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Here I Sit

by Shirley Morgenthaler

Faith Formation and Spirituality in Our Congregations

Welcome to *Lutheran Education Journal, Volume 156!* What a joy it is to celebrate the continuing publication of this historic journal, and at the same time celebrate the sixty years of ministry preparation for the Directors of Christian Education in our church body.

It began right here, folks! It was Concordia Teachers College in River Forest who took the brave step to move beyond the preparation of Lutheran Teachers for ministry in schools and congregations, and to include the intentional preparation of teaching ministers for a more comprehensive ministry to the entire congregation. I suspect it was that move that led to the eventual name change to Concordia College, and the beginning of the morphing into Concordia University Chicago, with its multiplicity of colleges and programs.

More and more, the congregation-wide preparation of DCEs for ministry has been focused on the topics of faith formation and spirituality development. This trend mirrors the developments in the larger community of denominations across the country and the world. From 2003 to 2012, Concordia University Chicago was host to a triennial *Children's Spirituality Conference,* attracting Christian-education leaders from a wide range of denominations and faith traditions. Christian education leaders from across the globe!

That conference has morphed into the *Children's Spirituality Summit,* now convened at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee every two years. This summit attracts church professionals and university faculty from across the country, as well as from Australia, the Philippines, England, and Canada, among others.

Faith formation focuses the attention on the learner, exactly where the focus should be. It takes what we are discovering about learning and about the brain and applies it to the spiritual realm. Learning about God is no different a brain activity than learning about math or about history. The difference is that it is also a heart activity. The difference is the eternity for which a relationship with Jesus Christ prepares us.

That eternity makes the work of the individual in DCE ministry both exciting and daunting.

This issue of *Lutheran Education Journal* reviews, explains, and celebrates the office of public ministry known as DCE ministry. At the same time, it gives each of us a deeper and richer picture of the Office of Public Ministry in general as well as of DCE Ministry in particular. The next time you see Dr. Debra Arfsten or Dr. Kevin Borchers, thank them for the work they do in forming, continuously and creatively, the next generations of DCEs for our church. ***LEJ***

From Where I Sit, Too
by Debra Arfsten

Celebrating DCE Ministry

It's been a great year of celebration for DCE ministry as we recognized the 60 years that God has blessed this profession in His church. We celebrated well at the National DCE Conference in January in San Diego, and Concordia University Chicago celebrated in October with a special chapel service and reception with local DCEs and pastors coming together. Ten years ago, when we celebrated our 50th, we were blessed to get a day of recognition in our LCMS church body that is now celebrated each year. It reads in part as follows:

Resolved, That we give thanks to God for the ministry of DCEs, remembering the words of the apostle Paul, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it," (2 Timothy 3:14, ESV); and be it also

> Resolved, That June 26, 2009, be officially proclaimed as National LCMS Director of Christian Education Day in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, with the prayer of God's richest blessings on the DCE ministries of our Synod, past, present, and future. (Complete document available on www.lcms.org)

In the 60 years since DCE ministry was founded, much has changed in the church and in our culture. Our training remains solid in focusing on the parish DCE yet with nuances that address more contemporary issues and tackle the challenges of technology, the change in understanding how learners learn, and how to address the change in priorities in church attendance, etc.

It seems that congregations are earnestly seeking church workers who not only have a solid theological and educational background, but also desire those who can connect with people of all ages, especially children and youth, and who can provide activities, service projects, and spiritual growth opportunities for all ages. The challenge is that many of our congregations still seek DCEs to do educational programming, and rightly so, however there seems to be a greater desire and need to go beyond that in the faith formation of children and adults. Providing deeper substance in study and more opportunities for service in addition to the programmatic activities seems to be a priority.

The variety of articles in this journal take a look at different aspects of the ministry. Dr. Bill Karpenko's article will take us on an historical tour of DCE ministry, identifying themes discovered in his research that takes this history into the 21st century. Dr. Kevin Borchers reflects on servant leadership and its connection to DCE ministry, taken from his own dissertation research on servant leadership. Based on his research on the relationship of the DCE and other Commissioned Ministers to the Office of Public Ministry, Dr. Dave Rueter explores what it means to be "called" as a DCE in the LCMS. Dr. Sarah Elliott takes a different look in her research study, which included interviews of former DCEs, as she sought to understand the factors and circumstances that may contribute to a DCE's departure from the profession, as well as identify any possible interventions that may have prevented that departure. And finally, we look at the question of the role of psychology courses in their preparation of church work students, written by Dr. James Bender, Dr. Lindsey Bartgis, and Mary Abo. ***LEJ***

Sixty Years of Ministry by Directors of Christian Education (DCEs) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)

A very Abbreviated History

By William O. Karpenko II

This history of DCE ministry provides yet another opportunity to learn of God's grace and mercy in the life of ordinary individuals pursuing a compelling calling. Hebrews 11 and 12 capture the spirit of this history: it is one long series of enduring and not losing heart. It is "faith in action," recounting the efforts of imperfect people and flawed happenings that God used to offer a ministry office to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod during a unique time in the Synod's life. It is one more story of God inspiring faith in His people so they would say:

> [1]Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2]looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12: 1-2. ESV)

The History of DCE Ministry

During the past sixty years at least eight history-type resources have been published. The first, and most often quoted, was written in 1974 by the now Rev. Ted Schroeder, who at the time was a non-rostered DCE attending Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (Schroeder, 1974). Barely 15 years into the DCE movement in Synod, his history attempted to answer three questions (1974). With a forward look, Dr. William O. Karpenko II addressed the future of DCE Ministry in 1983, basing his article on the previous 24-year history (Karpenko, 1983). In 1995, Rev. Dale Griffin, a patron saint of DCE ministry, lent his own analytic eye to the ministry that he had helped foster when he served on the Board for Parish Education/Services staff from 1961 to 1986 (Griffin, 1995). Five years before the 50th anniversary of DCE Ministry, Professor Mark Blanke authored a thoughtful look at DCE Ministry, past, present and future (2004). On the 50th anniversary of DCE ministry in the LCMS there were a spate of history-type

articles, two of which were captured in *Issues in Christian Education* (Weidner, 2009; Wilke, 2009). In 2011, a co-authored piece, appearing in the book "*Together,*" focused on "Telling the Family History" of DCE ministry (Schoepp & Warren) In August of 2019, the *NADCE Quarterly* added its contribution to the 60-year history of DCE Ministry (Karpenko, 2019). It is important to note that there are various other capsulated DCE histories that have appeared over the past 40 years in dissertations such as Tony Davison (1978). This article gratefully stands on the shoulders of these prior works and whole-heartedly recommends their reading if other perspectives are desired.

Every History has a Particular Lens

The individual or team that attempts to capture the history of a ministry like that of the Director of Christian Education inevitably does so from a particular perspective and a particular era. Thus, the author of this history is an 80-year-old rostered DCE who has served as a congregational DCE, a missionary, a counselor with trouble-prone youth, and a university professor/administrator. The lens then through which this history is written reflects his 60-year love affair with DCE ministry as a congregational practitioner, mission field innovator, DCE program director, instructor, and intern supervisor.

Themes of this History

This History will suggest that…

- There were a handful of significant pre-1959 happenings that prepared the way for DCE ministry in the LCMS.
- There have been seven eras of DCE Ministry in the LCMS, each generating its set of lingering questions.
- When DCE ministry has consistent and collaborative support on a Synodical level it flourishes.
- Most of the significant happenings shaping DCE ministry took place because of collaborative relationships and actions.
- The professionalization of DCE ministry is more evident now than any time in its past.
- DCE Ministry has become a long-term career for a growing number of individuals.
- Women are playing a greater role in congregational-based DCE ministry.
- Advocacy for DCE ministry within the Synod remains active.
- DCE ministry continues to make an impact on LCMS congregations through DCEs who are Biblically-based, lifespan Christian educators.

Understandings Undergirding this History of DCE Ministry in the LCMS

In 1999, at a DCE Summit held at the International Center of the LCMS in St. Louis, three consensus understandings were forged by those present (DCE Summit, 1999). They included, in descending order, a definition of a DCE, the mission of a DCE, and important values for a DCE.

> A Director of Christian Education is a synodically certified, called, and commissioned lifespan educational leader prepared for team ministry in a congregational setting. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Director of Christian Education plans, administers, and assesses ministry that nurtures and equips people as the body of Christ for spiritual maturity, service, and witness in home, job, congregation, community, and the world. DCEs exhibit Christian character; display a spiritually maturing faith; relate well with people of all ages; express a passion for teaching and learning; possess a servant heart; manage personal and professional life effectively; seek to work in team relationships; strive for excellence; operate in a self-directed manner.(Together, 2011, p. 7)

A fourth document that continues to shape the attitudes and behaviors of those in DCE ministry is the *Ethical Guidelines for Directors of Christian Education* adopted at a DCE summit two years later (LEA, 2002). This history is about an office of the public ministry within a particular denomination, not a history about particular individuals. Secondly, this history will not explore in any depth other DCE-related topics such as the role of research in fostering of DCE ministry, the role of DCE Program Directors in the development of DCE ministry, the impact of various DCE training programs on DCE ministry, the place of Synodical leadership in the history of DCE ministry, and the role of DCE summits in its history. Finally, as the title above notes, this is a very abbreviated recounting of DCE ministry's 60-year history, which is bound to overlook vital decisions, events, and individual perceptions.

A Numerical Context for Understanding the Service of Certified LCMS DCEs

1969-to-2019. As of October 2019, there are 2,302 individuals who have been certified as Directors of Christian Education within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Their service within and outside of the LCMS is vast and multi-faceted, in addition to some 1,000 non-church workers many of whom have served, or are serving, as highly gifted lay people in congregations, agencies, educational institutions, and other settings around the world.

Thus, when reading these data below, it is important to keep in mind that:

- Those who served as a DCE up until 1970 were <u>not certified</u> as a DCE, with the exception of three Concordia Seward graduates of its DCE Fifth Year Program (CUS, 1990).

