is the growth of the church as it fulfills its mission to preach the “gospel of the kingdom ... throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations.”<sup>27</sup> And that is where we turn our attention to next.

### **The Influence of Mission(s) and Church Growth**

“The Christian faith is intrinsically missionary...Christianity is missionary by its very nature, or it denies its very reason for existence.”<sup>28</sup> But the church has not always paid close attention to its mission.

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<sup>26</sup> Banks, 135.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 24:14

Already in the early 1960's, mainline churches were beginning to experience the loss of members. The growth spurts of the 1940's and 1950's had come to an end. "Many younger Americans grew up disengaged from any form of traditional faith community and their worldviews differed sharply from those of their parents and grandparents regarding religious practice...with devastating effects on business-as-usual in mainline churches."<sup>29</sup>

Many answers to this dilemma have been proposed. They range from Diana Butler Bass's call for the renewal in local congregations so that they may become *Practicing Congregations*,<sup>30</sup> to Stephen Compton's call for *Rekindling the Mainline*. Compton's central thesis is that "Old denominations are renewed as the percentage of new churches in their total number of churches increases."<sup>31</sup> Whatever the choice, one thing needed is an answer to the question, "Where do we find leaders for new churches, and how do we prepare them to lead?"<sup>32</sup>

Both the residential seminary and the non-residential programs of the church need to be prepared to answer that question as we talk about "renewal" in theological education. At the same time, this conversation is about the mission of the church. And it is the church's understanding of how to accomplish the mission that will drive the discussion.

<sup>28</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in 'Theology of Mission'* (NY:Orbis, 1991), 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), 22-23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen C. Compton, *Rekindling the Mainline* (The Alban Institute, 2003), 47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.



The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod adopted a set of six resolutions called “the Mission Affirmations,” at its 1965 convention in Detroit, Michigan. This convention sought to concisely articulate the LCMS’s understanding of the mission of the church.<sup>33</sup> The Mission Affirmations struck a responsive chord by reminding Missouri that it is a “mission synod.”<sup>34</sup>

The same the report that produced the Affirmations helps us to see where some of the confusion in theological education arises. This confusion between clergy and laity is evident in the section titled, “The Whole Church is Christ’s Mission”:

When we speak of the church as the body of Christ, we must include all of its members. All have equally been incorporated into His body through baptism...  
...When we understand the church as Christ’s mission to the world, we can no longer maintain ... a distinction between the clergy and the laity. All are members of the body of Christ, and the body of Christ is sent into the world on Christ’s mission.<sup>35</sup>

This statement mirrors TEE’s understanding of “the ministry” which says that “there continues to be a false dichotomy between clergy and laity,” in the churches.<sup>36</sup>

For many there is the false impression that the move toward “contextual theological education” embodied in TEE and the distance education programs that have built on its concepts—for instance, in the LCMS, DELTO, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology [EIIT], and the Hispanic Institute of Theology [HIT]—seek to blur

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<sup>33</sup> *Convention Proceedings, 46th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (1965). Resolutions 1-01A through 1-01F, 79-81.

<sup>34</sup> August R. Suelflow, Editor, *Heritage In Motion: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1998), 208-210.

<sup>35</sup> *Convention Workbook (Reports and Overtures), 46th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1965), 115-116.

<sup>36</sup> Kinsler, 4.

historical, biblical, and confessional understandings of the pastoral ministry. This is not the case for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The report continues:

In addition to the mission which all of the people of God share, the ordained clergy have the special function of serving as priests in and to the church in order that the saints may be equipped for their ministry in and to the world.<sup>37</sup>

“All Christians want the church to grow, don’t they?” Well, of course. But following the opening, in 1965, of the Fuller Seminary School of World Missions in Pasadena, California, some in the church became very uncomfortable with “the emphasis on the processes and procedures” of the Church Growth Movement.<sup>38</sup> The theological dimensions and implications of this movement were questioned, especially in the LCMS.

One of the major questions raised was the question of the relationship of the pastoral office to the laity of the church. It is not a new question for the LCMS, as the previous chapter has demonstrated by noting the differences between Loehe and Walther in this matter, but it did need to be addressed. And it was.

In 1989, the LCMS responded with a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations titled: “Evangelism and Church Growth with Special Reference to the Church Growth Movement.” Here is a part of what it says:

The Lutheran church, recognizing that both the priesthood of believers and the one who holds the pastoral office have important functions to fulfill in carrying out the mission of the church, rejects all tendencies to confuse them by failing:

- a. to recognize that the pastoral office has been instituted by God for the special purpose of publicly preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, and remitting and retaining sins;
- b. to recognize the importance of training pastors for this special office;

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<sup>37</sup> *Convention Workbook (Reports and Overtures), 46th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1965), 115-116.

<sup>38</sup> Suelflow, 321.

- c. to recognize that lay man and women are spiritual priests who have an important role to play in the spiritual life and mission of the church; and
- d. to recognize that the distinctive task of the pastoral office is not that of organizing other people to do the “real ministry” but is that of serving them faithfully with the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the holy sacraments.<sup>39</sup>

This report was “commended to the Synod for reference and guidance” by the 1989 LCMS convention.<sup>40</sup>

At that same convention (1989) the LCMS adopted “The Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended.”<sup>41</sup> Resolution 3-05B authorized “the training of lay workers by Districts and other entities for service within the District.” It established the title of “deacon” for the men who would be licensed by their District Presidents. And it set strict guidelines for their training and service.<sup>42</sup> Because this convention was held in Wichita, Kansas, these men became known as “Wichita Deacons.”

But “Missouri” was not happy! Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, Chairman of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the Synod and a member of the “Lay Worker Study Committee,” followed the adoption of Resolution 3-05B with an address to the convention in which he supported the actions of the convention. In that address he said:

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<sup>39</sup> *Convention Workbook (Reports and Overtures), 57th Regular Convention (1989)*, 306. The entire document is contained on pages 302-15 of the Workbook. Printed as a pamphlet the current quote is on pages 19-20.

<sup>40</sup> Suelflow, 322.

<sup>41</sup> *Convention Proceedings, 57th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1989), 111-113.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

We have many dedicated lay ministers who for up to 20 years have been asked to carry out a ministry of Word and Sacrament without recognition or supervision, without roster or doctrinal oversight. If we want to undermine Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, the surest way is to leave things the way they are, and to have no accountability or supervision. The adoption of Res. 3-05 does not initiate a single new practice in the doctrine of the ministry of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It will, however, initiate proper supervision of those practices which we have long recognized as being consistent with our understanding of the doctrine of the ministry so that we may all together *tell everyone what He has done*.<sup>43</sup>

Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession makes this statement: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call."<sup>44</sup> But not everyone was convinced that the "Wichita Deacons" really met the criteria of being regularly called (the Latin is "*rite vocatus*"). That discomfort led to the genesis of the DELTO program in response to the concern about "*rite vocatus*" and the multiplicity of lay-training programs that had developed in the LCMS. We turn next to that history.

### **A Brief Review of Lay Ministry, TEE, and the Beginnings of DELTO**

Lay Ministry is not new in the LCMS. The term owes its genesis to the Reverend Oscar E. Feucht, who became the first full time executive of adult education for the Synod in 1946.<sup>45</sup> His 1974 book, *Everyone A Minister*, was such a huge "hit" in the LCMS that by October 1976, it was already into its third printing. But he has been largely misunderstood.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 114. "*Tell Everyone what He has done*," was the theme of the convention.

<sup>44</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, Editor, *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 36.

<sup>45</sup> Alberto Garcia, *Church Leadership Seminar - Student Manual* (Mequon, WI: Concordia University Wisconsin Print Shop, 2004), 30.

Feucht has been accused of “redefining theological terms” by using the word “ministry” for the work of the laity.<sup>46</sup> In fact, what he concludes is, “The exercise of this universal priesthood does not do away with the institutional church or the necessity of the pastoral office.” He continues:

It is a God-ordained basic means to multiply the church’s ministry by utilizing the full membership of a parish; it is carried out not only in the church edifice, but in the family, the neighborhood, the community, in fact, throughout the world wherever there are disciples of Jesus Christ; in this way it fulfills the great commission which Christ gives to all who accept Him as Savior and Lord.<sup>47</sup>

#### LLTI – Lutheran Lay Training Institute

Under Feucht’s leadership the LCMS, in 1950, encouraged the establishment of Lutheran Bible Institutes in the United States. In 1959 the Synod approved the creation of a “two-year training school,” for the laity. And on September 19, 1961, the Lutheran Lay Training Institute (LLTI) opened its doors on the campus of Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Now called “Concordia University and is located in Mequon, Wisconsin). The 1962 Synodical convention passed a resolution in support of the Institute, and its graduates became recognized as “Certified Lay Ministers of the Synod.”<sup>48</sup>

In 1971-72 the University began an extension program for lay ministry training. The Extension Program was shifted to “regional centers” for instruction in 1992. The faculty and Board of Regents of the University approved the TEE model of instruction as

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<sup>46</sup> Rolf Preus, “Ministers: What is Their Job? Who is Their Boss? Why Do We Need Them?” ([www.christforus.org/Papers/Content/ministers.html](http://www.christforus.org/Papers/Content/ministers.html), 16 November 1991), accessed: 19 April 2005, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone A Minister* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), 149.

<sup>48</sup> *Proceeding of the Forty-Fifth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1962). Resolution 1-69, 90.

a part of that move.<sup>49</sup> And so “lay ministry” and TEE became established as a part of LCMS history. But this was only the beginning of its influence

### Hispanic Institute of Theology

As has already been noted, in 1979 a Board for Missions report had called TEE “a tremendously important open door.”<sup>50</sup> This “open door” was next used in the LCMS to meet the need of ministering to the growing numbers of Hispanic immigrants in the United States.

Alberto Garcia, Director of the Lay Ministry Program since 1992, records his accession to the program (and the beginning of a new initiative) with this paragraph:

During the 1977-78 school year Concordia College, Milwaukee under the direction of President Wilbert Rosin and Dean David Schmiel in consultation with Hispanic pastors developed a “Program to Train Hispanic Lay Workers.” Rev. Alberto L. Garcia was approved by the Board of Regents to carry this out.<sup>51</sup>

At about that same time, Doug Groll who had been a missionary in Venezuela in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, was asked to “restart” the Institute for Hispanic Studies at Concordia College in River Forest, Illinois<sup>52</sup>. It was established as a residential program, funded jointly by The Board of Missions and the Board for Higher Education (BHE) of the LCMS. But it was very expensive: “Sometimes there would be two students for a year, sometimes ten, but always three faculty members.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Garcia, 30-35.

<sup>50</sup> Suelflow, 388-9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> I am indebted to Doug Groll for the information that follows regarding the Hispanic Institute of Theology. He shared this information with me in an interview conducted in my office on February 17, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, in 1985 the Executive Director of the BHE went to the Advisory Board of the Institute for Hispanic Studies to seek a less expensive way to accomplish its purpose. Dr. Groll had been introduced to the work of Ralph Winter and the Presbyterian Church in developing TEE in Venezuela. Based on his experience, and with the aid of Rev. Rudolph Blanke, who had headed up the extension program of the LCMS in Venezuela, the TEE model was presented and adopted.

In 1986 Doug Groll was called to lead the project. Late in the spring of that year both seminaries of the LCMS (St. Louis and Fort Wayne) were invited to be involved. St. Louis responded positively and was represented by Dr. Jack Preus, III, dean of the faculty of the seminary. On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving of that year the Board of Regents of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, called Dr. Groll to be the Director of the Hispanic Institute of Theology of Concordia Seminary. TEE had come to the Seminary, albeit at a deployed location (River Forest, Illinois). But its influence was just beginning to be felt.

#### DELTO Beginnings

Following the 1989 "Wichita Deacons" resolution (see above), there was, as has already been noted, a great deal of consternation in the Synod concerning these under-trained workers. But that convention had also passed another resolution: Resolution 6-16 *Resolved,*

That the Synod in convention direct the Board for Higher Education Services (BHES) to immediately begin to study the establishment of alternate routes to the pastoral ministry in addition to the normal Master of Divinity or colloquy programs.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Convention Proceedings, 57th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1989), 150.

One of the Overtures (6-15) that lead to this resolution was from the Atlantic District. It pointed to the shortage of men entering the seminaries at that time as well as the need to open up routes to the pastoral ministry for men of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.<sup>55</sup>

Later, in 1995, the Synod passed a resolution "To Establish the Procedure by Which Laymen Licensed to Perform Function of the Pastoral Office Be Called and Ordained into the Ministerium of the LCMS."<sup>56</sup> Included in that resolution was the following addition to Bylaw 2.09 of the Synodical Handbook, "Eligibility for Individual Membership:"

*Candidates who have satisfactorily completed an approved Synodical educational program for the pastoral ministry involving extensive use of distance learning and/or a mentoring system must be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the faculty of one of the seminaries before the effective date of the first call to service in the church, as assigned by the Board of Assignments as provided by Bylaw 2.11.<sup>57</sup>*

TEE had "officially" established its influence on the theological training programs of the LCMS and DELTO was on its way. Indeed, even though DELTO is not named in the 1995 resolution, it had already been established at the Ft. Wayne Seminary.

On November 11, 1994, the Academic Policies Committee of Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), Ft. Wayne, Indiana had passed a "Proposal for faculty

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<sup>55</sup> *Convention Workbook (Reports and Overtures), 57th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1989), 246.

<sup>56</sup> *Convention Proceedings, 59th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1995), 120-1.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.



consideration: Texas/Southern Program.”<sup>58</sup> This resulted in the formation of the first DELTO Cohort – the so-called SOTEX 1 group.