- There have been hundreds of individuals serving in DCE-type positions who were not certified for that ministry (Schoepp, 2011).
- Over the years, while no published data exist at present, there have been a number of certified DCEs who have served in other denominations in church-related roles (Karpenko, 2019).

The following longitudinal data are offered to provide a numerical context for shaping one's understanding of the historical development of DCE ministry:

Table 1
A Numerical Overview of Certified DCEs: 1969-to-2019**

	1969	1979	1989	1999	2009	2017	2018	2019
No. of certified DCEs	3	213	831	1,200	1,849	2,210	2,261	2,302
No. of certified DCEs								
serving congregations:	3	137	321	435	657	563	568	576
No. of certified men:	3	100	242	286	348	287	284	273
No. of certified women:	0	37	88	149	209	276	284	303
No. of certified DCEs serving *Other LCMS ministries:*	0	27	104	244	335	397	409	428

Six findings are evident in these data:

1. The years of most notable growth of certified DCEs serving LCMS congregations were in the 1980s, one reason being the addition of some 146 individuals who were certified as DCEs on the basis of their LCMS congregational service, and the early 2000s, when Concordia Austin began graduating certified DCEs.
2. The greatest number of certified DCEs serving LCMS congregations was 657 in 2009 (CUS, 2009)
3. A mystery remains regarding the drop in the number of certified DCEs serving congregations between 2009 and 2017. An unresearched hypothesis suggests that the financial downturn in 2008 finally had its impact. In addition, some inaccurate tracking of DCEs leaving parish ministry may have occurred previously.
4. For the first time since the creation of a directory (CUS, 1987), the number of 2019 certified female DCEs serving as a congregational DCE exceeded the number of men.
5. Since the mid-1990s, there have been between 225 and 427 certified DCEs serving in related LCMS church-worker roles such as pastor, teacher, principal, professor, camp director, missionary, etc. (CUS, 1995-2019).

6. The percentage of certified DCEs who are serving in other ministries of the LCMS has steadily grown over the past five decades and now equals 74% of those certified DCEs serving congregations in 2019.

Significant Happenings and Lingering Questions in the Sixty-Year History of DCE Ministry

In this history, telling the story of the past 60 years will focus on brief era narratives and then switch to a series of significant happenings and lingering questions within each era. Participating indirectly in this historical overview will be a number of individuals who have served as Concordia University DCE instructors since the turn of the 21st century. Each of them was asked this question:

> *In your estimation, what are the 8-12 most pivotal events, happenings, decisions in the history of LCMS DCEs in the past 60 years?*

Of the 17 former or current professors invited, 15 chose to respond. If a majority of these instructors indicated a particular happening was pivotal, their collective response will appear in bold italics as the author cites various significant happenings.

Era One: Foundational Happenings in the Pre-1959 History of DCE Ministry.

There are five significant happenings, all of which come from the histories written by Ted Schroeder (1974) and Dale Griffin (1995), plus an article authored by Lisa Keyne (2011):

- **The first recorded LCMS DCE who was called a "Teacher"** In 1916 St. Mark Lutheran Church in Sheboygan, Wisconsin called teacher A.W. Kowert to become their "teacher, organist and choir director" (Schroeder, 1974, p. 4).
- **A visionary whose efforts ended pre-maturely:** In Keyne's valuable exploration of DCE ministry as a profession she uncovered the remarkable work of Rev. William H. Luke "who was hired in the mid-1920s to serve the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as Superintendent of Sunday Schools,"… and who encouraged in 1928 the 'calling of teachers or candidates as educational directors in congregations without schools.'" (2011, p. 82). Until his death four years later, at the age of 36, Luke continued to share his vision of a congregational Director of Christian Education.
- **The initial Synodical convention consideration of the office of the DCE:** As a result of a resolution from the Atlantic District in 1934, the Synod in its 1935 convention resolved to study the new office, and in 1938 received and accepted a report from the Board of

Christian Education that defined the office of "director of religious education," enumerating its functions, status, and preparation (Griffin, 1995, p. 138).

- **The impact of field DCEs in the 1950s:** Few things get people's attention more than a horde of spirited teen-agers attending a large youth event all dressed alike, appropriately loud, and open about their faith. As a result of their ability to excite and shape young people, the reputations of three Midwest, middle-aged DCEs and their pastors – Larry Steyer and Rev. Harlan Hartner, Bernie Arkebauer and Rev. Norman Temme, and Del Schulz and Rev. Robert Rosenkoetter – spread around the Synod. They also were making another kind of noteworthy impression, namely, as teams who were modeling effective staff relationships. Soon their "coffee-pot conferences" (Schroeder, 1974, p. 11), were inspiring other church workers as well as young people, like the author, who got to know Steyer at Walther League conventions.
- **A collaboration results in a precursor to DCE ministry:** In 1956, the LCMS' Board for Young People's Work, the Lutheran Laymen's League, and the International Walther League collaborated in the establishment of the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP) at Valparaiso University (Schroeder, 1974). Attracting DCE-type students, this training program and its curriculum served as a forerunner to future Synodical-school DCE programs. After graduating some 145 men and women, YLTP closed its program in 1974 even though a number of its graduates continued to serve as DCEs in the Synod. (Karpenko, 1986)

The Official History of DCE Ministry Begins with a Simple Resolution

Twenty-one years after the Synod received a report on the "Director of Religious Education" position at its thirty-sixth regular convention, the forty-fourth regular convention in San Francisco, CA on July 26, 1959, passed the following resolution:

> *Whereas,* The development of an organized and systematic program of Christian education is a necessity in every congregation; and *Whereas,* Many congregations would benefit from the services of a director of Christian education who would assist the pastor in providing professional leadership for the Sunday school, Saturday classes, and other educational activities of the congregation, therefore be it Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to analyze their parish education program and, where needed, to establish the office of 'director of Christian

education' in order to provide additional leadership for the education program of the congregation. (Proceedings, 1959, p. 224)

Era Two: The 1960s - A Halting Launch

With the Synod's resolution in place, congregations were encouraged to call graduating seniors from Concordia Colleges in River Forest and Seward (In the 1990s each Concordia with a DCE program will be referred to as a university). Ironic as it sounds, given the perceived threat that DCE ministry could undercut the Synod's commitment to parochial school education, the growing demand for DCEs was just fine with each school's placement office since they had a surplus of classroom teachers (Griffin, 2009). Even though a DCE training program curriculum would not be in place for another five years (Seward) and seven years (River Forest), and only a handful of individuals were actually certified as DCEs by the end of the decade, the placement of classroom teachers as DCEs became more and more frequent during the 1960s. According to Schroeder (1974, p. 12) some 149 had received calls as a DCE, a number of whom soon found themselves out of DCE ministry and into the classroom-teaching ministry or some other church-related roles.

Other significant happenings in the 1960s

1. **First Synodical placed DCE** In 1960, after graduating from Concordia River Forest and spending the summer in Europe (Karpenko, 1960), Neal Rabe joined the staff of Grace Lutheran Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma as Director of Christian Education (Griffin, 1995, p. 137).
2. **Another key Synodical resolution** After approving its ground-breaking 1959 resolution, the 1962 LCMS convention addressed the issue of training DCEs by passing the following resolution: "*Resolved,* That the teachers colleges at River Forest and Seward be encouraged, with the approval of the Board for Higher Education, to intensify the program for training directors of Christian education in their curricula, within the framework of their training as teachers of Lutheran parish schools." (Proceedings, 1962, p. 84)
3. **Board for Parish Education Staff.** A prime mover behind the Synod's establishment of the office of the DCE was Arthur L. Miller, Executive Director of the Board for Parish Education, who, in 1961, wisely brought Rev. Dale Griffin onto his staff to help nurture this budding ministry within the Synod (Griffin, 2009).
4. **First female Synodical-School DCE placement.** In 1969, Diane Horton Gregory accepted a DCE call to Mt. Calvary Lutheran in Huron, South Dakota, where she remained until 1972 (Schroeder,1974).

Several female YLTP graduates were already serving as early as 1960. (Karpenko, 1991),

5. **A new approach to training DCEs approved at CSP** In 1969, at the encouragement of the Board for Higher Education, Concordia College St. Paul inaugurated an innovative DCE training program under the leadership of Luther Mueller that did not require its graduates to be teacher trained (Griffin, 1995).

Some lingering questions

1. What is a DCE?
2. Are Valpo's YLTPers outsiders or part of this growing movement of LCMS DCEs?
3. Is there a place for women in this new ministry?
4. Are the two Concordia faculties open to allocating resources for a training program that might negatively impact teacher education on their campuses?
5. Can pastors and DCEs work together in a positive and productive way?

Era Three: The 1970s - Getting Connected

Given the Synod's decision to establish a DCE-training program at Concordia St Paul, there were now three schools responding to congregations seeking a DCE. How, if at all, should they relate? What followed was an example of the LCMS at its best as a coordinating agency that set direction without being coercive. On May 23, 1974, the Board for Parish Services, under the leadership of Mel Kieschnick, Dale Griffin, Bud Schultz, and Al Senske, convened a "DCE Ministry Consultation" that brought together Luther Mueller from St. Paul, Walter Wangerin, Sr. from River Forest, and William O. Karpenko II from Seward for several days of information sharing, discussion, and future planning (Griffin, 1995).

Other significant happenings in the 1970s:

1. **The beginnings of DCE-Director-generated research.** In 1974, Karpenko began tracking the call patterns among certified and non-certified DCEs within the LCMS. (Karpenko, 1975) This annual request for call information from the Synod's district education executives and presidents helped lay the foundation for understanding the number and kind of DCEs that were serving in the LCMS.
2. **The role of DCE-related periodicals.** DCE ministry was blessed over its 60-year history with informative periodicals. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the Board for Parish Education published *The Director of Christian Education Bulletin,* which kept field DCEs abreast of upcoming events, salient research, and important happenings. When the *Bulletin* ceased

in 1991, *DCE Directions* had an eight-year run, and in these last 10 years NADCE has offered an electronic *Quarterly.* Supplementing these offerings over the years has been the *Lutheran Education Journal* (River Forest) and *Issues in Christian Education* (Seward).

3. **Signs of further Synodical school collaboration.** On April 22, 1978, students from Concordia River Forest, Seward, and St. Paul converged on a retreat center in Guthrie, Iowa for the first annual tri-school DCE retreat. The goal of this event was to help future DCEs get to know each other even though the early retreats held an element of competition between the schools.
4. **Concordia Portland and Christ College Irvine launch new DCE programs.** In 1977, the Board for Higher Education granted Christ College Irvine and Concordia College Portland the opportunity to establish a DCE training program on their respective campuses, which they did under the leadership of Rev. Paul Meyer and Glen Herbold, respectively.
5. **DCE Colloquy is established.** In 1979, during the 53rd LCMS convention in St. Louis, MO, resolution 6-17A established a DCE Colloquy process (Proceedings, 1979). This decision further formalized DCE ministry's place within the Synod even though in the same convention the Synod deferred action on a resolution to grant DCEs membership in the Synod. (Proceedings, 1979) Since 1977, some 85 individuals have been colloquized, the largest numbers being from Concordia University St. Paul and Concordia University Nebraska (CUS, 2016).

Some lingering questions

1. Is DCE ministry a short-term transition ministry or is it a career that can last for 30 years or more?
2. Don't all male DCEs end up becoming pastors?
3. How best can the two new west coast DCE programs be wedded into the existing DCE community?
4. What will it take to get DCEs on the Synod's roster as DCEs rather than teachers?

Era Four: The 1980s - The DCE Community Network Coalesces for Collaborative Action

Some people have referred to the 1980s as DCE ministry's "Golden Era." Whether this assertion is true or not, it certainly was a heady time in which a number of highly significant happenings took place in the history of DCE ministry. There was a constellation of individuals and groups who willingly

contributed to the development and furthering of DCE ministry in Synod. Of particular importance was the support of the Board for Parish Education (changed to Board for Parish Services) and its staff liaison Rev. Dale Griffin, the dedicated efforts of field DCEs through LEA-TEAM, the collaborative spirit of the DCE program directors, a cadre of supportive district education executives, and Concordia Colleges willing to support the training of DCE students.

Other significant happenings in the 1980s

1. **Synod launches triennial National Youth Gathering (NYG).** Starting in Ft. Collins in 1980, each gathering has been a "show case" for the creativity, skills, and commitment of scores of DCEs who have played various major leadership roles in planning, implementing, and evaluating the NYG, and who were still very much in evidence during the 2019 National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN (*LCMS NYG Program Book,* 2019).
2. **The forging of a new DCE director team.** Vital to the success of future DCE ministry endeavors was the development of a trusting relationship with the now five DCE program directors. Through a series of face-to-face meetings that produced a strong personal bond and productive working relationship, LeRoy Wilke (St. Paul), Glen Herbold (Portland), Paul Meyer (Irvine), Lyle Kurth (River Forest), and Bill Karpenko (Seward) would achieve a number of desired results on behalf of DCE ministry and the Synod.
3. **The vital role of LEA-TEAM.** In 1973, the DCE organization entitled Department of Pastors and DCEs merged its efforts into the Lutheran Education Association (LEA) and, in the process, established LEA-TEAM (Theological Educators in Associated Ministries) (Keyne, 2011). Over the ensuing years the leadership of LEA-TEAM worked tirelessly to spearhead various initiatives that furthered the ministry of congregational DCEs.
4. **Membership in Synod finally happens.** On July 12, 1983, the LCMS in convention voted to include the Director of Christian Education, whether teacher-trained or not, on the roster of the Synod. Resolution 5-08 simply read:

   Whereas, Directors of Christian Education have made excellent contributions to the life and work of the parishes of the Synod; and
   Whereas, They have received thorough training for education service in the church; therefore be it
   Resolved, The word 'teacher' in the Constitution of the Synod be interpreted to include Directors of Christian

Education who have been trained and certified by the Synod; and be it further
Resolved, That such Directors of Christian Education be eligible to apply for membership in the Synod; and be it finally
Resolved, That all noncertified Directors of Christian Education be encouraged to seek the certification of the Synod. (Proceedings, 1978, p.178)

5. **Certification on the basis of field experience.** Ever since the creation of formal DCE training curricula at Concordia River Forest, Seward, and St. Paul, and the related move to certify its graduates, there was a bifurcated DCE community, some 200 of whom were the non-certified pioneers of the ministry. As a result, in 1983 the five training schools collaborated on a process that would grant certification on the basis of field experience (Karpenko, 1983). This remarkable process, which had to obtain the approval of the respective school's faculty, resulted in 146 individuals receiving DCE certification over the next three years (Karpenko, 1986).
6. **Collaborative research around DCE roles and sub-roles.** In the early 1980s, it became clear that the five DCE training programs would benefit from a common understanding of the roles and sub-roles of a DCE. After extensive field testing of a survey tool, Karpenko engaged some 320 field DCEs in a three-step research process (1986). The result was the identification of the three most prevalent "functional types" of DCEs and the 10 DCE roles and 52 sub-roles that could form the basis for the ongoing training of LCMS DCEs (1986). Three years later, phase III of The DCE Curricular Development and Validation Project was launched, involving 258 certified congregational DCEs (Karpenko, 1990). This study addressed whether DCEs were Generalists or Specialists, whether there were any significant role differences between female and male DCEs, and the most essential ministry abilities of a new DCE graduate (Karpenko, 1990).

Some lingering questions

1. Is DCE ministry in a congregation a viable long-term career for women?
2. Will all of the schools build their curricula around the newly identified DCE roles and sub-roles?
3. Will the next cohort of DCE program directors continue to work collaboratively?

Era Five: The 1990s - A Further Maturing of DCE Ministry

With the coming of the 1990s, a third generation of DCE Directors -

Steve Christopher (Irvine), Mark Blanke (Chicago), Steve Arnold (St. Paul), Bill Cullen (Portland), and Lisa Keyne (Seward) - found themselves poised to further the maturing of DCE ministry. This august group, along with the leadership of LEA-TEAM, key Synodical executives, and various District Education Executives, continued the pattern of DCE summits, conducted pertinent research, and graduated even larger numbers of DCEs. In 1997, the directors, joined once again by Karpenko who began serving Concordia Chicago in 1995, were operating out of an extensive covenant (Karpenko, 1997) that included mutual ministry understandings, common curricular commitments, and DCE internship agreements.

Other significant happenings in the 1990s

1. **Presence of DCEs in Synodical leadership roles.** As noted earlier in this article, certified DCEs have continued to serve in many non-congregational roles within the LCMS. Some of those roles included Synodical executives and district education executive positions. A particularly significant illustration of this fact was that two certified DCEs - Rich Bimler and Les Stroh – served in the office of LCMS President Ralph Bohlmann as his assistants during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Stroh, 2019).
2. **Ongoing professionalization of DCE Ministry.** In the middle of the 1990s, Lisa Keyne completed a doctoral dissertation that addressed the question "Who do you say that I am?" (1995). In outlining the nine criteria of a profession – a clear function and mission, a theory base, preparatory schools, certification or accreditation process, distinctive culture, Code of Ethics, process of evaluation to develop the field, professional organization, and power – she was able to both inform and challenge DCE ministry. In a later article (2011), she clarified that DCE ministry continued on a positive professionalization path, even though it still needed to mature further on several criteria.
3. **The emergence of the Karpenko Institute for Nurturing and Developing Leadership Excellence (KINDLE).** During an LEA-TEAM board meeting in February 1998, it was announced that a scholarship honoring William O. Karpenko II was being established. After several months of negotiation between the honoree and the board, it was decided that a leadership institute that provided continuing education for DCEs would be a superior endeavor. In May 1999, KINDLE's Board of Directors launched, with the encouragement of LEA-TEAM's leadership. The early mission of this organization was "to enhance the church through the ministry of DCEs who foster servant leaders." Since its formation, some 301 individuals have participated in

KINDLE's multiple training initiatives (Schuessler, 2019)

4. **The arrival of Concordia Austin's DCE program.** In the 1990s, the number of certified and noncertified DCEs serving congregations of the Texas district expanded dramatically. (CUS, 1999) Given the intensifying need for congregational DCEs who understood the Texas culture, and who were willing to remain "down south," it seemed natural that Concordia College in Austin (now Concordia University Texas) should have a DCE training program. Initially led by Dr. Jim McConnell, this 20-year old program has flourished under Directors Jacob Youmans and Grant Carey, and now has the second largest number of DCE students in preparation for service as DCEs (Lutheran Witness, 2019).
5. **Pivotal DCE summit concludes the century.** As described in the "Understandings" section of this article, those gathered for the 1999 DCE Summit reached a consensus regarding the definition and mission of a DCE as well as the values that undergird the position. These hard-earned agreements have continued to guide DCE ministry over the past 20 years (DCE Summit, 1999).

Some lingering questions

1. Is there a guiding image that describes the ministry of a DCE?
2. Will a stronger case for DCE ministry as a profession emerge in the coming years?
3. Will KINDLE play a useful role in the continuing education of DCEs?
4. How will the DCE program at Concordia University Texas be received within the Synod?

Era Six: The 2000s - More Growth and a Celebration

At the turn of the century, DCEs were being trained at six Concordia universities. Enrollments were sturdy and some 40-50 interns were learning their craft in congregations around the Synod and beyond. In 2000, there were some 454 certified DCEs serving congregations of the Synod, 166 of whom were women (CUS, 2000). Another 254 certified DCEs were serving in other ministries of the LCMS, 90 of whom were in parochial school-related ministries. More collaborative actions driven by LEA-TEAM, various District education executives, the DCE directors, and LCMS International Center staff, as well as more pertinent field-based research, were happening as the new century opened.