The Atlantic District, having submitted Overture 6-15 to the 1989 Synodical Convention,<sup>59</sup> was interested in bringing DELTO to its area of the country. What followed were a number of meetings to discuss what began as “The Manhattan Projects” in the fall of 1993. By July of 1995, DELTO had become “An Alternative Route to the Ordained Ministry—A Proposal.” Later that year (October 1995) an “Operating Agreement” was formed to begin DELTO in the Northeast. The document itself says:

This current project design represents the cooperative work of the Districts, the College (Concordia Bronxville, NY), Seminary (CTS, Ft. Wayne) and the Synod (Standing Committee for Pastoral Ministry [SCPM]). With all constituents kept fully informed.<sup>60</sup>

So, DELTO had begun based on the TEE model of theological education.

There is no need for further detail in this presentation except to list some of the individuals involved and to note the entities that they represent. Present at the September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993 “Consultation” were: David Benke (Atlantic District President); Wayne Hamit and Dwayne Mau, newly assigned mission facilitators; Robert Scudieri and Daniel Mattson from the LCMS Board of Missions; August Mennicke, Synodical 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Ralph Schultz and David Jacobson, President and Academic Dean of

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<sup>58</sup> On file with the Author. For this document and several others I am indebted to Dr. Daniel Mattson, Associate Executive Director, Planning & Administration Mission Team, Board for Mission Services. Dr. Mattson was involved in the early discussion that led to DELTO and other educational programs of the Synod. Others from the Board for Mission Services who have been involved include Dr. Robert Scudieri, Associate Executive Director, National Mission Team, Rev. David Born and Rev. Chris Reinke the Northeast and Western Regional Directors respectively.

<sup>59</sup> *Convention Workbook (Reports and Overtures), 57th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (St. Louis, MO, 1989), 246.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Concordia College, Bronxville, respectively; David Schmiel, former Dean at Concordia, Milwaukee and at the time of this meeting the President of CTS, Allan Buckman, Board for Mission Services, and Jan Case from CTS.<sup>61</sup>

Robert Newton, then Vice President, Pastoral Education and Placement, CTS, Fort Wayne,<sup>62</sup> Alan Borcharding as a representative of Synod's Board for Higher Education, and others participated in a later meeting. The point of this partial listing of names is that DELTO, from beginning to end, represents a new conversation in the church.

No longer is theological formation and education being left solely to the seminaries of the Synod. Synodical Districts, the Board for Mission Services, and others have also become involved. These conversations continue through the current DELTO Oversight Committee as it wrestles with some of the questions raised by this new approach.

### **DELTO in St. Louis**

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, did not begin its own DELTO cohort until about 1998, and even then did so only half-heartedly. Courses were delivered using the TEE model, a secretary had been designated part-time to keep records, and a faculty member was designated as the primary contact for the program. But the registrar kept no records, there was no uniform procedure to receive payment for the courses delivered, and no one was really "caring for" the students. Sometime during the 2000-2001 school year it was decided that an individual was needed to lead the program.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Newtown is currently President of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District of the LCMS and a member of the current DELTO Oversight Committee.)

I was called to the faculty of Concordia Seminary in March of 2001, as an Associate Professor of Practical Theology with no administrative duties. After the call was accepted in April, but before I had moved to the seminary, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Andrew Bartelt, asked me to attend a meeting of the Distance Education Task Force of the Seminary.<sup>63</sup> This was my introduction to DELTO.

By the time I joined the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in June of 2001, Dr. Bartelt had asked me to become responsible for the DELTO program as delivered by the Seminary. At the August faculty forum that year President John Johnson announced my appointment as the Director of DELTO.

During my tenure as Concordia Seminary's Director of DELTO and (since December of 2001) Secretary of the DELTO Oversight Committee of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), much has changed: DELTO has been "mainstreamed" in the administration of the seminary, students are encouraged to continue in the program, and we have graduated our first three cohorts.

The first major change occurred even before the Oversight Committee formed by the 2001 Convention of the LCMS, and mandate to "revise DELTO," met for the first time. This change was the result of discussions by the Seminary's Distance Education Task Force. A report of those changes follows.

Based on the Fort Wayne (and TEE) model, the original concept had been that students enrolled in the program would be introduced to each new course by meeting

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<sup>63</sup> Dr. Andrew Bartelt, the Vice President for Academic Affairs of the Seminary, convened the Distance Education Task Force. The Task Force began meeting in late 2000, and is comprised of members of the Seminary faculty, representatives of several geographical Districts of the LCMS, representative pastors, and a representative from Synod's Board for Mission Services. It was (and is) an amazing group of people who have a real heart for the pastoral needs of the Church and have a vision for the use of Distance Education technology in the training of men to meet those needs.

with the instructor in a location that was somewhat “central” for those students. Because of the size of the regions, each cohort of 12-18 students required several meetings for each new course. Instructors would often travel to several locations on a weekend and introduce each course to the 3-4 students gathered there. Four major problems were identified.<sup>64</sup>

The first concern was instructor “burn-out”: Adding a full weekend of travel to their already busy schedules and then expecting the instructors to be in class on Monday morning was an extreme expectation. Secondly, the students, who rarely saw anyone other than those who met in their location and had no formal communication with others in their cohort, were disconnected from one another and the Seminary. There simply was no sense of being a part of a theological community.<sup>65</sup> Thirdly there was a high student dropout rate. A lack of accurate record keeping makes it impossible to document the numbers, but there was ample anecdotal evidence reported to the Distance Education Task Force to support this conclusion. The fourth problem the Task Force identified was the geographic nature of those early DELTO cohorts. Because only a single, geographically collocated cohort was allowed to begin each year,<sup>66</sup> many men who might have been eligible for DELTO were excluded because of where they lived.

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<sup>64</sup> John Oberdeck, “Minutes of Distance Education Task Force of Concordia Seminary,” May 7 St. Louis, MO, 2001. On file with the author.

<sup>65</sup> Chapter 4 will address the question of community identification in theological education and distance education.

<sup>66</sup> Board for Higher Education of the LCMS, Standing Committee for Pastoral Ministry, *DELTO Policy Manual* (1997), 22.

Thus, as reported to the Distance Education Task Force in October of 2001,<sup>67</sup> when a new cohort was begun in September 2001, it was composed of students from a large geographic area who agreed to come onto the Seminary campus three times a year for a 3-day retreat. Upon arrival to the campus, these men were introduced to two courses. When they returned approximately four months later the instructors of those two courses met with them for a “wrap-up” session. At that time, they were introduced to two more courses and the cycle continued.

The result is that these men learned to know each other very well and hold each other’s ministry situations in prayer. They developed a sense of being members of the Seminary community. Although they have experienced a rate of retention similar to previous cohorts,<sup>68</sup> their experiences set the stage for the work of the Synodical Oversight Committee.

For a report of what the Oversight Committee has discussed thus far see Appendix A of this dissertation. The TEE movement has already raised most of the issues addressed in that report. It should be noted, however, that the answers of the LCMS are somewhat different than those of others involved in TEE because of its confessional stance its view of the ministry as outlined above.

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<sup>67</sup> John Oberdeck, “Minutes of Distance Education Task Force of Concordia Seminary” (October 8 2001).

<sup>68</sup> There was, initially, a large dropout from this group – we began with 19, there are currently nine remaining and they will complete their program in January of 2006. Many of those who have left the program were first generation immigrants for whom English is a second language. The Seminary has responded to their needs by establishing the “Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology” (EIIT). EIIT uses a different curriculum than DELTO, but otherwise is structured much like the current “new” DELTO program using WebCT as the delivery system, yearly on-campus seminars, and a strong pastor-mentor relationship for each student. See the appended document, “DELTO- State of the Project for more about the “new” DELTO.

### Some Conclusions

The distance education programs of Concordia Seminary are complimentary of, and informed by, the residential programs of the seminary. They can strengthen the residential programs as they contribute to the contextualization of theological training, even as the residential programs contribute to the theological and educational depth of the distance education programs. Both can be strengthened as they work together toward the same goals.

One can expect that future discussions about the shape of theological education will bring about changes to the residential programs of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. It is impossible to forecast what those changes might be, but they will happen as they are already happening in other seminaries. It is also probable that in the not too distant future there will be a blending of residential and non-residential programs at the seminary where at least a portion of the M.Div. program will become available electronically and non-residentially.

The developments reported in this chapter, and interests in the LCMS itself, will continue to move DELTO and her sister programs forward in answer to the mission needs of the church and the need for pastors to serve the growing number of “Vacant but not Calling” congregations reported in Table 1 of this work.<sup>69</sup>

Some currently argue that DELTO should be restricted to vacant and essentially indigent congregations, but the mission statements of the Synod and DELTO itself point

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<sup>69</sup> Page 2.

to a broader emphasis. These are quoted from the DELTO policy manual of 6 May 2001,<sup>70</sup> and have not changed.

**LCMS Mission Statement (1998)**

In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is to vigorously make known the love of Christ by Word and deed within our churches, communities, and the world.

**DELTO Mission Statement (1996)**

Responding to extraordinary mission needs in the church, the seminaries of the LCMS have agreed to provide programs designed to prepare pastors by distance education in cooperation with Synodical districts. Through these programs the seminaries provide in-context preparation for men selected to serve as pastors in exceptional settings as determined by the church. The seminaries prepare pastors who demonstrate high pastoral quality and excellence in Lutheran doctrine and practice.

In spite of these statements and the demonstrated commitment of the Synod to DELTO and other distance education programs for the training of pastors, the model is sometimes rejected because of the perception that it lacks the formational aspect of theological education afforded by residential programs. It is questioned whether a theological community for proper spiritual formation can be developed in distance education programs.

Community is very much a part of the DELTO program as it proceeds from the very nature of what it means to be a member of Christ's Church. The next chapter will address these questions scripturally, theologically, and practically.

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<sup>70</sup> On file with the author.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY IN DELTO**

It has thus far been demonstrated that DELTO and other distance education programs are outgrowths of the history of theological education leading to ordination in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) and are complimentary to the residential programs of the LCMS seminaries. Furthermore it has been shown that the LCMS as a whole will continue to promote and use DELTO in an attempt to answer the need for pastors in the growing number of congregations in the church that are "vacant, but not calling."<sup>1</sup> Yet, there continue to be those who are opposed to the use of distance education methods as a means of preparation for pastoral ministry.

In an attempt to address remaining skepticism, there are two concerns about the use of distance education for theological and pastoral training that need to be addressed. The first is the question of community formation and the second is the evaluation of the readiness of students for pastoral ministry in the church. This chapter will address the question of community and the following chapter will examine the evaluation process in distance education programs.

The biblical and theological foundations of these issues will be explored as these topics are addressed. Related literature will be examined, and applications will be made specifically to DELTO as representative of related programs in the church.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1. 2-3.



## Setting the Stage

When Dr. John F. Johnson, President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1989-2004, talked about preparing students to become pastors, he preferred the term “formation” over “training” – a word he said is too easily given to visions of dogs jumping through hoops. Having made the distinction between “formation” and “training,” President John F. Johnson said,

Theological education is not the same thing as indoctrination. What I want to form in our graduates is the character of being a theologian. ...There must be a marriage of knowing our Lutheran confessional, Biblical theology and being able to apply that in the pluralistic world in which our graduates are called to minister.<sup>2</sup>

While this vision applies primarily to the graduates of Concordia Seminary’s historic Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program, it is equally applicable to the Concordia’s developing distance education programs including: The Hispanic Institute of Theology, DELTO (Distance Education Leading To Ordination), the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT), and the Deaf Institute of Theology (DIT). The primary interest here is DELTO whose purpose has already been described; now a few words about its structure.

Courses One through Ten of DELTO “may be taught at the District level.”<sup>3</sup> The “Seminary level” courses (courses eleven through thirty) are delivered using computer-mediated delivery systems. The primary platform currently being used to develop the content of these courses is WebCT.

Three additional elements have been coupled with the WebCT delivery system:

- The instructor who directs the academic work of the students;

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<sup>2</sup> *Reporter/Alive* – newspaper of The LCMS, June 10, 1991. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *What is DELTO?* Brochure describing the LCMS Distance Education Leading To Ordination program (LCMS Board for Pastoral Education, 2003).

- A local pastor-mentor/vicarage supervisor who works with the students in the location where they are in ministry;<sup>4</sup> and
- An initial (before they begin course #11) face-to-face meeting of students and mentors on the campus of Concordia Seminary followed by yearly face-to-face, residential seminars on the campus until the completion of course #30.

Two elements, the pastor/mentor/vicarage supervisor and the face-to-face meetings, are designed to provide the opportunity for “formation.” As such they are foundational to the purposes of DELTO.

These elements provide the vehicles whereby DELTO students are in on-going conversation and intentional contact, with one another and the clergy with whom they will share their ministry. Of equal importance, the face-to-face residential seminars give students the opportunity to identify with the seminary campus, its faculty, its students, and its facilities. The idea here is that once the DELTO student is ordained, he will be regarded, and regard himself, as a pastor of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in relationship with the other pastors of the Church, and as an alumnus of Concordia Seminary.

The importance of this relationship is highlighted by none other than the Apostle Paul in his second letter to Pastor Timothy. Paul was the one who had chosen Timothy to become a pastor in the early church. He taught him, mentored him, and served as an example for him. The Apostle says:

You, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a

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<sup>4</sup> For a complete definition of the Pastor-Mentor’s role see the “DELTO Pastor-Mentor Manual” on line at <http://www.csl.edu/DELTOManual.doc>, I helped develop this as a partner in the initial meetings which led up to it, and as the final reviewer for the funding body.

godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ... But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.<sup>5</sup>

The pastor/mentor/vicarage supervisor relationship and the face-to-face meetings add a "community" element to DELTO. The design and delivery of the curriculum contributes to "community" as well. This process involves the faculty, course designers, and technicians, administrators, and all others who work with the program.