Other significant happenings in the 2000s

1. **Ethical guidelines for directors of Christian education.** In 2000. a group of certified DCEs in the Twin Cities, under the steady and thoughtful leadership of Dr. Steve Arnold, began the arduous task of creating a *DCE Code of Ethics* (Carter, 2011) After many meetings,

several listening posts, an extensive survey of 302 DCEs under the leadership of David Rahberg (Brantsch, 2001), *and* a thorough airing of the proposed guidelines at the 2001 DCE summit in Austin, TX, the guidelines were ready for distribution (LEA, 2002)

2. **Shedding light on noncertified lay practitioners.** Over the past 60 years, there have been several thousand *non-certified* individuals who have served LCMS congregations in full or part-time DCE-type roles. Paul Schoepp's seminal dissertation (2003), which identified some 500 "lay practitioners," who were uncertified but serving in DCE-type congregational positions, offered a profile of these church workers as well as their level of involvement in the 10 roles of a DCE described earlier in this article. One key finding, implemented by Concordia St. Paul in the mid-2000s, suggested that the best way to support, and even certify these individuals, was to offer distance-learning courses (Schoepp, 2011). In 2012 Concordia University Irvine followed up on this recommendation and began using this certification approach, including on an undergraduate level. As of 2019, nine DCEs have graduated by this route and another 14 students are in the pipeline (Duport, 2019).
3. **DCE Career Path Project.** Ever since the 1960s, questions have arisen whether DCE ministry is a short-term transitional career or something more long-term. A desire for answers to this question and others resulted in the DCE Career Path Project in 2007, when the DCE Summit endorsed the idea. (Karpenko, 2011) A team of six veteran DCEs tackled this task with Dr. Jack Giles serving as convener and Dr. William O. Karpenko II serving as the lead researcher. Other participants included Dr. Debbie Arfsten, Dr. Steve Christopher, Mr. Ben Freudenburg, and Mr. Bob McKinney. The project turned out to be the largest research effort ever conducted on certified LCMS DCEs. The data from the 802 respondents provided a picture of the many and varied career paths of LCMS DCEs. Results of this massive 420-page study are captured in a 24-page monograph. (Giles & Karpenko, 2009)
4. **Kieschnick proclamation.** In 2009, in honor of DCE ministry's 50th anniversary, Gerald Kieschnick, President of the LCMS, issued a proclamation that June 26th should henceforth be recognized as a day to celebrate the ministry of Synodical DCEs, concluding with these words: "Directors of Christian Education have been serving the church with vibrant energy and tireless dedication since the office was originally designed…and our Church remains as much in need of

ongoing effort in the area of Christian education as it was 50 years ago." (Kieschnick, 2009)

Some lingering questions

1. What impact will the financial downturn in 2008 have on DCE ministry?
2. Will the number of certified DCEs serving the Synod continue to grow?
3. What impact will the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) initiative have on DCE Ministry?

Era Seven: The 2010s - Off the Synod's Radar but Not the Local Congregation's

After 60 years, DCE ministry has established deep roots in most LCMS districts. Yet as the 2010s opened, DCE ministry, the Synod, and the rest of the country for that matter, found themselves caught up in massive change. Not only would this decade experience continued financial uncertainty, increasing technologically driven innovation, and rapidly changing social norms around human sexuality, but, more close to home, there was a Synodical leadership change in the offing, declining numbers of students attending DCE training programs, and LCMS congregations having to or choosing to remove second-chair staff more frequently than in earlier decades.

Other significant happenings in the 2010s

1. **Ministering in a very different world.** How does one minister in a culture that is becoming increasingly toxic to organized religion? (Borchers, et al., 2011). As Bolsinger outlined in his provocative book *Canoeing the Mountains* (2015), a new style of adaptive leadership was needed to address the changing ministry scene. Confronting DCE ministry, especially the training schools, was a mindset that no longer responded to an attractional model of doing ministry. Adding to this complicated milieu, those in DCE ministry were also navigating the negative impacts of social media, truth understood subjectively, and a mentality that one could be any one of many gender designations. On the other hand, there was a fresh millennial emphasis upon being real, using social media to stay connected, addressing climate change, and supporting celibate gays (Yarhouse & Zaporozhets, 2019).
2. **National Association of Directors of Christian Education (NADCE).** The long wait surrounding the establishment of an independent professional organization for DCEs ended in March 2010 when chairperson David Weidner announced the launching of NADCE. (Weidner, 2010). Less than a year later in Orlando, FL, NADCE held it first of five well-received biennial conferences. As an organization,

NADCE's mission continued to focus on advocacy, professional connections, and resources.

3. **A shift in the Synod's vision.** With the election in 2013 of Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison as the President of the LCMS, a new vision emerged for the Synod that emphasized "Witness, Mercy, and Life Together." Within the latter aspect of the vision, catechesis as well as parochial school education were being encouraged. What was missing was a comprehensive emphasis on Christian education that speaks in Biblically relevant ways to all ages, and is anchored by a Synod staff person whose portfolio is parish education.
4. **Advocacy efforts increase.** One of the themes of DCE ministry's history centers on advocating for initiatives that enhance its opportunity to serve faithfully and effectively. Whether it was the Synodical membership push of the early 1980s or the Nomenclature debates of the 1990s (Arnold, et al., 1995), LEA-TEAM lent its voice to commissioned ministers' concerns. With the launching of NADCE, various individual and group initiatives emerged. One of these efforts was the July 2013 consultation entitled "For Such a Season as This," which gathered 21 DCEs of varying ages from around the country to address a perceived diminishing Synodical emphasis on congregational lifespan Christian education. A current advocacy effort is focused on Synodical convention Resolution 9-17 that passed in July 2019 (Proceedings, 2019, p. 201) entitled "To Study Voting Privilege in the LCMS."
5. **Increasing number of long-term DCEs retiring.** Even though the numbers were not massive, they did begin to address questions about DCE longevity that were raised in prior decades. By 2019 some 140 certified DCEs had served congregations for 30 years or more (Karpenko, 2018), and of that number 26 had careers of 40 years or more (Karpenko, 2019). It also bears mentioning that DCE Bob Ewell retired in July 2019 after serving 50 years at Christ Lutheran in Lincoln, NE. (Karpenko, personal conversation, July 25, 2019).
6. **Closing of the Concordia Portland DCE program.** In 2018 after a series of consultations, faculty discussions, and administrative decisions, Concordia University Portland closed its 37-year-old DCE program for reasons of under-enrollment and lack of needed income. Over the years the program had graduated 132 DCEs, 26 of whom were still serving the congregations of the LCMS (CUS, 2019).

Some lingering questions

1. Will congregations continue to eliminate DCE positions for questionable reasons?

2. Can DCEs be trained in a new style of leadership that is both acceptable to congregations and addresses the current culture?
3. How will the mindset and attitudes of millennials impact their DCE career?
4. Will DCE program enrollments continue to diminish?
5. Will NADCE be able to impact positively DCE ministry through its advocacy efforts?
6. Will DCE program directors be able to maintain their history of cooperation and collaboration amid declining budgets, multiple institutional roles, and fewer students?
7. Will the 2019 Synodical convention resolutions regarding Commissioned Ministers being eligible to vote at Synodical conventions receive any kind of a positive hearing?
8. Will any other LCMS DCE programs close or be established?
9. Will the Synodical convention resolution designed to study the future structure of the Concordia University System impact the training of DCEs?

Revisiting the "Lingering Questions" from a 2019 Perspective

Over the past 60 years, numerous questions have arisen regarding DCE ministry in the LCMS. Looking back, many of them have been answered while others still linger. What follows is a brief response to the questions arising during the first 50 years. The nine questions related to the current decade will be left to simmer for the next person who writes about the ongoing history of DCE ministry.

1. **What is a DCE?** As David Weidner helpfully pointed out (2009) this question was often mixed with two other questions: "What does a DCE do all day?" and "Aren't DCEs just a bunch of youth directors?" While this latter question belied the crucial role that DCEs played with congregational youth, there were some early uncertified DCEs whose ministry vision was fairly unfocused. Over the ensuing years, various DCE-related field research repeatedly demonstrated that, on average, a DCE's major responsibilities lay in parish education and that youth ministry often formed what was called a "dual-function" role for a significant number of DCEs (Karpenko, 1990)
2. **Are Valpo's YLTPers outsiders or part of this growing movement of LCMS DCEs?** Some were a part but most were not. Becoming rostered by the LCMS proved to be a difficult barrier for those YLTPers serving congregations. Six did choose to be certified as DCEs through the 1980s field certification process (Karpenko, 1986). That said, in the 1960s, female YLTPers opened the eyes of numerous congregations regarding

the value of a woman DCE serving on a congregation staff.

3. **Is there a future for women in this new ministry?** Clearly. Besides the forerunner role of female YLTPers, Concordia St. Paul graduated an equal number of women and men in the 1970s, further cementing a woman's role in this ministry (CUS, 1990). Over the next 40 years, the steady and dedicated ministry efforts of hundreds of congregation-based female DCEs further demonstrated the value of women as staff colleagues, educators, volunteer coordinators, and role models. Their leadership role in LEA-TEAM, KINDLE, NADCE, district DCE conferences, the triennial National Youth Gathering, and many other church-related settings has been impactful.
4. **Are the CUC and CUN faculties open to allocating resources for a training program that might negatively impact teacher education on their campus?** It appears that they were when studying curricular changes and staffing patterns in the 1960s and 1970s (Griffin, 1995) even though it was often painful for teacher-education advocates to watch students with relational and leadership skills select to train as DCEs rather than teachers and principals.
5. **Can pastors and DCEs work together in a positive and productive way?** Beyond the "coffee pot conferences" of the 1950s, which fostered a positive and productive vision for pastors and DCEs working together, there were ample situations where a pastor and DCE could not function together effectively. Yet, over the ensuing years, more and more strong, long-term teams emerged. This perception was further solidified in a 1992 survey of district presidents and education executives, which found that "a) the number of strong teams was growing; b) less time was being spent in responding to problematic staff relationships; and c) the number of gender-related staff problems was much less than three years ago." (Karpenko, 1992).
6. **Is DCE ministry a short-term transition ministry or is it a career that can last for 30 years or more?** It is turning out to be both. For some DCEs their career vision clearly has been to do DCE ministry for 3-5 years and then move on to another form of service either inside or outside of the church. On the other hand, as noted earlier in this article, there is a growing stream of male and female DCEs who have careers that span 40-plus years.
7. **Don't all male DCEs end up becoming pastors?** No, they do not. Most DCEs are individuals with a passion for second-chair ministry as Christian educators. During the first four decades of DCE ministry this was certainly true. In the past two decades, as recent DCE certification

directories point out, the number of certified DCEs becoming pastors has grown, especially stimulated by a more amenable Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) process. The 2019 percentage of eligible DCEs who are pastors, is 17% (CUS, 2019).

8. **How best can the two new west coast DCE programs be wedded into the existing DCE community?** This question was answered fairly quickly in the early 1980s because of the issues facing DCE ministry at the time, and the urgency of conveying a united front when seeking to be recognized as members of the Synod's ministerium. Also, while being the "new kids on the block," there was an openness to collaboration by Glen Herbold (Portland) and Paul Meyer (Irvine) that soon resulted in both growing friendships and a capacity to link arms on common projects and goals.
9. **What will it take to get DCEs on the Synod's roster as DCEs rather than teachers**? This question had haunted DCE ministry ever since a 1967 conference asked this question for all DCEs, whether teacher-trained or not (Board for Parish Education, 1967). Finally, what it took, as described earlier, was the concerted collaboration of all the major players in DCE ministry. Pivotal in this process were the efforts of LEA-TEAM's leadership, the relationships between Synodical staff, particularly Rev. Dale Griffin and Rev. Herbert Mueller (Secretary of the Synod at the time), and the DCE program directors, and various district executives and presidents. A common voice for a common cause.
10. **Is DCE ministry in a congregation a viable long-term career for women?** During the past 40 years an extensive amount of research has been directed toward women serving in DCE Ministry. These efforts were summarized in an extensive article on female DCEs (Arfsten, Duensing-Werner, & Karpenko, 2011). In essence, the article concluded that a) the amount of time that female and male DCEs spend pursuing the 10 roles of a DCE are quite similar; b) the majority of female DCEs are married; c) while still present, the number of gender-related staff problems are lessening; and d) the majority of female DCEs are congregational DCEs. Given the dramatic cultural shifts generated by the MeToo Movement, a re-visiting of the aforementioned findings would be instructive.
11. **Will all of the schools build their curricula around the newly identified DCE roles and sub-roles?** Without a thorough examination of what is being taught at each Concordia, it is difficult to answer this question in 2019. The author's impression from numerous conversations with fellow directors in the 1980s and 1990s was that those schools who

were a part of the process that researched and identified the roles and sub-roles integrated them into their curricula in ways that served their training approach.

12. **Will the next cohort of DCE program directors continue to work collaboratively?** This sensitive question can finally be answered only by today's DCE directors. Over the years, collaboration was a hallmark of the directors' common efforts. That said, it was a miracle that DCE program directors were able to collaborate as much as they did, given the competitive dynamics around student recruitment, branding, unequal resources, and curricular differences. Today, the financial, organizational, and personal obstacles to collaboration are more formidable, requiring even more sacrifice and effort.
13. **Is there a guiding image that describes the ministry of a DCE?** Over the past 40 years the title of Director of Christian Education, while not amenable to some congregations and DCEs, has come to be an acceptable generic title for this ministry. What continues to percolate from era to era has been the guiding image of a DCE. In the 1980s a commonly-used term for a DCE was parish educator; in the 1990s it was teacher of the faith; then came the term lifespan educator, which remains the parlance of today. Alongside of this discussion there was the ever-present issue of whether DCEs were "generalists" or "specialists" (Blanke, 2011), which DCE-related research has clearly found to be the latter. (Karpenko, 1990).
14. **Will a stronger case for DCE ministry as a profession emerge in the coming years?** If one works with Keyne's nine criteria of a professional organization, there continue to be solid signs that each of the criteria is being addressed, particularly the most challenging one, namely "power." Given the current study initiative emerging from the 2019 LCMS convention around who can vote in district and Synodical conventions, this criterion may finally be realized.
15. **Will KINDLE play a useful role in the continuing education of DCEs?** Now entering its 20th year of service to DCEs, and other Commissioned Ministers of the LCMS, KINDLE continues to offer training experiences for three distinct populations - new graduates in their first four years of public ministry, those in the full bloom of their ministry career, and those who are 50 and older who desire to finish their public ministry well. If KINDLE's extensive evaluation data are valid, it appears that the organization is addressing a critical continuing-education need within DCE ministry (Pavasar, personal communication, October 18, 2019).

16. **How will the DCE program at Concordia University Texas be received within the Synod?** Quite positively. The DCE program has tapped into a very vibrant, innovative district, which currently has some 86 certified DCEs serving in its midst (CUS, 2019). Graduates now serve in many of the Synod's districts.
17. **What impact will the financial downturn in 2008 have on DCE ministry?** There are no solid data with which to answer this question other than a handful of anecdotal stories where DCEs have appeared to be terminated for congregational financial reasons. Otherwise, congregations continue to seek DCE interns, call new graduates, and pursue field DCEs (CUS, 2019).
18. **Will the number of certified DCEs serving the Synod continue to grow?** Combining the number of DCEs serving in all ministries of the LCMS, the answer is "Yes," although within this gradual growth there have been some years when the total dipped below a previous year. (CUS, 2017)
19. **The impact of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) initiative upon DCE Ministry:** Since its inception in 2007 some 30-35 certified DCEs completed the program and became LCMS pastors. (CUS, 2019) While this is fewer men than one might have imagined, the impact has been dramatic given that many of these individuals were veteran, highly gifted, and well-regarded DCEs. Their departure from local and district DCE ranks has been a significant loss for those remaining in DCE ministry.

The Future in Perspective

There is much in the future of DCE ministry that suggests exciting opportunity, robust challenge, and ample chances for collaboration, if the past 60 years are any indication of what is ahead. Yet who is not sobered by the current polarizations that are devastating community within and outside of the church? Who is not daunted by the seemingly endless concoctions beckoning people to individualistic declarations and pursuits? Who is not drawn to technology's seductive offers of a better, fuller life?

All who follow Jesus are living in a special time when running the race of faith is full of distraction, godless panaceas, and disconcerting change. It is into this season that DCE ministry continues to send its band of laborers. Amid the lingering questions noted for the 2010s, can DCE ministry survive, and more importantly, thrive with an adaptive leadership style that effectively addresses the needs of a "me first" culture? The author believes that it can and will.

If its history is any predictor, DCE Ministry, and its 1,000-strong cohort, will need to keep its eyes on Jesus. As Hebrews 12:3 invites, "Consider Him who

endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." May this reminder and promise fuel DCE ministry in the coming decades to offer Christ-like servant leadership that engages, enlightens, and encourages those whom the Holy Spirit inspires to be like Jesus. In the decades ahead, to God Alone Be the Glory! ***LEJ***

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Resources

*For those interested in a more expansive 60-year history of DCE ministry in the LCMS you are welcome to send that request to bill.karpenko@gmail.com

**The figures for 1969,1979, and 1989 are approximations built upon Karpenko's annual DCE Call Trends documents and the 1990 Comprehensive Directory of DCEs who have been certified by a Synodical school of the LCMS.

William O. Karpenko II *or "Karp" was on his DCE-type internship in July 1959 in Los Angeles, CA, some 500 miles south of where the LCMS was voting to encourage the calling of congregational DCEs. After graduating from the Youth Leadership Training Program at Valparaiso University in 1961, God led him into parish ministry in Cheektowaga NY and onto mission fields in Japan and Nigeria. Chicago was his next base of operation where he drove a taxi, achieved a Masters degree in counseling psychology from DePaul University, and worked with trouble-prone youth in community and high school settings. The next 35 years, which included a PhD from the University of Nebraska, were spent in Lutheran higher education at Concordia University Nebraska, Concordia University Chicago, and Valparaiso University. Currently he is an adjunct professor at Concordia University Nebraska and is secretary of the KINDLE Board of Directors.*

Servant Leadership and Leading Volunteers in Ministry

A DCE Perspective

By Kevin Borchers

Leadership is not only about influence, but also about the relationships that exist between the leader and the led (Northouse, 2010). In the church, the model of ministry leadership and followership is exemplified in the gospel narratives about Jesus and His disciples and Jesus, the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:1-9). Jesus' model of servant leadership perfectly combined the influential and relational aspects of ministry leadership into a single construct first recognized in the writings of Robert Greenleaf beginning in the early 1970s.

Review of Literature

Research (Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009; Melchar & Bosco, 2010; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012; Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013) demonstrated the existence of a relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction, and between servant leadership and organizational performance. However, much of that research concentrated on the servant facet of servant leadership, neglecting the leadership dimension. It was not until Dutch researchers van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) developed and validated the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) that a survey instrument comprehensively captured the seemingly paradoxical aspects of service and leadership initially described by Greenleaf (1970).

The SLS collects data accurately, representing followers' perceptions of the extent to which leaders demonstrate both the service and leadership dimensions of servant leadership using eight factors, as defined by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011): accountability, authenticity, courage, empowerment, forgiveness, humility, standing back, and stewardship. Borchers (2016) studied these eight servant leadership characteristics in an investigation of the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction in a faith-based nonprofit healthcare organization with Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) roots. The study sought to identify a direct relationship between followers' levels of job satisfaction and their perceptions of servant leadership, as demonstrated through the manifestations of the eight aforemetioned characteristics in their dealings with supervisors. Survey administration occurred over two days covering the

various work shifts in a 48-hour period so as to provide the opportunicy for all members of the organization to participate. This resulted in 162 returned surveys for a return rate of 43.7%. However, data cleansing removed 20 cases and resulted in a final sample size of 142 cases and a final return rate of 38.4% with a confidence level of 87% and a confidence interval of ± 5%.