"Community," however, is a very amorphous term in today's literature, especially as it applies to education and to computer-mediated training. Richard Schwier, in a paper presented to the International Symposium on Educational Conferencing, June 1, 2002, says:

Using the metaphor of community to understand online learning environments has the classical problem of all metaphors: First of all, it is indistinct ... Second, all metaphors are limited ... (and third,) all metaphors are shallow when compared to their referent ideas.<sup>6</sup>

Still, Schwier adds, "It gives us an accessible way to think about the baffling array of online learning environments."<sup>7</sup>

Len Sweet, theologian, author, and futurist, and primary instructor in the Doctor of Ministry (Leadership in the Emergent Culture) program of George Fox Seminary, in the midst of an online chat said it this way, "The word 'community' is a semantic swamp, stay out of it."<sup>8</sup> He is right, but sometimes one has to explore and define the swamp before one can understand it (and maybe "drain" it); that is what follows.

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Timothy 3:10-14.

<sup>6</sup> Schwier, Richard. *Shaping the Metaphor of Community*. p. 3 Retrieved 3 Dec. 2003 <http://cde.athabascau.ca/ISEC2002/papeers/schwier.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Schwier, 3.

### Some Definitions of “Community” In Education

An examination of the contemporary literature in education and educational trends reveals a broad range of understanding about the purpose of “community,” and, indeed the definition of what constitutes “community.”

In 1994, Thomas Sergiovanni, a senior fellow at the Center for Educational Leadership, argued for community building in schools saying that:

Community is the tie that binds students and teachers together, in special ways, to something more significant than themselves: shared values and ideals. It lifts both teachers and students to higher levels of self-understanding, commitment, and performance – beyond the reaches of the shortcomings and difficulties they face in their everyday lives.<sup>9</sup>

He makes a convincing argument. But he is particularly helpful when he addresses “The Challenge of Leadership.”<sup>10</sup> His concluding statement that leaders in this endeavor “must plant the seeds of community, nurture fledgling community, and protect the community once it emerges... [as they] lead by following ... serving ... [and] inviting others to share in the burdens of leadership,”<sup>11</sup> is particularly helpful.

Len Sweet echoed this approach to leadership in his posting for the fourth week of discussion in the Leadership in the Emerging Culture seminar in 2003 when he wrote, “The essence of leadership is relationship: influencing people to achieve things together that can’t be achieved alone.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Sweet, Leonard. Archived text of session 12 chat, LEC2MOD1, George Fox Seminary, available at [http://webct.georgefox.edu/LEC2MOD1/archives/chat/session12\\_chat\\_text.htm](http://webct.georgefox.edu/LEC2MOD1/archives/chat/session12_chat_text.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Sergiovanni, Thomas J. *Building Community in Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994, xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Sergiovanni, Chapter 11.

<sup>11</sup> Sergiovanni, 203.

<sup>12</sup> Sweet, Leonard. “I Hear You: Hire Good Vibrations & Tune Your Team” 17 Sept. 2003. LEC2MOD1 Posting #4/Fourth week/17 September 2003, 11.

Some believe the intentional development of community within schools is a tool to help today's students "transcend prejudice, increase academic motivation, improve focus and cooperation, foster creativity, and keep more (of them) in school."<sup>13</sup> "In other words," says Rachael Kessler, it means, "*caring about the inner lives of our students.*"<sup>14</sup> It is hard to imagine that such view could be very useful in U.S. public schools because of the constitutional requirement for the separation of church and state, but there are many who are intrigued by it.

Caring about the lives of students is the important emphasis. Seminary distance education must pay attention to the needs of students in regards to their theological formation and education. For that to be accomplished, other disciplines must also be heard.

Any discussion of "community" must acknowledge that this subject engages the ongoing conversations of a number of fields including sociology, philosophy in general, and political philosophy in particular. It engages the question of individualism vs. communalism: the latter group represented by contemporary attempts to reestablish the "soul of education" just noted.<sup>15</sup>

Individualism can be traced to the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who, along with others looked to the "contract and consent" between free persons, "rather than to custom or tradition, as the basis for all human interactions." He elevated individual

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<sup>13</sup> Kessler, Rachel. *The Soul of Education*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000, 159.

<sup>14</sup> Kessler, 59. (Her emphasis.)

<sup>15</sup> The works of Kessler & Sergiovanni are representative of this movement.

rights, as opposed to responsibility to society as the foundation for morality.<sup>16</sup> This mindset, and approach to the interaction of individuals has influenced much of modernity and modern thought.

Beginning in the 1980s a number of influential thinkers and writers, responding to the societal unrest, which grew out of the “Vietnam era,” began to speak again about the need for community. Their criticism of individualism was its disregard of the social and relational dimensions of life especially as they shape the individual. Evangelical scholar Stanley J. Grenz argued, “The community is crucial to the sustaining of character, virtue, and values, and provides the necessary basis for involvement in public discourse.”<sup>17</sup>

The underlying theory for this revival of the concept of community can be traced, as many authors do, to the *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* theory of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany, and the work of Ferdinand Toennies.<sup>18</sup> One author says that these two words “are special words that communicate a set of concepts and ideas considered seminal in sociology.”<sup>19</sup> *Gemeinschaft* translates to “community” and *gesellschaft* to “society.”

In *gemeinschaft* human relationships are intimate, much like one would experience in a family. The idea connotes a sense of belonging to a larger whole. In contrast to this *gesellschaft* points to human relationships and interaction which are based on contracts rather than custom or tradition.

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<sup>16</sup> Grenz, Stanley J. and John R. Franke. *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, 206.

<sup>17</sup> Grenz, 209.

<sup>18</sup> Grenz, 210.

<sup>19</sup> Sergiovani, 5.

*Gemeinschaft* is personal and relational; *gesellschaft* is impersonal and based on rules and authority. The search for “community” in education today seeks a return to more attention to *gemeinschaft* as a way of balancing the perceived impersonal approach that many feel they need to adopt in order to be in control of the situation.

Ben Daniel, Graduate Student in Educational Communications and Technology at the University of Saskatchewan, offers a particularly helpful definition of the current concept of “community” in a paper titled “Building Social Capital in Virtual Learning Communities,” and posted to the Internet in April of 2002. He says,

Virtual communities are social entities built around social interaction. It is the people not the space in which they interact that form the community. If virtual communities are more or less the same as physical communities, ...they have implicit value.<sup>20</sup>

What is helpful here is the recognition that communities, virtual or not, are built around “social interaction.” People need people; they need relationships in order to grow. So no matter what the definition of community, all recognize the need for interpersonal interaction that goes beyond the simple transmission of information. Community is relational and whatever we build we must recognize that.<sup>21</sup>

Joseph R. Myers, owner of the consulting firm, FrontPorch, which helps churches promote and develop healthy community, defines the task in this way, after first introducing us to a metaphor:

The slime mold spends much of its life as thousands of distinct single-celled units, each moving separately from its other comrades. Under the right conditions, those myriad cells will coalesce again into a single, larger organism, which then begins its leisurely crawl across the garden floor, consuming rotting leaves and

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<sup>20</sup> Ben Daniel, *Building Social Capital in Virtual Learning Communities*. April 2002 (my emphasis) <<http://www.usask.ca/education/coursework/802papers/daniel/>> retrieved: 21 May 2003, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 6.

wood as it moves about. When the environment is less hospitable, the slime mold acts as a single organism; when the weather turns cooler and the mold enjoys a larger food supply, “it” becomes a “they.” The slim mold oscillates between being a single creature and a swarm.

Slime mold offers us an interesting insight: We humans could help by creating the healthy environments in which people naturally connect. If we would concentrate upon facilitating the environment instead of the result, (people experiencing community) we might see healthy, spontaneous community emerge.<sup>22</sup>

Calling the search for community a “fundamental life search,”<sup>23</sup> Myers argues that, “People search for spontaneous community, not forced belonging.” He then adds, “Permit people to lead themselves, God does. We can learn from him.”<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps especially in a theological program, we should not so much seek to “create” community as allow it to happen. We need to know that because of their faith and call to ministry the students involved already are “in” community. The job of the program, then, is to discovery ways to enable the students to find the relationships, the “belonging” that will best serve their own circumstance and needs.

Essentially they will ask the same question as the “expert in the law” of Luke 10, who asked, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus’ answer was to tell him, and us, a story: The “Parable of the Good Samaritan.” In response to Jesus’ parable, this expert was able to define the neighbor as, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus said, “You go, and do likewise.”<sup>25</sup>

The expert could not “do likewise,” and went away disappointed. But programs of distance education that focus on Jesus can show mercy. There is, therefore, good

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<sup>22</sup> Myers, Joseph R. *The Search to Belong*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003, 72-73.

<sup>23</sup> Myers, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Myers, 84.

<sup>25</sup> Luke 10:25-37.



reason to expect that healthy relationships and good community will develop in these programs. The lessons taught in the Scriptures about how God's people have learned to live together in community inform the process. We turn now to a cursory examination of the significance and centrality of the concept of "community" in the Bible.

### **Community in the Scriptures And Theology**

Two works inform this study. One by Paul Hanson, Florence Corliss Lamont Professor of Divinity at Harvard, titled, *A People Called* (1986), explores the "Growth of Community in the Bible." The other, by theologians Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, is titled, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (2001). It emphasizes the role of the community in the shaping theological understanding.

The Hanson book is helpful because of the approach the author takes as he defines the development of the concept of "community" in the Scriptures. He points out from the very beginning, and then demonstrates the fact that:

We can identify certain cardinal characteristics that develop in biblical history. We ... see especially that a unique triadic notion of community persists from earliest Yahwistic times down through the early rabbinical and Christian period. The understanding of righteousness, compassion, and worship that characterizes this triad defines the realm of shalom to which God invites the faithful to live.<sup>26</sup>

In early Israel, Hanson notes, "Community life, like worship, was a response to the antecedent act of a gracious God. Community was Israel's concrete way of saying thank you to God."<sup>27</sup> And, as Hanson then proceeds to show us, everything that Israel, the people of God in the New Testament, and even Jesus (as both God and man), does is always a response to God the Father's antecedent gracious action.

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<sup>26</sup> Hanson, Paul D. *The People Called*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Hanson, 52.

First he notes that Jesus “was so devoted to his heavenly Father that his whole life was an act of undivided *worship*. [And] the effect of this devotion was that his teachings and miracles directed the attention of those around him not to himself but to God.”

Secondly, Hanson points us to God’s *righteousness*, “according to which every person is equally entitled to the protection of the community.” The fact that none are exempt from responsibility to others “lies at the very heart of Jesus’ life,” he says:<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the third cardinal quality in the classical biblical notion of community comes to its most emphatic statement in the entire Bible in the life of Jesus. Indeed, the meaning of *compassion* is both broadened and deepened, broadened within the context of his eschatological vision, deepened through Jesus’ own passion.”<sup>29</sup>

The point is that as we seek to build “community” (whether in person, face-to-face, or online in so-called virtual communities), is it important to remember that it is not about “us,” either as the leaders or as the learners. It is about the God who has called us. “Perhaps the single most important source of renewal for contemporary communities of faith lies in the rediscovery of their identity as ‘the people called.’”<sup>30</sup>

DELTO students and teachers alike continue to be “a people called.” That is significant! We are “God’s people,” as St. Peter says.<sup>31</sup> The people of God called first to faith, and then into community, are now called to build the community into which they have been called by serving it as they serve the Triune God.

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<sup>28</sup> Hanson, 423. (Emphasis added)

<sup>29</sup> Hanson, 424. (Emphasis added)

<sup>30</sup> Hanson, 467.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Peter 2:9-10.

The notion of being called by God to faith and then into the body of Christ informs our understanding of the “call” which leads individuals to seek ordination as pastors of the Church here on earth. The first is a call to faith and to live the faith in whatever circumstance of life they are found. The second is the call to pastoral ministry.

How different this concept is from the concept of those who are seeking to build community in order to shape society! Whereas Kessler sees community as a tool to help today’s students “transcend prejudice, increase academic motivation, improve focus and cooperation, foster creativity, and keep more (of them) in school.”<sup>32</sup> The biblical concept, as Hanson explains it, is a community gathered by God, “responding to God’s saving grace.”<sup>33</sup> “A people called” is family in the truest sense of the term.

Understood biblically, then, DELTO seeks to discover and use processes that allow the community into which its students have been called to develop according to the student’s needs, as God leads them. This is an on-going work that continues to develop as the pastor/mentor relationships are fostered and the face-to-face seminars are refined. (This will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.)

Above all ... ‘the people called’ is a people belonging to God. This sense of being God’s possession constitutes its identity, its vocation, and its vision. Its charter is God’s covenantal promise, ‘I shall be your God, and you shall be my people.’<sup>34</sup>

And the mission of “the people called” is the call to

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<sup>32</sup> Kessler, 159.

<sup>33</sup> Hanson, 514.

<sup>34</sup> Hanson, 517.

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.<sup>35</sup>

That is what the DELTO program is ultimately about.

Stanley Grenz and John Franke “maintain that a Christian theology that is truly Trinitarian will also be completely communitarian. ... That theology, with its Trinitarian structure, finds its integration through the concept of *community*.” In other words, they say, “Community is the integrative motif of theology,”<sup>36</sup> that which engages its faith with life in this world.

Community is the locus in which scripture, tradition and culture intersect and interact to enable service and worship of the Trinity as we look to eternity.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, understood in this context, community comes about not by humankind’s design (or human design or action) but by God’s design. It is the *gemeinschaft* discussed earlier.

Three things are needed for this kind of community, three things which DELTO students possess and which the program will need to continually emphasize:

1. They share a similar frame of reference – the call to faith and a call to ministry as they serve the larger church.
2. They have a group focus – ordination, which evokes a sense of group identity as they engage in the common task of theological education.

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<sup>35</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>36</sup> Grenz, 204.

<sup>37</sup> Grenz and Franke’s chapter titles put this concept into perspective: 3. Scripture: Theology’s “Norming Norm”; 4. Tradition: Theology’s Hermeneutical Trajectory; 5. Culture: Theology’s Embedding Context; 6. The Trinity: Theology’s Structural Motif; 7. Community Theology’s Integrative Motif; and 8. Eschatology: Theology’s Orienting Motif.

3. This group orientation is balanced by its “person focus” – the understanding that each one is called to a particular ministry context in which their formation and ministry are inextricably linked.<sup>38</sup>

It must, however, always be kept in mind that “community” is given to God’s people by God himself. This is the next topic for discussion.

### **God’s Presence Constitutes Community**

What must always be kept uppermost is the understanding that God is present in the process of community formation even as he is present in the lives of each individual involved. It is the presence of God among humans that has defined and constituted the community of faith from the beginning.

Before the fall, God communed with Adam and Eve in the Garden, but they broke the relationship with the fall into sin.<sup>39</sup> Because of this, the story of the scriptures becomes the story of God’s repeated efforts to demonstrate, to his people (first to his Old Testament people and then to the New Testament church) his desire to live among them.

Thus Yahweh constitutes Israel as his covenant people following the Exodus.<sup>40</sup> Moses said, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.”<sup>41</sup> The tabernacle and then the temple became the sign of God’s presence among his people. But because of the people’s unfaithfulness eventually the tabernacle and temple were destroyed as the Prophets of old testify.

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<sup>38</sup> Grenz, 216-218. (Lists the three criteria; I have made application to DELTO students.)

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 3.

<sup>40</sup> Exodus 20:2-3.

<sup>41</sup> Exodus 33:15.

God's answer was to send Jesus, also known as "Immanuel" – "which means, 'God with us,'" as the angel said.<sup>42</sup> The testimony of John's Gospel says it this way: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)<sup>43</sup>

Jesus (the One and Only), before He died, promised, "Another Counselor, to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth." "I will not leave you as orphans," he promised.<sup>44</sup> "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."<sup>45</sup> And so God continues to dwell with his people.

Even looking to eternity, the Scriptures promise that God will dwell with his people and thus constitute the community of faith as a lasting ordinance. St. John on the Isle of Patmos reports: "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God...the old order of things has passed away.'<sup>46</sup>

This is a basic premise that must be kept in mind: that God dwells with his people and builds them into a community. It is the basic premise, both acknowledged and unacknowledged, that has guided classical residential theological education for centuries. But all theological education is no longer residential and classical, and so this premise

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew 1:22.

<sup>43</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>44</sup> John 14:16-18.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 28:20.

<sup>46</sup> Revelation 21:3-4.

continues to shape DELTO and other computer-mediated theological programs also today.

### **Building Community in the Electronic Environment**

Steve Delamarter, who, in the fall of 2003, conducted a study on technology and theological education for the Wabash Center for Teaching Theology and Religion, said in his preliminary report, "The recent experiments of theological educators with technology can only be understood against the backdrop of the deep assumptions they already have about the proper modes of formation for ministry."<sup>47</sup>

One of those is an assumption for the need for "face-to-face community discourse."<sup>48</sup> As DELTO and other programs seek to change the paradigm we must continue to think deeply about the theological education community and face-to-face community discourse.

John Palka, formerly a missionary working with theological education in Togo, West Africa, and a curriculum developer working with the emerging distance education programs of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri has done some of this thinking. In the course of his work Palka developed the following "Theological Education Community" model in consultation with me. It is useful in defining the various processes of theological education.

The diagram assumes God's indwelling with His people as the overarching influence on community within theological education. This influence is brought to bear

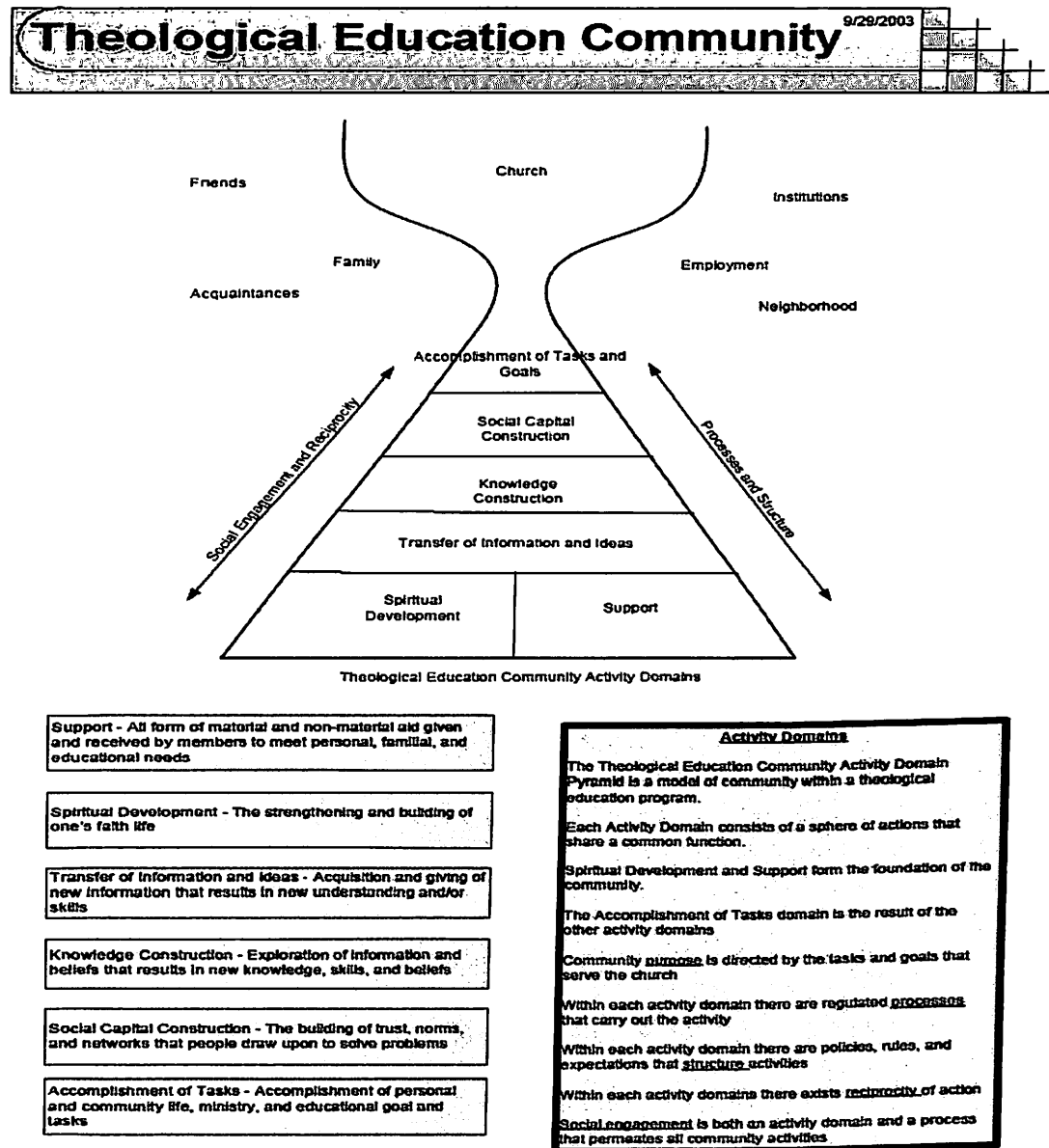
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<sup>47</sup> Delamarter, Technology and Theological Education In the Fall of 2003, A Preliminary Report. Unpublished MS. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Myers, 82.

on the community of faith through continued attention to God's additional gifts of Word and Sacrament.

Figure 1: Theological Education Community



Perhaps the most significant comments in this diagram are the notes that “Community purpose is directed by the tasks and goals that serve the church,” and “Social engagement is both an activity domain and a process that permeates all



community activities.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, the very nature of computer-mediated education for theological formation will shape the three relational “events” noted at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>50</sup>

As the instructor directs the academic work of the students; as the local pastor-mentor works with the students; and as students attend the yearly face-to-face “residential” seminars, the goal is that the community of faith will continue to grow. .

The Goals for the DELTO Curriculum, in Attachment 2, addresses the elements of instructor involvement, and the intentional shaping of pastor/mentor and student discussion designed to foster the growth of community.

In order to gauge the effectiveness of the process of community formation, two “focus group” meetings were conducted when the first Cohort of the “new” DELTO attended its second face-to-face seminar in July of 2005.<sup>51</sup>

The three most prominent elements of support listed by the students were: wives, mentors, and congregations. Wives and mentors provide emotional support and encouragement. Congregations provided the same plus financial support. The DELTO office was also a source of considerable support.

Noticeably absent from the support elements listed was classmates. However, during the focus group session and the weeklong seminar, community was built and considerable emotional support and encouragement was evident. This experience

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<sup>49</sup> “Theological Education Community” diagram used by permission of John Palka, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO. See below.

<sup>50</sup> Pages 76-77.

<sup>51</sup> Jennifer Diedrick, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Cohort 1 DELTO Focus Group, to David Wollenburg, “DELTO Focus Group Report,” July 12, 2005, Two, two hour meetings led by John Palka, 12 page report., on File in the DELTO Office.

demonstrated that for community and trust to develop there is a need for peer-to-peer support.

One student put it this way, "I think the first week [of the opening Seminar] needs to be about group building. Help us work through that ... because I didn't access the community out there."<sup>52</sup> As a result of this finding, when another opening seminar was conducted in September 2005, more attention was paid to community building. The students gave this element of the program 3.95 on a 5-point scale.<sup>53</sup>

Another important element cited by the students was the act of ministry as significant in developing the theological education community as it contributes to their spiritual development. Here are two of their comments:

"I think one of the biggest growths in my spiritual life and been being the act of being a pastor."<sup>54</sup>

"Being able to offer people God's word that are in trouble - - it builds your faith when you see the affirmation of that."<sup>55</sup>

At one point it was suggested that the cohort should gather more frequently, perhaps twice a year. There was not strong support for the idea because such gatherings "stop them from doing their pastoral work and those that hold full-time jobs have to take vacation time to attend the seminars."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 5. Participant 3.

<sup>53</sup> Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Opening Seminar Satisfaction Survey, to Cohort 2, David Wollenburg, "Satisfaction Survey: Cohort 2 Opening," September 9, 2005, on file in the DELTO Office.

<sup>54</sup> Diedrick, 2. Participant 3.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Participant 11.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 7.



As community is being developed, even the computer-mediated conversations (CMC's) have taken on new meaning: "CMCs – You can communicate with someone you know – now that we've had the opportunity to get to know one another when something is written in the CMC you see personality and ministry context behind the remarks."<sup>57</sup> Still, the program needs to continue to improve and respond as the students make their needs known.

### Concluding Notes

Some of the key elements of distance learning as distance education educators, writers, and researchers Rene M Palloff and Keith Pratt have defined them are:

- The separation of teacher and learner during at least a majority of each instructional process.
- The use of educational media to unite teacher and learner and carry course content.
- The provision of two-way communication between teacher, tutor (*mentor?*) or educational agency, and learner.
- Separation of teacher and learner in space and time.<sup>58</sup>

Having said that, they note: "*Key to the learning process are the interactions among students themselves, the interactions between faculty and students, and the collaboration in learning that results from these interactions.*"<sup>59</sup>

David Stein and Hilda Glazer, in an article in *The American Journal of Distance Education*, note that persistence in any program is fostered through a number of elements

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., Participant 7.

<sup>58</sup> Palloff, Rene M. and Keith Pratt. *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Palloff, 5. (Emphasis added.)



including “a sense of belonging to a community of learners exhibited by electronic networks for ‘out of class’ discussions and conversation.”<sup>60</sup>

Community and a sense of community – as difficult as that may be to define – are essential ingredients of all of life. In the theological community of formation and learning, as has been shown; the basis of “community” is the call of God who walks among us and is present with us – His antecedent gracious actions. It is incumbent upon those who plan, design, and administer such programs to facilitate that community so that it may grow.

The DELTO program in its present form:

- Encourages contact between students and faculty;
- Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students;
- Uses active learning techniques;
- Gives prompt feedback;
- Emphasizes time-on-task;
- Communicates high expectations; and
- Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.<sup>61</sup>

All of this is being done cognizant of the presence of our Triune God in the lives of student, instructors, administrators and congregations alike. He has made us a part of the community of faith: DELTO simply seeks to deepen the connections God has provided.

In the following chapter we turn to the issue of student evaluation. This chapter will deal not only with assessment of the student’s knowledge of the content of the courses. More importantly it will address how the seminary faculty can, with confidence, certify distance education graduates for ordination by the Church.

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<sup>60</sup> Stein, David and Hilda R. Glazer. “Mentoring the Adult Learner in Academic Midlife at a Distance Education University.” *The American Journal of Distance Education* 17.1 (2003), 21.

<sup>61</sup> Palloff, 19.



As that question is discussed, the topic of educational assessment in general will also be explored. It will be demonstrated that the use of student portfolios will serve as an effective instruments for both purposes.