Quantitative data on job satisfaction and perceptions of servant leadership were obtained by combining the Abridged Job in General Scale (AJIG; Russell et al., 2004) and the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) to create a single instrument with two parts. In Part 1, participants reacted to eight words or phrases associated with their feelings about their jobs and responded with "1 = YES it describes your job," "2 = NO it does not describe your job," or "3 = UNDECIDED if you are unsure." In Part 2, participants responded to statements associated with the eight servant leadership characteristics (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) using a six-point Likert scale ("1 = Strongly Disagree," "2 = Disagree," "3 = Somewhat Disagree," "4 = Somewhat Agree," "5 = Agree," or "6 = Strongly Agree"). Following this, data transformation yielded job satisfaction scores that ranged from 0.00 (no or low job satisfaction) to 3.00 (high job satisfaction). Perceptions of servant leadership scores ranged from 1.00 (strong disagreement with a perception of servant leadership) to 6.00 (strong agreement with a perception of servant leadership).

Job-satisfaction scores ranged from .38 to 3.00 (M = 2.54, SD = .67), were non-normally distributed, and had a skewness of -1.63 (SE = .20) and kurtosis of 1.99 (SE = .40). Forty-nine percent (48.6%, n = 69) of participants reported job satisfaction at the highest level (3.00) and 73.9% of participants (n = 114) reported job satisfaction scores above 2.00.

Overall servant leadership scores, which addressed all eight servant leadership characteristics as one, ranged from 1.63 to 6.00 (M = 4.45, SD = .84), were non-normally distributed overall, and had a skewness of -.86 (SE = .20) and kurtosis of .62 (SE = .40). Eighty-seven percent (86.6%, n = 123) of the employees somewhat-to-strongly agreed that direct supervisors exhibited servant leadership behaviors or characteristics overall.

Scores for overall perceptions of supervisors' servant leadership ranged from 1.00 (strong disagreement with an overall perception of servant leadership) to 6.00 (strong agreement with an overall perception servant leadership). Accountability was the servant leadership characteristic most strongly perceived (M = 4.92, SD = .93) by participants, followed by stewardship (M = 4.67, SD = 1.05), empowerment (M = 4.59, SD = 1.10), standing back (M = 4.45, SD = 1.04), and humility (M = 4.33, SD = 1.08). Authenticity ranked sixth (M = 4.28, SD = 1.00), followed by forgiveness (M = 4.28, SD = 1.15), and, finally, courage (M = 3.81, SD = 1.23) with 43.0% (n = 61).

Bivariate correlation using the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine that a moderate, positive correlation existed between followers' job satisfaction and their overall perceptions of servant leadership, $r_{(140)} = .47$, $p < .001$, which indicated the existence of a direct relationship between followers' levels of job satisfaction and their perceptions of their leader's servant leadership.

Pearson's correlation analyses using levels of job satisfaction and perceptions of individual servant leadership characteristics indicated moderate, positive correlations existed between the level of job satisfaction and perceptions of empowerment ($r_{(140)} = .47$, $p < .001$), stewardship ($r_{(140)} = .45$, $p < .001$), standing back, $r_{(140)} = .45$, $p < .001$), and humility ($r_{(140)} = .41$, $p < .001$). Weak positive correlations existed between job satisfaction and perceptions of authenticity ($r_{(140)} = .32$, $p < .001$) and accountability ($r_{(140)} = .31$, $p < .001$). A weak, slightly positive, correlation existed between job satisfaction and perceptions of courage ($r_{(140)} = .26$, $p < .01$). No statistically significant ($p < .01$) correlation existed between levels of job satisfaction and perceptions of forgiveness ($r_{(140)} = .15$, $p = .09$).

Even though the servant leadership characteristics of accountability, courage, and forgiveness were among the servant leadership characteristics with weak or no correlation with job satisfaction supported, van Dierendonck and Nuijten's (2011) assertion that accountability, courage, and forgiveness had the lowest correlations with subjective outcomes of well-being at work, which included job satisfaction. However, van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) noted that accountability, courage, and forgiveness were essential characteristics of servant leadership, since none of the three were previously included as part of any previous instrument used to measure servant leadership. In addition, accountability and forgiveness, along with empowerment, were identified as essential factors for the leadership facet of the servant leadership construct (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Applying the Research to Volunteers in Ministry

The study identified a direct, positive relationship between followers' perceptions of their leaders' servant leadership and the levels of satisfaction followers had in their jobs. While that study was not conducted in a congregational setting, it would be appropriate to consider how servant leadership could affect the satisfaction of congregational ministry volunteers serving under the leadership of professional staff.

People are most important. The most valuable resources available to any organization are its people. In the business world, frontline employees are positioned closest to the business's customers or clients. In congregational ministry, volunteers serve on the frontline caring for church and community members who participate in that ministry program. Therefore, ministry leaders

(i.e., called workers with responsibility for ministry leadership) should involve frontline volunteers in the identification of future direction of the ministries in which they serve. Such a practice is in line with the servant leadership characteristic of empowerment, which this study reported as having the highest correlation with job satisfaction.

It is recommended that church leaders seek to become more aware and more receptive to the needs of the volunteers they lead in ministry. For this to happen, though, church leaders like pastors, DCEs, and other staff members should invest time in relationship with volunteers. Ministry is relational, so church leaders should seek to strengthen personal relationships they have with volunteers, thereby increasing levels of trust between leaders and followers. Such efforts could lead to volunteers feeling more valued and better heard by church leaders and the congregation. This could be accomplished by simply engaging in personal conversations with individual volunteers outside church "business" meetings, recognizing that some individuals feel less comfortable sharing ideas, feelings, or thoughts within a larger group. These conversations should focus on getting to know and understand volunteers' needs and eliciting their ideas to improve or to make the their ministry jobs easier or more efficient. Such conversation could also include seeking volunteers' thoughts about ways leaders can help them grow and become more successful in their ministry.

Leadership and Staff Retention

Retention of ministry volunteers is very important. Leadership style has been shown to have a direct relationship with followers' commitment to the organization (Aydin et al., 2013). Servant leadership has demonstrated positive correlations with the organizational commitment of followers (Liden et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Previous research by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), Gunnarsdóttir (2014), and Borchers (2016) reported direct, positive relationships between levels of job satisfaction and servant leadership in general, and between levels of job satisfaction and individual characteristics included as part of the servant-leadership construct.

Church-staff members, by virtue of the Call they have received from God, should seek to model the servant leadership Christ Jesus modeled to His disciples. Church leaders would do well to develop written servant leadership objectives based on the eight servant leadership characteristics set forth by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011). Servant leadership objectives should be designed to increase the leader's personal practice of servant leadership and its modeling to followers. These objectives should identify strategies that the leader applies to work with the volunteers they lead. For example, a leader selecting the characteristic of empowerment might have an objective that states, "I will help

my volunteers experience opportunities for personal and professional growth by helping them to identify available opportunities to grow in their ministry abilities and by providing them with the resources they need to participate in these growth opportunities."

Annual leadership reviews. The Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) was the first instrument of its kind to measure followers' perceptions of servant leadership in the workplace and the first instrument to account for both the servant and leader facets of the servant leadership construct. While the SLS does not assess servant leadership on an organizational level as does Laub's (1999) Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) instrument, the SLS does provide a clear assessment of the ways in which followers' perceive servant leadership characteristis in their leaders. Therefore, the SLS could be used as part of an annual leadership review for church-staff members having ministry leadership responsibilities that include leading volunteers. As in Borchers (2016), base scores for overall servant leadership and individual scores for each of the eight characteristics could be established during a first review using the SLS. These initial scores could then be used to provide direction in the development of servant-leadership-development plans using the statements for selected SLS items as guides to develop objectives to be addressed in a given amount of time. Scores from subsequent reviews (e.g., annual or other) could then be used to assess progress toward achievement of development objectives on which leaders were to work and to establish revised or new servant-leadership-development objectives for the following year.

Leading in Ministry as a Servant

Congregational ministries are dependent upon volunteers. Just as the retention of high quality, qualified, and caring employees is a primary function of great importance to any organization, the recruitment and retention of ministry volunteers in the church is a key function of church leadership staff. Developing, maintaining, and improving volunteers' satisfaction with the program ministries in which they serve is a high responsibility of Directors of Christian Education (DCEs). Along with that, encouraging a commitment to the mission and vision of the church and the role they play in achieving that mission and vision must also be a high priority of the DCE and all other called church workers. It could be said that it is part of our vocation – our calling – as described by the apostle Paul. "And he [God] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ…" (Ephesians 4:11-12 ESV). This same passage is used by Rueter (2019) in his explanation of auxiliary offices within the Office of Public Ministry.

Equipping the saints is what DCEs do when they recruit and train men and women to teach Sunday school, devote time and energy to be in ministry

to and with the youth of our congregations, serve on congregational boards and committees, and undertake a host of other endeavors for the sake of the Kingdom. It is of utmost importance in retention efforts. Servant leaders who develop relationships with and care for their followers contribute greatly to the volunteers' satisfaction with their ministries, the retention of volunteers in ministry, and the strengthening of their congregation's efforts.

Empowerment. Motivating, enabling, encouraging, and empowering the people of God to pursue personal development for the sake of the organization (e.g., congregation, ministry) or to further their own lives is at the heart of empowerment. It is the ability of a leader to foster a proactive, self-confident attitude among followers that builds and uplifts the volunteers serving in a ministry so that they believe they are making a difference. Empowerment provides followers with a sense of personal power. The responsibility for ministry belongs to them (i.e., the volunteer members of the congregation). They own it.