## CHAPTER 5

### DELTO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

The DELTO informational brochure provides the following description of the program: “DELTO provides contextual theological education leading to ordination for men who provide pastoral service to congregations or in situations that cannot support a full-time pastor or missionary.”<sup>1</sup> What the brochure does not address is the process by which DELTO graduates will be “certified” for ordination in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. That process is the subject of this chapter.

#### Certification Defined

The LCMS requires that prior to an individual’s ordination (and “first call”) into the pastoral ministry he must be “declared qualified and recommended” by the faculty of the seminary “for their specific types of service in the church.” In other words, he must be certified. As stated in the Bylaws of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod:

#### 2.09 Eligibility for Individual Membership

a. A graduate of an authorized Synodical institution must be declared qualified for a first call and recommended by the faculty of the respective Synodical institution before the effective date of the first call to service in the church, as assigned by the Board of Assignments as provided in Bylaw 2.11.

b. *(This section is not applicable and is, therefore, omitted.)*

c. Candidates who may be declared qualified for first calls are those who before the effective date of the first calls will have satisfactorily completed the prescribed courses of studies and will have received diplomas from their respective institutions. In addition, they must have indicated complete dedication to the ministry and evidenced a readiness for service in the church. Finally, to be

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<sup>1</sup> What is DELTO?

[http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/BHE/delto\\_brochure\\_feb03\\_view.pdf](http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/BHE/delto_brochure_feb03_view.pdf).



declared qualified and recommended by the faculties ... for their specific types of service in the church, the appropriate faculty ... must be satisfied that the individual will meet all personal, professional, and theological requirements of those who hold the office of ministry to which the individual aspires. In addition, an academic year of supervised internship (vicarage) is required of all seminary students before graduation.<sup>2</sup>

Residential program students are certified on the basis of the faculty's personal knowledge of the individual students as a result of classroom contact and interaction. In some cases, an interview may be conducted. The "Placement Committee" of the seminary faculty, which recommends candidates to the faculty for certification, also reads written reports from the individual student's vicarage. The student's vicarage supervisor and the student write the vicarage reports. They are another element that contributes to the recommendation for faculty certification.

By definition DELTO students will have very little personal contact with the faculty because of the "distance factor." How then can the faculty and, ultimately, the church in good conscience certify DELTO students for ordination at the completion of the program? What kind of assessment can be used that will benefit not only the faculty and the church, but also for students' development during their course of study?

In answer to those questions this chapter describes the development of student portfolios, which are "built" as the individual students progress through DELTO. By way of introduction this chapter first identifies recent attempts in higher education to improve student assessment in general. It then discusses the benefits of portfolio assessment for DELTO, as it describes expected portfolio content.

In addressing the questions of the reliability and validity of portfolio assessment for DELTO, the witness of the Scriptures is explored to demonstrate that this "new" idea

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<sup>2</sup> Hartwig, Raymond L., Editor, *The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Handbook: 2001*. 20-21.



is really a very old idea: It represents the relational nature of faith and the life of faith for the people of God.

Before getting to that, however, we must first remember that the faculty will not be coming to this process of certification in a total vacuum. Some members of the faculty will have a better knowledge of the students than others, as is also the case for residential students.

By the time students complete the academic requirements of DELTO they will have been on campus at least four (4) times for the residential seminars described in the last chapter. Thus the students, and the faculty who made presentations at those face-to-face seminars, will have a minimal acquaintance. Additionally, as students and instructors interact via the Internet in the course of their academic work, those who teach the DELTO classes will already have formed some opinions about the students: They will have graded their work, and they will have shared some personal moments. The question that remains is, "How can student assessment in distance education programs be improved so that the faculty can confidently certify them for ordination?"

### **Student Assessment**

The word "assess" comes from the French "assidere," which means, "to sit beside." It describes a process of observation and evaluation that is, in and of itself, neutral. While it is neutral, however, assessment can have both positive and negative effects depending on the purpose for which it is used, the goal or goals toward which it is directed, and the perceptions of those who are being assessed. It is therefore important to be clear about the purposes of any such process.



In education three areas of interest come to mind whenever assessment is discussed: student progress, instructional practice, and program design. These three areas are neither mutually exclusive nor totally congruent, but they do work together for the good of the student. One set of authors puts it this way: "The fundamental role of assessment is to provide authentic and meaningful feedback for improving student learning, instructional practice, and educational options."<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, however, the real interest is on the student and the development of the student. The tendency in the past was to simply evaluate the students' knowledge, ability or skill. A major change began in about the mid-1980s as the educational community recognized that the assessment of instructional practice and educational programs is important.

Cathrine Palomba and Trudy Banta, writing about planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education, use this definition: "Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development." Their point is that all assessment needs to be undertaken "for the purpose of improving student learning and development."<sup>4</sup>

Joan Herman and Pamela Aschbacher, writing for the Center for the Study of Evaluation of the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), make the same point when they say,

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<sup>3</sup> Herman, J.L., P.R. Aschbacher. *A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1992). vi.

<sup>4</sup> Palomba, Catherine A. and Trudy W. Banta. *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1999). 4.





Assessment is not an end in itself – it provides information for decision making about what students have learned, what grades are deserved, whether students should pass on to the next grade, what groups they should be assigned to, what help they need, what areas of classroom instruction need revamping, where the school curriculum needs bolstering, and so forth.<sup>5</sup>

The emphasis here is on assuring student achievement for the purpose of student growth. As this goal is pursued instructional practice and curriculum can be adjusted in order to improve the quality of student performance.

In answer to this recognized need, a variety of approaches were undertaken. One approach was that of Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama which spent more than a decade applying the principles of TQM (Total Quality Management) developed by W. Edwards Deming in a university setting.<sup>6</sup> Their own summary report of the project concludes:

It was well to begin TQM and it was well to end it so that, having done both, Samford could move from quality as a technique to quality as an ethos, from models of productivity to models of maturation, from top-down unity in alignment to bottom-up unity in diversity.<sup>7</sup>

John Harris, Associate Provost for Quality Assessment at Samford, argued for quality as an ethos based upon professional judgment in his March 2000, paper titled, “Discerning Is More Than Counting.” He concludes, “We should begin to work with our colleagues in designing assessments that reflect the modes of inquiry most congruent

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<sup>5</sup> Herman. 95.

<sup>6</sup> I have not defined TQM, or provided references to the works of W. Edwards Deming here since I am simply referencing the Samford report concerning this emphasis. From prior personal study and involvement, however, I will note that it is an approach to management (specifically in the production of goods ) which gained much currency in the late 1980s and early 1990s across a broad spectrum of companies in the United States. It represents an approach to business, and in this case education, which emphasizes customer expectations and needs as the driving force for conduct.

<sup>7</sup> Samford University Press. *Betterment: The Samford Way*, Edited by Janica York, 2002. 25.



with their respective disciplines.”<sup>8</sup> And so, he points his readers to the subject of the more widespread assessment movement in higher education that designed to improve student outcomes and performance, which is the use of portfolios for assessment.

Lendly C. Black, who has written about portfolio assessment for the *NCA Quarterly* and *Assessment Update*, gives a brief history of portfolio assessment in the 1993 book *Making a Difference: Outcomes of a Decade of Assessment in Higher Education*. He notes that portfolios have been a part of the educational process for a long time, especially in the fine arts areas. It was not until the early 1970s, however, that some colleges began using them to “measure a wide range of student competencies.” And it was not until the early 1980s “that many institutions began to consider the portfolio as a viable evaluation tool for academic programs like general education.” Hence, he notes, portfolio assessment of general education and academic majors is a relatively new phenomenon.<sup>9</sup>

That was 1993, and portfolio assessment is now no longer a new phenomenon. In fact, the newest development in portfolio assessment is the use of the electronic portfolio. Teachers Leonard P. Herman and Mark Morrell, reported on this development in the June 1999 issue of “*The Journal ONLINE*.”<sup>10</sup> Since then the first international conference on the digital portfolio (**ePortfolio 2003**) was held on October 10, 2003, in Portier, France.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> American Academy for Liberal Education, Higher Education and Assessment. By John Harris & Dennis Sansom. *Discerning Is More Than Counting*. AALE Occasional Paper in Liberal Education No. 3. Edited by Janica York, 2000. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Banta, T.W. and Associates. *Making A Difference: Outcomes of a Decade of Assessment in Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993). 140.

<sup>10</sup> Herman, Leonard P. and Mark Morrell. “Educational Progressions: Electronic Portfolios in a Virtual Classroom.” *The Journal ONLINE* June 1999.  
<<http://www.thejournal.com/magazine/vault/articleprintversion.cfm?aid=2091>>.



Evidence of the use of portfolios in a variety of academic disciplines abounds. Articles have appeared in various places discussing ePortfolios;<sup>12</sup> the American Association of Higher Education is developing a taxonomy of electronic portfolios;<sup>13</sup> and an April 19, 2004 press release from Oral Roberts University announced the fact that they have developed a system to gather and evaluate portfolios on line. John Brown, Director of the ORU College & Career Guidance Center is quoted: "E-portfolios provide a place to document and track academic success. They also provide tools, beside exams, that help the faculty to more accurately assess student growth."<sup>14</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore ePortfolios, but their very existence points to widespread acceptance and use of portfolio assessment in higher education today. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that a program like DELTO should make use of this method of assessment as a way of encouraging student growth while also providing a means for program evaluation and instructional improvement.

The subjects of program evaluation and instructional improvement will remain in the background in this paper; much more space than is available would be necessary to adequately address these benefits. What we turn to now is a discussion of the benefits of

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<sup>11</sup> Cambridge, Daren and Barbara. "The Future of Electronic Portfolio Technology: Supporting What We Know About Learning."   
<[http://webcenter1.aahe.org/electronicportfolios/ePortfolio\\_2003\\_keynote.pdf](http://webcenter1.aahe.org/electronicportfolios/ePortfolio_2003_keynote.pdf)>. 31 October 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Batson, Trent. "EPortfolios - Bridging the Gap Left By CMS." *CMS Review* December 2003.   
<[http://www.sllabus.com/news\\_article.asp?id=8669&typeid=155](http://www.sllabus.com/news_article.asp?id=8669&typeid=155)>. Accessed March 5, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> "Towards a Taxonomy of Electronic Portfolios."   
<http://webcenter1.aahe.org/electronicportfolios/taxonomy.html>>. 2003. Accessed March 8, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Moore, Clifford E. "E-Portfolio: Wave of the Future." Oral Roberts University.   
[www.oru.edu/news](http://www.oru.edu/news), 2004. Accessed April 22, 2004.



portfolio assessment as a valid and reliable measure of a student performance and, in the case of DELTO, readiness for pastoral ministry.

### **Performance Assessment by Portfolio**

Educators generally identify four different types of evaluation: Summative, Formative, Placement and Diagnostic.<sup>15</sup> The summative evaluation is used to determine if an individual has demonstrated sufficient knowledge to be passed on to the next level. The goal is to determine if the learner has been able to meet required criterion. Formative evaluations are designed to inform the instructor about how to help the learner attain the goals of instruction. Placement evaluation is used to guide individuals into different educational tracks or to determine where they can best perform: These tend to be used by both educational and vocational counselors. Diagnostic evaluation is used to develop individualized learning plans for either special or gifted students.

All of these methods of evaluation are taken a step farther by performance assessment: "Performance assessment draws on the understanding that students learn best when they are engaged in active tasks. It is the process of using student activities or products, as opposed to tests or surveys, to evaluate student's knowledge, skills, and development."<sup>16</sup> So, more than simply an evaluative tool, performance assessment is also a learning tool designed to provide on-going feed back as learners work to accomplish their goals.

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<sup>15</sup> Because these are so widely understood in educational theory I am using my own summaries without external reference.

<sup>16</sup> Palomba. 115.





One of the most useful forms of performance assessment is the portfolio. “Portfolios are a type of performance assessment in which students’ work is systematically collected and carefully reviewed for evidence of learning and development.” Because they contain longitudinal information, portfolios can be evaluated for degree of improvement as well as for overall quality.<sup>17</sup>

Often the focus of portfolios is on documenting a process of change and determining the effect of the curriculum and environment on student growth. But there are additional, more personal benefits. Professor Peter Elbow, of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Massachusetts, notes that, “Portfolios are inherently more personal than other forms of assessment.” He continues, “When we read a portfolio we get a much stronger sense of contact with the person behind the texts: an author with a life history, a diversity of facets, a combination of strengths and weaknesses, someone who (has) had good days and bad days.”<sup>18</sup>

As DELTO courses are delivered, a variety of evaluations are used. Much depends upon the instructor of the particular course, as well as the content of that course. But, because DELTO is designed to form pastors for the church, and because the faculty has the responsibility of certifying DELTO graduates for pastoral ministry, the benefits of portfolio assessment for the overall program quickly become obvious.

Through the portfolio, the faculty will be able to know the person behind the electronic communications, see the longitudinal growth of that individual, and thus be

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<sup>17</sup> Palomba. 131.

<sup>18</sup> Black, L., D.A. Daiker, and J. Sommers. *New Directions in Portfolio Assessment: Reflective Practice, Critical Theory, and Large-Scale Scoring* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1994). 53.



satisfied that certification is more than merely a statement that the student has completed the prescribed course of studies. Additionally, the use of the DELTO portfolio will encourage the student himself to grow in the ability to engage in personal reflection and self-evaluation.

Diane Halpern, of the Department of Psychology, California State University, San Bernardino, CA, writes, "The use of portfolios ... [looks] not only for the end results of learning [but also] seeks to understand the activities and kinds of performance that led to those results."<sup>19</sup> This is of benefit not only to the institution doing the evaluation, but also to the students engaged in constructing the portfolio: "Portfolios, of necessity, require some metacognitive [*sic*] work ... [as they cause] students [to] become self-reflective. They can look longitudinally at their work], begin to recognize change, and grow in the knowledge of who they are."<sup>20</sup>

In other words, the portfolio fosters the kind of reflective learning which even the Apostle Paul calls for from the believers as he writes to the Philippians saying, "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."<sup>21</sup> This pattern demonstrates a life changing faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.

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<sup>19</sup> Halpern, D.F. and associates. *Changing College Classrooms: New Teaching and Learning Strategies for an Increasingly Complex World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994). 306.

<sup>20</sup> Halpern. 308.

<sup>21</sup> Philippians 3:17.



The Apostle describes his own progress in this way: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on ... toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."<sup>22</sup>

One benefit of engaging in a portfolio process is the opportunity it provides for personal reflection. "While there are differences in the meaning of the experience and in what [students] learn from reflection, all report that the process helps them to identify for themselves the critical features of their own teaching and philosophies."<sup>23</sup> In some cases that may lead to change, in others it confirms that what they are already doing is valid practice.

A primary value of the portfolio is that it documents growth over time. But it also causes both students and faculty to engage one another in a unique way: It calls for conversation in which "both speaker and listener find new meanings."<sup>24</sup> As students become engaged in constructing their portfolio and in telling the story of their development, "their knowledge base grows and they become more connected to the profession."<sup>25</sup> Although the profession to which the author of this quotation refers is that of teacher, the statement is equally true for those preparing for the pastoral ministry.

Grant Wiggins, President of the consulting firm *Authentic Education* of Hopewell, New Jersey, addressing the annual Portfolio Conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1997, noted that in portfolio assessments "the evaluation becomes contextual and

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<sup>22</sup> Philippians 3:12-14.

<sup>23</sup> Lyons, N., Editor. *With Portfolio In Hand: Validating the New Teachers Professionalism* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998). 248.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 116

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 118.



dialogical, watching the student develop within the context in which they are set based upon the prior understanding they have brought to the process.”<sup>26</sup>

It is important to remember in this connection that students in DELTO will be working not only with the faculty. They will also be engaged with a local pastor-mentor who will also serve as their vicarage supervisor. The construction of the portfolio will provide another opportunity to foster the growth of this relationship as the pieces which will be placed in the student’s portfolio are produced by the two (student and pastor-mentor) working in concert as will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **Reliability and Validity of Portfolio Assessment**

Because of the requirement that the faculty certify graduates for ordination, it is important not only that the students be known as a result of interaction with them, the faculty must be assured that the instrument for that knowing – in this case the student portfolio – is reliable and represents a valid picture of the individual. In other words, faculty must be assured of the authenticity of this form of assessment.

Grant Wiggins, president and director of programs for the Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS), a nonprofit educational research and consulting organization in Pennington, New Jersey, writes:

Authentic assessment is simply a fancy way of describing what performers in the world beyond school face each day: They are tested on their ability to do a known job well and in a variety of circumstances in which the performer has a right to receive or seek utter clarity about purposes, audience, standard, and criteria.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 207.

<sup>27</sup> Wiggins, G. *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998). 42.





Performance tasks, says Wiggins, should be,

- *Authentic*: They should have realistic options and a genuine purpose.
- *Credible*: They should be valid and reliable and should address rigorous content and performance standards.
- *User-friendly*: They should provide a clear and complete set of instructions, guidelines, and models.<sup>28</sup>

To that end he recommends the establishment of appropriate rubrics for the construction of the performance portfolio. The rubric, he writes, “Tells potential performers and judges just what elements of performance matter most and how the work to be judged will be distinguished in terms of relative quality.”<sup>29</sup>

Joan Herman, Pamela Aschbacher, and Lynn Winters, all educators on the staff of the Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA, note that portfolios are collections of student work that are reviewed against criteria in order to judge an individual student or program. The “assessment” in portfolio exists only when

- (1) An assessment purpose is defined;
- (2) The criteria or methods for determining what is put into the portfolio, and by whom are explicated; and
- (3) The criteria for assessing either the collection or individual pieces of work are identified.<sup>30</sup>

The purpose of portfolio assessment in the DELTO program is determination of eligibility for certification. The content is outlined on the next few pages, and criteria for

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<sup>28</sup> Wiggins. 140.

<sup>29</sup> Wiggins. 153.

<sup>30</sup> Herman. 72.



assessment will be discussed after that so that the questions of reliability and validity can be answered.

### **Content of the DELTO Portfolio**

The DELTO curriculum is a 30-course curriculum. The first 10-courses are delivered at the (geographical) District level by locally appointed instructors; the final 20 courses are delivered and taught by the seminary and seminary faculty.<sup>31</sup> It is at this level that the DELTO Student Portfolio project will begin.

The content of the DELTO Student Portfolio will be built as students progress through the 20 “seminary level” courses of the DELTO program. At the conclusion of each course students will be expected to submit a two-page paper answering the questions:

*What has this course meant for me?  
How has it affected my ministry?*

Additionally, as the students will be considered “vicars” in fulfillment of the requirement for “an academic year of supervised internship [vicarage] ... before graduation,”<sup>32</sup> annual vicarage reports will be required from students and vicarage supervisors (the student’s pastor-mentor). These annual vicarage reports will also be included in the DELTO Student Portfolio.

The annual vicarage report is another place where the student and pastor-mentor relationship becomes important. One requirement of the vicarage reports from both supervisor and student is that they must be shared and discussed with the other. Helen

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<sup>31</sup> See the attached “DELTO – State of the Project” prepared by the author as Secretary of the DELTO Oversight committee.

<sup>32</sup> LCMS Handbook, p. 21, see also Attachment 1, “DELTO -State of the Project.”



Fridus speaking to the annual Portfolio Conference held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1997, notes:

As students become engaged with their mentor in constructing their own portfolio and in telling the story of their development their knowledge base grows and they become more connected to the profession. The value of the portfolio process, ... proved to be related to reflection possibilities constructed over time more than to the function of the audience of the portfolio.<sup>33</sup>

What is put into the portfolio - point two (2) above - then, will be the twenty 2-page papers, and a minimum of three annual vicarage reports from both students and their pastor mentors. These reports have yet to be written; Concordia Seminary has documents that are currently used for our traditional students, but with the advent of this "concurrent/convertible"<sup>34</sup> vicarage new forms will need to be written.

Professor Peter Elbow, Amherst, Massachusetts, points out that, "The genius of portfolios is that they hold many pieces and give us a much better validity than others assessments procedures. That is, they give us a better picture of what we are trying to evaluate."<sup>35</sup> For this reason, students will be invited to contribute one, five-page or less, piece each year, of their own choosing, to the portfolio. This piece can be a sermon, a paper written for one of the courses they have taken, or a piece which they produce especially for the portfolio in conjunction with their mentor.

These three sources of portfolio content will work together to assure the validity of the portfolio as they provide,

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<sup>33</sup> Lyons. 132.

<sup>34</sup> "Concurrent/convertible" reflects that fact that men who are in DELTO are expected to be in a ministry "where their presence is expected both during and after completion of the program," as defined by the admission requirements of the DELTO program.

<sup>35</sup> Black. 44.



The ability for both students and faculty to see each part of the work in a larger context, allowing student self-assessment, and allowing faculty to measure individual students against their own performance rather than an artificial standard. Both student and faculty are able to observe the evolution and development of the individual.<sup>36</sup>

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, the Apostle Paul asks: "Do we need ... letters of recommendation to you or from you?" And then answers the question in this way:

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.<sup>37</sup>

Since the faculty will not be able to know and read DELTO students in the way St. Paul envisions, the contents of the portfolio will provide that knowledge, allowing the seminary faculty to know the hearts of the students entrusted to them.

#### **Assessment Criteria for the DELTO Portfolio**

The criterion for assessing the portfolio – point three (3) above - represents another matter. Grant Wiggins, the president and director of programs for the Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS), Pennington, New Jersey, says that, "Typically, a rubric contains a scale of possible points to be assigned in scoring work on a continuum of quality. And ... provides descriptors for each level of performance."<sup>38</sup> But since this is essentially a "pass/fail" program whose purpose is to prepare men for pastoral ministry it will not be scaled. Rather it will be designed to assess whether the men have met the requirements for certification or not.

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<sup>36</sup> Snavely, Loanne L. and Carol A. Wright. "Research Portfolio Use in Undergraduate Honors Education: Assessment Tool and Model for Future Work." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 29, no. 5 (September 2003): 298-303. 301.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.

<sup>38</sup> Wiggins. 150.





The more important question is what constitutes those requirements. There are two choices. One is the "Twelve Themes for Pastoral Education" developed by Dr. L. Dean Hempelmann, Director of Theological Programs for the LCMS. The Twelve Themes are:

1. Academic Readiness
2. Pastoral Practice
3. Spiritual Formation
4. Mission Outreach
5. Scholarship for the Church and to the World
6. International/Global Component
7. Flexibility in approach and Delivery of Pastoral Education
8. Understand Church within Culture and Context
9. Faithful Faculty with Pastoral Experience
10. Community of Faith
11. Service of the Baptized
12. Church Administration<sup>39</sup>

These are very worthwhile, and were developed by Hempelmann over a period of several months as a result of interviews with church members, church officials, and seminary professors. Because the Director of Theological Programs wrote these themes they would seem to provide the proper criteria for certification of DELTO graduates. However, it is the faculties of the individual seminaries who are charged with certification, and the Twelve Themes describe more of what is expected of the seminaries rather than expectations of the graduates of the seminaries.

More useful and applicable is the listing of competencies expected of the seminary graduate developed by the Concordia Seminary faculty some years ago and reported in the 2003 ATS Self-Study report. These competencies are:

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<sup>39</sup> Hempelmann, L. Dean. "Twelve Themes."  
<<http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=4097>>. 2002.



1. Exegete and teach the Scripture text within the circles of language (using the vernacular), history and theology
2. Teach the doctrines of the faith on the basis of the Scriptures, as set forth in the Creeds and Confessions of the Church.
3. Be knowledgeable of the major epochs of church history and be able to reflect on current church practice in light of the church's response to its context (the cultural situation) in former eras.
4. Critically think through issues encountered in the pastoral ministry within the framework and categories of Scripture and of the Lutheran confessions.
5. Be able to use appropriate resources and to offer a persuasive apology for the faith against present day heresies.
6. Preach the Gospel according to the Scriptures effectively and persuasively to a contemporary Lutheran congregation.
7. Be knowledgeable of Lutheran Worship and be able to lead the church's worship in a manner respectful to historic norms and attitudes, but also open to appropriate variation in worship forms and style.
8. Recognize and exercise the pastoral office as the ministry of preaching, worship, teaching, evangelism, pastoral care and counseling for the edification of God's people.
9. Lead and enable God's people to carry on the New Testament mission of the church in a world of diverse cultures and traditions, a mission articulated as: Worship, Witness, Nurture, Fellowship-Care and Service.
10. Be an example to the believers of Christian devotion and an obedient life.<sup>40</sup>

Because the faculty developed these standards, and the faculty is the entity that is called upon to certify students for ordination, these are the standards that will be used for the DELTO portfolio. In this way the validity of the instrument to meet the needs of the institution will be clarified.

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<sup>40</sup> Concordia Seminary, Self-Study Steering Committee. *COMPETENCIES - SEMINARY GRADUATE*, Vol. II Appendices to the Self-Study Report, 2-1 (St. Louis, MO: Seminary Print Shop, 2003). 2-1.



Dr. Trudy Banta, introducing her study of university assessment wrote, “Most institutions have statements that articulate the objectives of their academic programs. Too often, however, these statements remain buried in university catalogues.”<sup>41</sup> That is as true for seminaries as it is for universities. So, one other benefit of using the competencies listed above is that it will require the faculty to become reacquainted with them and to use these competencies as they participate in the evaluation of these portfolios. As the faculty uses the competencies, it will shape the way they construct and administer their course. Students, seminary, and the church will benefit from the use of these competencies.

### **Implementation**

Jesus, as he tells the parable of the sheep and the goats before the throne of God at the end of time, says that first the sheep, and then the goats ask, “When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?”<sup>42</sup> The King responds to both by pointing those being judged on the basis of their actions while here on earth. What Jesus portrays is, in effect, a scene similar to portfolio assessment – looking at what people have produced to make a judgment about their future.

That’s an important picture to keep in mind as portfolio assessment is implemented in the DELTO program. And along with that, the words of the LORD in the book of Jeremiah, “I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”<sup>43</sup> In the same way, the

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<sup>41</sup> Banta. 41.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 25:37 & 44.

<sup>43</sup> Jeremiah 29:11.



DELTO portfolio is designed to give students a future and a hope as they move toward certification for ordination.

Students need to know what is expected of them, portfolio assessment provides that for the program as a whole as well as for individual courses. At the same time, students also need to know that the goal of any assessment is their welfare, not negative judgment regarding certification.

“Establishing criteria and standards for grading is crucial. Equally important is the communication of those criteria and standards to students. It can

- Help explain to students what is expected of them.
- Help students participate in their own learning, because they know what they are aiming for.
- Help students evaluate their own work.
- Help you to give constructive feedback to students.”<sup>44</sup>

So, the final piece to be examined is the piece that will explain to students the purpose of the portfolio, its content, and the evaluation process that will be used. Appendix 3, The DELTO Student Portfolio, addresses these questions. It has been incorporated into a DELTO Student Manual, which students receive during the opening Residential Seminar described in Chapter 4. It will also be used to prepare the faculty for the process of portfolio evaluation.