The empowerment actions of servant leaders are based in the trust they have in the volunteers with whom they serve. It is not about maintaining one's personal control and decision-making powers, but about giving those things away to those serving in ministry on the front lines. Empowerment is all about the DCE walking alongside and mentoring the individuals with whom he or she serves so that the responsibility for ministry itself could be turned over to God's people (i.e., the Church) – the Priesthood of All Believers.

For the DCE, empowerment is about knowing and understanding each person's spiritual gifts, their passions for ministry, and their unique talents and abilities – a recipe established by God (Psalm 139). More importantly, not only should a DCE know these things about people, but they should also prayerfully seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to consider how that knowledge guides their fellow members of the Body of Christ into ministries in which they can flourish and feel they are making a difference in the lives of others, the church, and the world.

Stewardship. If you work in the church, then this is not what you think. Stewardship, as it relates to servant leadership, is a willingness to take responsibility for the larger institution, seeking to serve instead of seeking control or pursuing one's self-interests. It is the extent to which a leader acts as a caretaker and role model, thereby motivating followers to act for the common good of the organization. Stewardship is closely related to empowerment in that it is other-centered leadership. It is not about making you, your ministry programs, or even your congregation look or sound better than others. Stewardship provides the attitude; "There's no 'I' or 'me' in "team."

Stewardship is not just something a leader does. Sergiovanni (2007) indicated that stewardship is an act of trust whereby one entity (e.g., congregation) places

its trust in another entity (e.g. pastor, DCE). The people, members of the congregation, entrust the DCE with the responsibility for administering and leading their congregation's small group ministry. However, the DCE cannot lead every small group operating under the auspices of the church. Therefore, she recruits and trains volunteer in accordance with their gifts and entrusts each individual or team of leaders with the obligation and responsibilities for caring for their small group without maintaining a direct hand of control within the group. It is safe to say that DCEs who are good leadership stewards develop strong bonds of trust between themselves and the ministry volunteers with whom they serve so that the DCE can give away the ministry to the rest of the church. This, then, contributes to a healthier, more positive and productive congregational culture that has the potential to increase ministry success.

Standing back is the extent to which a leader prioritizes the interests of others first, providing them with the support they need and credit they deserve. It is the extent to which a leader willingly remains in the background upon successful accomplishment of a task while others receive the accolades. MacBeath (2005) suggested that standing back involves maintaining the support of others while those others lead. It is characterized by mutual trust and self-confidence. Where there is a high level of trust, differences can be tolerated, yes, even appreciated.

Standing back can be seen in the DCE who enables Sunday school teachers, youth ministry volunteers, and volunteer planning teams to receive the credit for making a difference in the lives of God's children in the church and community. It can be seen as a DCE allowing a team of volunteers with previous experience in serving and with varied gifts and talents to collaborate, to review and recommend the theme and publishing company, if one is to be used, for the upcoming summer VBS program. Standing back, in some instances, means the DCE, often cast as the leader, becomes the follower.

Humility. Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) described humility as the ability to maintain a proper perspective on one's personal accomplishments and talents; the ability to acknowledge one's strengths and weaknesses, thereby making it possible to admit personal imperfections and mistakes one has made. Greenleaf (1970) suggested that servant leaders put their personal agendas and goals on the back burner in order to care for their followers. Maxwell (2019) indicates leaders choose dispositions of humility in recognition that they need other people, and in their desire to become someone other people want to follow. In humility, leaders acknowledge their shortcomings and failures. They possess a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. By adopting a personal sense of humility, leaders develop a clear view of what only they can do and fully accept that others can perform certain tasks better than they can.

Humility could mean something similar yet very different from the above discussion. It could mean doing the job that no other person is willing to do.

Authenticity. When people express themselves in ways that are consistent with their inner thoughts and feelings, they are being authentic (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Authenticity is being true to oneself, privately and publicly representing internal thoughts and attitudes, intentions, and commitments in an accurate manner. For a servant leader like a DCE, pastor, Lutheran teacher, or other church worker, it means behaving in such a way that professional roles remain secondary to who the individual is as a person.

The same could be said of congregations and their leaders, whether ordained, commissioned, contracted, or volunteer.

> A pastor and the church leadership cannot just put on the right clothes, drink the right beer or coffee, or throw about key phrases to retain young people in the church. Many churches have tried and failed to put on what's 'cool,' only to find that young people see right through their attempts. (Curnutt, Kiessling, Shults, Borchers, & Rueter, 2019, p. 126)

Being real, being genuine, being who God made you to be is what counts.

Curnutt et al. (2019) showed that worship style and aesthetics are relatively unimportant in comparison to relationships when it comes to keeping young adults engaged and connected to the church and its ministries. Furthermore, their research indicated that Millennials (ages 23-37) and Gen Z (ages 8-22) have been so bombarded with marketing that they can spot inauthenticity from a far distance. Just be yourself!

Three of the proposed servant leadership characteristics – accountability, courage, and forgiveness – demonstrated little to no relationship with job satisfaction in Borchers (2016). This might well be due to their inclusion as part of the leadership rather than the servant facet of the construct. While these three are necessary (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), they might not seem as edifying in the DCE's ministry with volunteers.

Accountability is a mechanism by which responsibility for outcomes is given to individuals and teams, ensuring people know that which is expected of them (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2019). While this characteristic never demonstrated a high correlation with perceptions of servant leadership, it is important that it be included as part of any leadership construct. Followers are accountable to their leaders and vice versa, but the scope of accountability is much greater. Both DCEs and volunteers are accountable not only to each other but also to the whole congregation. All three can be accountable to a community, and, ultimately, all are accountable to God.

Courage is the ability to take risks and try out new approaches to old challenges, relying on the values and convictions that govern one's actions.

Courage is not the absence of fear, but the ability to persist and act in the presence of fear (Wong & Davey, 2007). Those called into leadership must be reminded and charged with the biblical words, "You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf…Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you" (2 Chronicles 20:17 ESV).

For the DCE seeking to lead and live with integrity, courage is a requirement when facing the temptations of the world. It takes courage to counter-culturally follow God's lead when the rest of world, even some of your friends, are going the other direction. The Christian recognizes that his strength comes from the Lord (2 Timothy 1:8), and it is in this strength that he can authentically take a stand.

However, we also know that courage is required to go against the status quo, to go against, "We've always done it this way," even when "this way" is not working. Cultural change is among the most difficult forms of change to undertake and successfully make. It is not for the faint of heart. Sometimes it requires the pastor or DCE to help the congregation confront the grim realities of avoiding change.

Forgiveness. We should know what this is. Right? Forgiveness is the ability to let go of perceived wrongdoings coupled with an ability not to carry a grudge. It is the capacity to forgive offenses, arguments, and mistakes, thereby creating an atmosphere of trust in which people feel free to make mistakes without fear of retribution or rejection (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Unfortunately, in almost every study involving servant leadership, it has been found to have little or no relationship with job satisfaction. It is almost as if forgiveness is actually missing despite having been designated as part of the servant leadership construct.

For those of us who work and serve in the church, this should not be so! However, didn't Jesus say, "Forgive us AS (the author's personal emphasis) we forgive those who sin against us?" The Church must be a grace place in which the love of God and forgiveness are readily made available to all. Furthermore, DCEs, pastors, teachers, and all others should be God's instrument of grace – the hands, feet, arms, and legs of our God of second chances. If we equate the non-sinful mistakes people make in process of doing ministry with sin that truly is rebellion against God, or if we fail to speak the words of forgiveness, how are we faithfully living out the vocation to which we have been called? As DCEs and other called workers, let's make every effort and take every opportunity to share the love of God in Christ. Tell them they are forgiven just as you have been forgiven.

Having been allowed by God to serve just under 40 of the 60 years of DCE ministry that we celebrate this year, I have been blessed to serve with pastors, teachers, directors of parish music, deaconesses, and so, so many volunteers who

have led and continue to lead as servants, caring for the flock or the portion given to them. Many have served as powerful witnesses to me and to others about what it means to lead by serving and serve by leading. Each one exemplified some or all of these characteristics to me. It is my prayer, that in the next 60 years, we who are DCEs and all who serve the Church will seek more fervently to follow the example of Jesus, the Messiah who washed feet, the Suffering Servant who gave His life for those whom He cared for and loved so deeply.

Happy 60th birthday, DCE Ministry! ***LEJ***

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Called to be a DCE

By David Rueter

Sixty years is a milestone truly worth celebrating. DCE ministry has come a long way since its early days. Yet, there remain for some of us certain unanswered questions. One of these questions has been the source of much personal contemplation as well as struggle. A benefit of academic life is occasionally having the opportunity and even the expectation to dig deeply into those types of questions. During the 2016-2017 academic year, I was privileged to hold the Harry and Caroline Trembath Chair for Confessional Theology at Concordia University Irvine, a rotating professorship that allows professors with their terminal degrees that chance for further theological research. This honor, the first given to a non-ordained scholar, gave me the privilege of researching a question that has been poking at the back of my brain for the entirety of my career as a DCE since the late 1990s. I wanted to better understand how the DCE, and more broadly. how commissioned ministers relate to the Office of Public Ministry.

My parents were both Lutheran schoolteachers. In fact, my father was a principal for many years. While serving in Downey, California, he served on staff with Marvin Schaus, who taught 5th and 6th grades as well as playing organ on Sundays for worship and directing the church and school choirs. His eldest son, Nate was a classmate of mine in preschool and kindergarten before the family moved to Liberia to work with Lutheran Bible Translators. Years later, upon entering college, Nate and I were again classmates and, in fact, freshman year roommates. At Concordia University Irvine, we took some of the same classes despite his plans to become a pastor and mine to become a DCE. During that time, tensions existed between Pre-Seminary and DCE students that have been worked on over the years and structurally corrected. However, at that time the tensions were real and they formed a type of backdrop for the ministerial formation that students of the time received. Interestingly, there was a semester where Nate and I crossed into each other's worlds. He took youth ministry and I took Greek.