Joan Heerman and Pamela Aschbacher, from UCLA write: “In some respects, portfolio assessment is a misnomer for ‘assessment of a body of work.’ In other

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<sup>44</sup> Walvoord. 65-66.





instances, the portfolio assessment is really the assessment system.”<sup>45</sup> For DELTO as a program it is the latter – the assessment system – for good reasons: It provides a longitudinal view of student formation, it provides reliable, authentic data for certification, and it provides for the engagement of faculty, students and pastor-mentor/vicarage supervisors to a degree not possible by other means.

It is simply the best possible way to guide and encourage student growth and development. It will contribute to the overall goal of forming thoughtful, practicing pastors who are well grounded theologically. And it will engage the faculty in a very satisfying and enriching way with one another and with the students for whom they are responsible.

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<sup>45</sup> Herman. 71.



## CHAPTER 6

### A VISION FOR PRACTICAL-CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Because, “I believe that distance education methods, using contextual pastor-mentors, can effectively meet the needs of the church and the expectations of the seminary,” the purpose of this study has been to,

**Demonstrate the validity of DELTO for the formation of non-degreed pastors so that Seminary faculty can confidently certify them for ordination and the Church (laity and clergy alike) will receive them as recognized pastors of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.<sup>1</sup>**

It is now time to bring the various discussions together in order to see how this point has been made.

It is a requirement of DELTO (Distance Education Leading To Ordination) that men who are admitted to the program already be serving a congregation that does not have an ordained pastor available.<sup>2</sup> As one of the letters quoted in Chapter 1 and reproduced below demonstrates, the people these men serve consider them to be their pastor. The letter, dated 19 June 2003, says:

Please know that the congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church is, by vote, unanimously in favor of ... entering the DELTO program. As a congregation we are satisfied with ...’s ministry to the congregation and the community. **We do not believe that ordination will make him any more a pastor to us**, but we understand that it is necessary for ... to feel equal to his peers in the church. We

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *What is DELTO?* (LCMS Board for Pastoral Education, 2003).



hope we can help him, and ourselves, to achieve respectability in the eyes of our brethren.  
Yours truly,<sup>3</sup>

People in the congregations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) want pastors for those congregations, and they want that pastor to be recognized by their whole church body. If the LCMS, or its seminaries, refuse that recognition – and the training that precedes it – the congregation will still be served as they raise up their own pastors.

But congregations without certified pastors may become isolated from the larger church body as a result of that choice. Another result may be that these congregations may not feel as “respectable” as the members desire it to be. Yet, as the letter also demonstrates, the man serving this congregation is considered to be their “pastor” - even though he has not been ordained.

William H. Willimon, Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Christian Ministry at Duke University Durham, North Carolina, has described the pastoral ministry this way:

From among the baptized, the church has found it helpful to call some to lead the church, to care for congregations, to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments, to worry about what makes the church, church, in a way that is helpful to all members of the body of Christ as they live out their vocations. Christians so designated – ordained, placed under orders by the church – are called pastors, priests, or clergy.<sup>4</sup>

Pastors are defined by what they do. And what they do is to care for those who call and identify them as “pastor.” And yet there is also a profoundly important aspect to their work because of the fact that they care for souls.

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter 1. 10.

<sup>4</sup> William H. Willimon, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000). 11.



Dr. John Fritz, sainted professor of Pastoral Theology at Concordia Seminary, whose 1937 work is still widely respected and used in the LCMS, describes the task this way:

The objective ... is the salvation of man and the glory of God, 1 Timothy 4:16;<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:31<sup>6</sup>. With this in mind, the pastor should apply the Law and the Gospel. Whether he baptize a child, make a decision in a case of divorce, or officiate at a funeral, the pastor acts as *Seelsorger*, a curate of souls.<sup>7</sup>

To do that well, pastors need to be formed in “the character of being a theologian,” as John Johnson, former President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has said.<sup>8</sup> They need to be able to “Keep a close watch on (themselves) and on the teaching.”<sup>9</sup>

What this work argues is that distance education programs like DELTO can accomplish the work of forming pastors by delivering theological content to students in the context in which they serve making use of the worldwide web. As the content is delivered, the web provides for student-to-student interaction and instructor-to-students exchanges in the form of “video-text books,” assigned readings, and computer-mediated conversations (CMC’s).

Evaluation of student work is accomplished through the same medium. At the conclusion of their training, evaluation of their readiness for ministry will be

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 4:16, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

<sup>7</sup> John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2000). 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Reporter/Alive* – newspaper of The LCMS, June 10, 1991. 1.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 4:16.





accomplished making use of the student portfolio compiled during the course of their work and study.

Concurrently, students are engaged in the work of the ministry in the community in which they have been asked to serve and are able to apply what they have learned in that context. One student, in the required portfolio piece for Old Testament Isagogics wrote:

This course has already had a profound effect on my ministry, and will continue to have. I was preparing to launch into a sermon series on the book of James, when I was watching the video segment in which [the instructor] explained the context in which the Sinaitic covenant was given: To a people already redeemed and set free! It's funny when you know something, but don't understand the big picture. That one thing opened up for me the Gospel in James! James is written to a people that have already been redeemed and set free! The message given that Sunday on the Introduction to James was one of the most powerful, passionate, and meaningful messages I'd ever given, based on the comments received afterwards.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Argument**

Chapter 2 traces the history of preparation for pastoral ministry in the LCMS in order to demonstrate that the LCMS has historically provided both a "practical" and a "theoretical" track leading to ordination. The practical track essentially came to an end in late 1960's when both seminaries owned and operated by the LCMS, adopted the Master of Divinity as the primary degree issued in preparation for ordination.

Chapter 2 also argues that when the shift was made from a two-track system to a virtually exclusive emphasis on the "theoretical" method of preparing men for ministry, an emphasis on outreach was lost. In conjunction with other events in both the LCMS,

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<sup>10</sup> Bill Baker, Bakersfield, CA, O.T. Isagogics Reflections for my Portfolio, to DELTO Office, St. Louis, MO, "OT Isagogics Reflections," 9-15, 2004, on file.



and the church at large the loss of the practical track contributed to a decline in denominational membership.<sup>11</sup>

The influence of the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) movement, which led to the development of the DELTO (Distance Education Leading To Ordination) program, was examined in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 also argues that distance education programs are not designed to be in competition with the residential programs of the Synod. They are, rather, complimentary of those programs and informed by them. Distance education is not intended to replace residential seminary programs, but to supplement them as the seminaries work to meet the growing need for pastors and missionaries in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.<sup>12</sup>

Thus it was shown that Distance Education Leading to Ordination, and other distance education programs, can meet the need for pastors and missionaries in a way that has historic precedence using the technology and methods of today. DELTO trains “practical” pastors for ministry in “response to the extraordinary mission needs of the church” as the brochure that describes the program says. It continues, “DELTO provides contextual theological education leading to ordination for men who provide pastoral service to congregations or in situations that cannot support a full-time pastor or missionary.”<sup>13</sup> As it does, DELTO can meet those needs in ways that overcome the

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<sup>11</sup> See page 51.

<sup>12</sup> See page 76 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *What is DELTO?* (LCMS Board for Pastoral Education, 2003). See Chapter 1



objections of its detractors, and others who are opposed to this method of theological education because it represents a “dumbing-down” of pastoral formation.<sup>14</sup>

Theologically, the very fact that “pastors” are being trained for certification and ordination for and by the whole church demonstrates that DELTO is a responsible program that fulfills the “*rite vocatus*” requirement of Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>15</sup>

Two additional frequent objections to the training that DELTO provides are: It cannot provide its students with a community in which they can develop spiritually and intellectually as residential programs do. And, that it will be impossible for the seminary faculty to know these students well enough to be able to certify them for ordination.<sup>16</sup>

The subject of community is addressed in Chapter 4. And a plan for student assessment is developed in Chapter 5. Both objections are answered in ways that demonstrate that these important concerns can are being met by the DELTO program.

Community is provided by the context in which the student serves, by his relationship with his pastor-mentor, and by relationships with fellow students as they meet for annual face-to-face seminars on the seminary campus and dialog on-line in the computer-mediated classroom. Most important is the scriptural and theological understanding that faculty, students, pastor-mentors, families and congregations are,

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 1, page 14.

<sup>15</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, Editor, *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959). 36. See also Chapter 3. 64 ff. for a discussion of the importance of *rite vocatus* for the LCMS.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 1, page 14.



together, “a people called” by God to serve him and he will preserve and prosper their work together.<sup>17</sup>

Student assessment by means of portfolio, addressed in Chapter 5, answers the question of the faculty’s ability to know students well enough to certify them for ordination. The student portfolios will contain student reflections on each course completed along with summation and evaluation of their ministry by their pastor-mentors. The seminary faculty will be able to evaluate the progress of the DELTO student’s training and formation for ministry. As those documents are weighed against the competencies expected of graduating seminarians, the faculty will have enough information to be able to confidently act on the certification of the DELTO graduates for ordination.<sup>18</sup>

It may be that those who complete the DELTO program will never rise to the level of theologians because a 30-course curriculum requiring no biblical languages cannot compare to the rigorous requirements of the Master of Divinity programs offered by residential seminaries. But it can and will provide “contextual theological education leading to ordination for men who provide pastoral service to congregations or in situations that cannot support a full-time pastor or missionary.”<sup>19</sup> And that is what DELTO is all about. These are men who will, as Dean Willimon of Duke University has said,

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<sup>17</sup> See page 85 ff.

<sup>18</sup> See page 111 ff.

<sup>19</sup> *What is DELTO?* (LCMS Board for Pastoral Education, 2003). Also see above, page 120.





Lead the church, ... care for congregations, ... preach the Word and ... administer the sacraments, and ... worry about what makes the church, church, in a way that is helpful to all members of the body of Christ as they live out their vocations.<sup>20</sup>

As they do, they will be the pastors they have been called to be as they, “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught ... (and are) able to give instruction in sound doctrine and to rebuke those who contradict it.”<sup>21</sup>

The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 2:16, asks, “Who is sufficient for these things?” He answers the question in the following chapter: “Our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”<sup>22</sup>

That is the confidence also of those who are in the DELTO program, and of those who administer the program. And with the Psalmist they together confess, “God is great!”<sup>23</sup>

### **The Future**

As I reported to the Board for Pastoral Education (BPE) of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on December 2, 2005,

Fifteen men began the “new” DELTO in 2004, 11 remain active in the program. Of the 5 who have dropped out 2 are now residential students at Concordia Seminary (one M. Div., the other alternate route), one is elderly and simply could not keep up the pace, and the final one experienced disappointment that resulted in a loss of confidence in his pastor-mentor, and he has temporarily withdrawn.

Eighteen men began our second “new” DELTO cohort as they attended, with their pastor-mentor/vicarage supervisors, the opening residential seminar, September 7-

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<sup>20</sup> Willimon. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Titus 1:9.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:5-6.

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 70:4



9, 2006. These men, like those before them, demonstrate a sincere commitment to formation for the pastoral ministry. They are currently taking their second seminary level course and are active in their studies and ministries.<sup>24</sup>

Regardless of any opposition to it, the DELTO program is alive and well. Admission is still restricted to men who are serving either mission starts or congregations where there is no ordained pastor available. But it can be anticipated that eventually the admission criteria will be broadened, especially in light of the *Ablaze!* emphasis of the Synod.<sup>25</sup>

As these men continue in ministry and in DELTO it will be possible to track not only their personal growth, but also the progress of their congregations and their growth in ministry and service by means of the vicarage reports and annual statistical reports. As their progress is documented, the success, validity, and necessity for continuation and growth of the DELTO program will become more evident.

Ten of the twenty "Seminary level" DELTO courses are presently developed. As the remaining courses go into production, and as we begin to teach the already developed courses for succeeding years, revisions and improvements will be possible based on both student and professorial responses to the present work.

There remains much to do to meet the needs of Christ's church for pastors and missionaries using distance education methods for their formation. With St. Paul we

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<sup>24</sup> David Wollenburg, Director of DELTO, "Annual Report to the Board for Pastoral Education, LCMS," December 2, 2005. On file.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter I. 4-5.



“press on toward the goal,”<sup>26</sup> confident that “the objective ... is the salvation of man and the glory of God.”<sup>27</sup>

For now, it is my prayer that this dissertation can provide a framework for others, (also) in other denominations, to develop their own programs of theological education using distance education methods.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Philippians 3:14.

<sup>27</sup> Fritz. 10

<sup>28</sup> See page 17.



## APPENDIX 1

### DELTO: STATE OF THE PROJECT

A summary of Oversight Committee decisions to this point.

#### **I. Theological Assumptions** (adopted 2/19/02)

- A. The office of the public ministry is a divine office instituted by God for the public administration of the means of grace (AC V), as distinguished from the priesthood of all believers.
- B. Those who are to be placed into that office are recognized by the public action of the church through certification, call, and the laying on of hands (AC XIV).
- C. While not every one placed into the pastoral office need necessarily (nor regularly does) carry out all functions of the office, there is one pastoral office, and that office carries with it the full authority of Christ in publicly administering the means of grace.
- D. It is the responsibility of the church through its congregations to fill the pastoral office with qualified men.
- E. Although congregations as a local manifestation of the church universal have within themselves the right to call and place into the public ministry whomever they may choose, congregations united into our Synodical fellowship have agreed to call and install only those men who have been certified by the whole synod.
- F. Such certification implies a spiritual, theological, and educational basis that is recognized and regularized across the entire synod.
  - 1. Although placement of qualified individuals into the office is theologically non-negotiable *de jure divino*, the level, manner, content, and delivery of theological education leading to such certification is not fixed to any specific standard or degree, which are matters to be determined by the church *de jure humano*.
  - 2. While education need not be (nor has it ever been) the same for every context of pastoral ministry, questions of educational level





and certification belong to the whole Synod. They should, therefore, be carried out in a standardized and regularized manner.

- G. The task of education and certification has been entrusted by our Synod to the seminary faculties and the pastoral colloquy board.

## II. Admission Criteria (Adopted 2/20/02)

- A. Applicants should be mature in faith and life (ordinarily no less than 30 years of age), have significant experience in the church, and adequate post-secondary school course work and experience to enable successful completion of the program.
- B. Applicants must be communicant members in good standing of an LC-MS congregation, supported by their spouses (if married) and other immediate family members, and be sufficiently committed to the Lutheran faith to represent the LC-MS in their unique situation.
- C. Applicants must be male and have demonstrated the aptitude to serve in the pastoral office as identified in Scripture (esp. 1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1).
- D. Applicants must be in, or entering, a word and sacrament ministry where no seminary prepared pastor is available and where his presence and ministry is expected both during and after the completion of the program.

*(On 9/30/03 the Oversight Committee addressed the interpretation of this paragraph relative to interest expressed by the field for both lay men and "commissioned ministers" to be admitted to DELTO. At that time it was "agreed to resolve the issue by saying that for the present only men who are serving vacant or mission congregations where no seminary prepared pastor is available, and where their presence is expected both during and after completion of the program should be admitted to DELTO. Further, the committee wishes to emphasize that the District Presidents are responsible for qualifying the situations in which these men serve.)*

- E. The District in which the applicant serves and his District President must screen and recommend the applicant to the program.
- F. The District in which the applicant serves, his District President and his congregation must approve and support the ministry situation in which the applicant will receive his training
- G. Applicants must be paired with an ordained pastor of the LCMS who will serve as their **Mentor/Vicarage Supervisor** throughout the course of study.



- H. Mentor/vicarage supervisors must be approved according to standardized criteria and agree to provide appropriate feedback to their student and to the seminary on a regular basis. Each mentor/vicarage supervisor must have the permission of his own congregation to be engaged in this educational endeavor.

### III. Curriculum Decisions

- A. In order to emphasize the non-degree nature of the DELTO program, grading will be on a pass/fail basis. (Adopted 3/20/02)
- B. The DELTO curriculum will be taught on the basis of an appropriate use of the Bible in the vernacular with the understanding that DELTO is dealing with extraordinary circumstances and that the Biblical Languages are still necessary for the life of the Church. (Adopted 3/20/02)
- C. The approved DELTO curriculum consists of 30 courses, with the first 10 being acceptable as taught through District level programs based on equivalency to the syllabi posted on the Synodical website. (Adopted 6/17/02)
- D. The Synodical Entrance Level Competency Exams (ELCE's) will be utilized as the standard for meeting the objectives of the first three courses (OT Bible, NT Bible, and Christian Doctrine). All students (whether taking actual course work or through self-study and review) will demonstrate their competency by taking and passing these exams at the level required by the seminaries. (Adopted 7/29/02)
- E. Grand-fathering of past courses for the first 10 was discussed, and it was agreed that equivalent material may be accepted by the seminaries based upon the guidelines provided by the accepted syllabi. (Adopted 9/26/02)
- F. Acceptance/non-acceptance of the first 10 courses will be based on the seminary's evaluation of the courses over against the approved DELTO syllabi as posted on the BHE website, with the understanding of the Oversight Committee that it is the District's responsibility to supply the relevant syllabi to the seminaries. (Adopted 12/10/03)

### IV. Student and Graduate Status

- A. **Vicars:** DELTO students ... should be regarded as "Vicars" once they (are) in the program. (Adopted 2/19/02)
- B. As a working definition the word 'vicar' means "under District and seminary supervision engaged in Word and Sacrament ministry." ... the nomenclature used for students in the DELTO program will be "DELTO-



Vicar” beginning at course #11. ... as students begin course 11 their name will be reported to the Council of Presidents for formal assignment as a convertible vicar. (Adopted 9/25/02)

- C. **Placement:** Discussion with the Secretary of Synod resulted in the recommendation that two new categories of the source of certification be added to the Lutheran Annual: “DELTO FW,” and “DELTO SL.” (Adopted 7/29/02) Upon completion of the program and certification it is expected that the candidate will be placed in the location in which they have received their training. (Adopted 9/25/02)

## V. Admissions Process

- A. Students should enroll in the DELTO program at one of the seminaries even as they begin taking District level courses so that the seminaries can be enabled to track student progress and be better able to plan for new classes. The District level programs will report a student’s progress to the appropriate Seminary. (Adopted 7/29/02)
- B. Applications for admission and enrollment will be routed through the Districts which are encouraged to maintain files for their DELTO students. (Adopted 9/25/02)

## VI. Mentoring

- A. “Mentoring” is defined as “a supportive relationship in which one party positively affects the development of the other.” It is not managing, not life *coaching* (skill development), not *counseling*. A good mentor supports the student; establishes relationship; positively affects the individual’s development, prays for him – *the mentor listens, questions, advises, and models.* (Adopted 9/26/02)
- B. A “Pastor-Mentor Training Manual” has been produced under the Direction of Dean Hempelmann assisted by Jan Case and Pete Ave-Lallemant.
- C. The Pastoral Growth Advisors assigned to each seminary will be asked to work with DELTO students from very early on in the program. (9/26/02)



### **Implementation Work**

Plans developed to implement the work of The Oversight Committee:

#### **VII. Course Development (Delivery)**

- A. On September 25, 2002, Ray Halm of CUEnet met with the Oversight Committee and proposed that the adopted DELTO curriculum be developed by CUEnet following the general form of the current Teacher Colloquy program. Ray has received the promise of Schwann Foundation development monies if courses are developed by the two seminaries working together.
- B. This proposal was discussed in detail, both in that meeting and in a subsequent meeting with Ray and Dean Hempelmann, Andy Bartelt, Walter A. Meier III, William Weinrich, and David Wollenburg.
- C. It was agreed that courses would be developed for delivery making use of CUEnet's WebCT program and ISP (Internet Service Provider), and that the general outline of each course would include
  - i. A "video textbook" developed by one professor from each seminary as the subject matter experts.
  - ii. Assignments and evaluative material developed by each seminary according to its needs, and presented by an Instructor (Professor) assigned by the seminary offering the course.
  - iii. Appropriate use of the pastor-mentor/vicarage supervisor to assist in the spiritual development of students within the appropriate community of both the local and "larger" Church.

#### **VIII. Admitting students**

- A. For the present we intend to admit solely with those who are "ready" to begin with course # 11, later we will work out processes for those who are enrolled in District programs.
- B. When a student's file is complete with transcripts, letters of recommendation, identification of the context in which he will be working, and we are satisfied that the "First 10" have been accomplished that student's file is presented to the Admissions Committee.
- C. Following admission and before the student can begin taking classes, we must have evidence that he has passed the required ELCE's, we must have a vicarage assignment in place for that student – this involves receiving, through the ordinary channels, a "Vicarage Agreement" form from the congregations and (as a minimum) preliminary placement in this "concurrent vicarage" prior to formal action by the COP Placement Committee.





## **APPENDIX TWO**

### **GOALS FOR DELTO CURRICULUM**

The following were reformulated as a result of discussions with CUEnet December 17-19, 2003.

- 1. Provide classical Lutheran theological education consistent with the goals and core values of the Seminary**

Although adjusted to meet the needs of a distance program, the curriculum still maintains and builds on the basic themes and emphasizes of historic Lutheran theological education and formation.

- 2. Value DELTO students as members of the Seminary community**

They must know that they are full-fledged members of the community, and must be treated and respected as such. To this end they receive the support of the community even as they contribute to it.

- 3. Attainable for students and mentors**

Both need to be able to not only “get to” the material, but also able to complete the required work in a timely manner – we need to recognize the life situations of these men: Most of them will have full time jobs, families, and ministries – now they are adding study.

- 4. Recognize the mentoring relationship, and make use of it on a regular basis**

The local pastor/mentors are key to the success of this program. They will provide the local “community” in which the student develops. We need to use them for exercises and discussions with their student – plan for a weekly activity for student and mentor together.

- 5. Build faith, subject knowledge, and community (spiritual growth)**

Perhaps even more than knowledge our goal is to help the student develop a pastoral head and heart. In order to do this we must provide the opportunity and means for spiritual growth to occur as an overall outcome of each course and each contact with the student and the pastor/mentors.



## **6. Provide a communication rich environment**

Using both “synchronous” opportunities (threaded discussions, “hear-me/see-me” sessions, or chat) so that students have the opportunity to be “together” as a part of the desired spiritual growth, and “asynchronous” material (video text book, other on-line resources, and other Web-based instruction) so that students can work at time that suit their needs best.

## **7. It is be doable in a 6-week period**

This addresses the question of course “load” for busy, yet committed students. The goal is for students to be able to successfully master a course every 2 months – the 6 week instructional time allows for some “down” time between each course as well as flex time if a student’s circumstances dictate it. At the same time, provision will be made for enrichment and follow-on work. (See point #11.)

### MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING THESE GOALS

## **8. Instructor must respond to students and be available to them in a timely manner**

This is a reminder that if we expect students to turn work in on time, they need to expect that it will be returned in a timely manner.

## **9. Provide a Printed Syllabus/Handbook for each course**

A print copy of what will also be available on-line will be productive as it enables them to navigate the web based instruction and assignments.

It makes the process of completing a course more understandable and easier to track for both students and mentors – it means that they will not always be tied to the computer as they study.

## **10. Expect a 1 page summary at end for the student’s portfolio!**

This could also serve as a concluding assignment, but it would be retained in the student’s “permanent” files for use when it comes time to certify these men for ordination – it would be used by the faculty as a record of the student’s progression and growth.

This should include major lessons learned in the course and some reflection on how, if any, it has shaped the student’s progress (formation) toward becoming a Pastor in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.



**11. Student time needed to meet course objectives and contribute to life-long learning**

In order to meet the needs of the DELTO student each course will follow essentially the following guidelines:

- A. The “video textbook” will normally be 10-12 hours in length; it should take students 30-36 hours to master this material.
- B. Additional required assignments (reading, writing, etc) will aim for 36-42 hours of which 2 hours per week would be spent with the student’s pastor-mentor.
- C. Additional assignments of 18 hours will be “Highly Recommended” material.
- D. As a guide and incentive for life-long learning instructors will design 30-40 hours of “Guided Extended Activity” in which students will be encouraged to be engaged following the completion of each course and/or the entire DELTO program.



## APPENDIX 3

### THE DELTO STUDENT PORTFOLIO

- A. **Portfolio Purpose:** The purpose of the DELTO student portfolio is to provide evidence of your growth toward becoming an ordained pastor of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It will be used in two ways:
1. Once a year, as you come to the campus for the required Annual Seminar we will review the contents with you and reflect with you on your progress.
  2. As you near completion of the DELTO program, the faculty will use the pieces included in your portfolio as the basis for recommending your certification for ordination – a minimum of two faculty members will be asked to review
- B. **Items to be Included in your Portfolio:** This is your opportunity to reflect on the education you are receiving as a DELTO vicar, and to help the faculty get to know you better. There will be three sections in your portfolio:
1. **End of Course Papers:** At the conclusion of each class you take you will be asked to write a two-page paper for submission to the Director of DELTO. This will be in addition to any other requirements of the course instructor, but the course will NOT be credited until this paper has been submitted. It will answer two questions: *What has this course meant for me? And how has it affected my ministry?*
  2. **Vicarage Reports:** Once each year as you are in the program you and your vicarage supervisor will each prepare a Vicarage Report. These reports will be retained in your DELTO student portfolio.
  3. **Personal Reflection Papers:** These are not required, but provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your personal growth in life and ministry. You may submit one such paper, five-pages or less, double-spaced, each year. It may be the result of the yearly, required residential seminar, a sermon you have preached, or other reflections.
- C. **Portfolio Evaluation:** The faculty will be looking for satisfactory evidence that you have attained the Competencies expected of a Seminary graduate. The





following grid outlines those competencies and will be used to evaluate your portfolio; it will also provide the basis for your yearly review or your progress:

<b>Critical Competencies Expected for Certification</b>	<b>Not met</b>	<b>Fully met – evidence from course, vicarage report or other evidence.</b>
1. Exegete and teach the Scripture text within the circles of language (using the vernacular), history and theology.		
2. Teach the doctrines of the faith on the basis of the Scriptures, as set forth in the Creeds and Confessions of the Church.		
3. Be knowledgeable of the major epochs of church history and be able to reflect on current church practice in light of the church's response to its context (the cultural situation) in former eras.		
4. Critically think through issues encountered in the pastoral ministry within the framework and categories of Scripture and of the Lutheran confessions.		
5. Be able to use appropriate resources and to offer a persuasive apology for the faith against present day heresies.		
6. Preach the Gospel according to the Scriptures effectively and persuasively to a contemporary Lutheran congregation.		
7. Be knowledgeable of Lutheran Worship and be able to lead the church's worship in a manner respectful to historic norms and attitudes, but also open to appropriate variation in worship forms and style.		
8. Recognize and exercise the pastoral office as the ministry of preaching, worship, teaching, evangelism, pastoral care and counseling for the edification of God's people.		
9. Lead and enable God's people to carry on the New Testament mission of the church in a world of diverse cultures and traditions, a missions articulated as: Worship, Witness, Nurture, Fellowship-Care and Service.		
10. Be an example to the believers of Christian devotion and an obedient life.		



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