Years later as I have reflected upon that time, I have wondered whether how students are formed for ministry has a lasting impact on their understanding of their own office as well as the offices of others who serve alongside them in ministry. In my work on district staff and as a church-work-program related faculty member, I often cross lines from one church-work group to another. It is normal at this point for me to spend time in groups of pastors as well as DCEs and teachers. I have grown to appreciate the unique gifts and perspectives that each of these and others bring to their work in the church. My concern remains however, that my experience crossing lines speaks to the ongoing existence of those lines. These distinctions remain important. It would not work to confuse the role of a pastor with that of a DCE. However, if we are to understand all those who serve in public ministry in the LCMS, the lines that all too often divide us and too many times keep great collaborative work from taking place, need to be examined.

Over the history of our Synod, there have been various understandings of the role and place of commissioned ministers. Though the term commissioned minister came as a result of 20th Century developments related to the tax status of church workers, the conceptual category of auxiliary offices has been discussed since the founding of the LCMS. C.F.W. Walther held a rather high view of the Lutheran teachers who served the synod since its inception. There was even discussion on how to appropriately provide representation of the Lutheran teaching in the governing structure of synod, something we continue to wrestle with today.

> Every other public office in the church is part of the Ministry of the Word or a helping office that supports the Preaching Office...Therefore, the offices of Christian day-school teachers...and others are all to be regarded as ecclesiastical and sacred, for they take over a part of the one church office and support the Preaching Office. (Walther, 1992).

Early forms of training for both pastors and teachers were done in parallel. The establishment of the Addison Teachers Seminary (now Concordia University Chicago) continued the Lutheran emphasis on the formation of men for ministry as teacher, just as men were trained at the Concordia Seminary for pastoral ministry. From the beginning there was a rigor to the theological training that the Lutheran teacher received (now that all commissioned workers receive) that distinguishes them, preparing them for their specific public ministry.

Throughout the history of the LCMS we have often wrestled with the relationship of commissioned ministers to the pastoral office. Many might grant that commissioned workers are indeed in a form of public ministry but would argue that they are distinct from the office of public ministry. There were attempts especially in the 1950s and 1960s to argue for a functional view of the

office of public ministry more in line with the theology of the Wisconsin Synod than the LCMS. In this functional view, each office of the ministry, including the pastoral office, is merely a branch off the larger office of public ministry. While I sympathize with the purpose behind such attempts (most notably by A. C. Stellhorn the first secretary of schools for LCMS and A. C. Mueller who served on the Board for Parish Services), reducing ministry to functions rather than maintaining the distinct nature of the biblically mandated office of public ministry broke with both LCMS and historic Lutheran understandings of the doctrine.

Conversely, to hold that commissioned ministry is auxiliary to the office of public ministry leaves commissioned workers as some sort of semi-ministerial laity, and also fails to hold. I believe that Walther properly attempted to hold the tension between the singularity of the office of public ministry, rightly arguing against there being a plurality of offices of public ministry, while at the same time he held that the church had the right to establish offices that derive from the office of public ministry, that are in themselves properly still a part of the office of public ministry. As I have come to understand Walther on this point, as well as the Lutheran Confessions, and a good number of other sources, it would be improper to refer to those in an auxiliary office as simply some sort of called laity.

In order to get at the center of the argument some philosophical language may be necessary.

> If the pastoral office is coextensive with the preaching office, then commissioned ministers are not within the Office of Public Ministry; however, the church has the freedom to create other helping office and to call people to them as public ministers in a derivative sense. If, on the other hand, the pastoral office is not coextensive with the preaching office, then we can understand commissioned ministers as being within the public ministry but still in a helping sense, as the office of pastor is the only office within which the public ministry which Christ specifically instituted and which is not optional for congregations. (Rueter, 2019, p. 114)

Put more simply, is it more appropriate to say that in all times and in all ways is it more appropriate to equate the Office of Pastoral Ministry with the Pastoral Office, or is there a way in which it is theologically and practically appropriate to talk about the Office of Public Ministry in a way that is inclusive of more than merely the Pastoral Office?

This issue is unfortunately compounded by the use of Lay Minister as a particular auxiliary office. If commissioned workers as bearers of auxiliary offices are public minsters of the gospel and therefore a part of, though not bearers of the full office of public ministry, then to refer to any office as lay ministry is an

oxymoron. This is not a judgement on those who serve on the LCMS roster as Lay Ministers, rather I am empathetic to the confusion that such a title creates in understanding just what such a worker is to be about and how they are to be understood in the context of both the local church and LCMS at large.

How are we then to understand which is the appropriate case? Are commissioned workers properly a part of the Office of Public Ministry or does being *auxiliary* mean external to that office? The key question is whether the use of a term like auxiliary implies a derivative nature to the office in that it would not properly be considered a part of the Office of Public Ministry. To answer such a question, an examination of key Scripture passages is essential.

In Acts 6, the early church was growing and growing fast. In fact, the church was growing at such a rate that there were aspects of the work of the church that the apostles were not able to continue to keep up with. Due to the rapid growth of the church, there was added pressure to manage the various developing aspects of the ministry to those both within the church and those that the apostles and others sought to reach out to with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The situation came to a head when complaints began to surface about a disparity of care received by the Greek widows as opposed to the Jewish widows.

Luther addressed similar situations in 16th-Century Germany. When a parish was larger and the needs of ministry more complex, Luther argued not only for additional pastoral assistance, but also for additional help from workers who might rightly have been called deacons or deaconesses (Klug, 1993). Luther's thinking here parallels and likely draws upon the rationale that we see in use by the apostles themselves in Acts 6.

The first thing to note is how soon the church began what some might call social ministry. In a counter-cultural move, the early church became known for its care of those who could not otherwise care solely for themselves. The value that was being defended was the call to care for all. This was not seen as something outside of the ministry of the church, but rather as a natural extension of the ministry of the Gospel being preached by the apostles. In order to manage both the call to preach the Gospel as well as administer the caring ministry to those in need within their midst, the apostles had to maintain an interesting balancing act. In response to the complaints by the Hellenistic followers of Christ, the apostles first readily acknowledged the need to sort out the care for all the widows in their fellowship. It was not an option to let this ministry drop. However, they also noted that "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word " (Acts 6: 2b-4. ESV). A couple of things should be noted here. There are some who use these

verses to mark a clear distinction between the pastoral office and other "so-called" ministry, uplifting the former and nearly dismissing the latter. That is not what is actually taking place in the text.

If the apostles had considered this ministry to be lesser in importance, something some scholars argue, effectively dismissing the role of the deacon and by extension the modern commissioned minister, then the criteria for selecting them would not have been nearly so stringent. Yes, there is a need for spiritual maturity in all aspects of our service in the church, but there seems to be something more than that implied in the text. This becomes more evident when in verse 6 the apostles placed the seven into their offices as deacons through prayer and the laying on of hands. There is a solemnity to this act. They were not selected merely as food service workers. Rather as we see later in Acts, when Stephen, one of the seven, is martyred for the faith, that they likely were in fact ministers who publicly served more than just bread, they brought the very Word to those in need.

Now, some will contend that the latter ministry of Stephen is a sign that some deacons were later ordained as pastors, but this is an argument from silence. This may have happened, or it may not have, we cannot know for certain as the Bible is silent on the matter. Good Lutheran theology does not bind the believer to restrictions not actually articulated in the text of Scripture. Similarly, there are those who argue that scripturally only those offices mentioned in the Bible may be considered to be properly a part of the Office of Public Ministry. Turning to texts like Ephesians 4:11, the argument goes that all those offices listed are in fact a part of the pastoral office as we understand that office today. This emphasis on the singularity of the Office of Public Ministry is good, right, and salutary, if handled properly.

Granting that the offices noted in Ephesians 4:11 are all a part of the pastoral office, what is often missed is that the very listing of these as distinct offices in use at the time, implies that individuals in the early church served in diverse ministries, while remaining a part of the one Office of Public Ministry. The same holds true today. The commissioned minister is an auxiliary minister, but that does not place the commissioned worker outside the Office of Public Ministry. Attempts to argue that one's ministry can be public but not a part of the Office of Public Ministry fail to logically hold. The goal to maintain a high view of the pastoral office is good and right to do but does not need to be done by devaluing other offices.

One way to picture this argument is to think of these seemingly distinct offices as having been rolled back into the single office that the church has come to know as the Office of Public Ministry. The pastoral office as we know it bears this office in full. However, as the needs of the local church or denomination

grow in complexity, the church rolls back out elements of that single office into distinct offices again, neither dividing the office nor confusing the whole from the parts. In this way, one can both affirm that the list of offices in Ephesians 4:11 is speaking of the pastor and yet further hold that when the church in Christian liberty sees fit to place upon an individual or group of individuals an office that is a part of the Office of Public Ministry, but does not place on the office bearer either the full responsibly nor the full authority of the Office of Public Ministry, that this is both good and right to do in service of Christ and His Kingdom here on earth.

One possible critique of this image is the potential to see this image as implying that these offices had been distinct and that the church merely subsumed those offices into a single Office of Public Ministry. That is not what is being argued here. The assumption here is that each distinct office was and has always been a part of the one Office of Public Ministry and that whether the church utilized that office in a singular expression or as the LCMS does today with a variety of offices, there remains only one Office of Public Ministry.

So, what then is the relationship of commissioned ministry to the Office of Public Ministry? It is not as some have suggested that the pastor is merely one office among many that are a part of the Office of Public Ministry, a view historically of the Wisconsin Synod rightly rejected officially by the LCMS, though at times imported into the conversation within the LCMS regardless (Rueter, 2019). Rather commissioned workers and auxiliary offices merely do not bear the full Office of Public Ministry as a senior or sole pastor does. Walther held that the associate pastor and Lutheran teacher both were a part of the Office of Public Ministry, but not full office bearers as the senior or sole pastor is. The major distinction is that the associate pastor may take a call as a senior or sole pastor, whereas the male commissioned minister must rightly become a pastor first in order to do so.

Returning to the philosophical language noted previously, it is my contention that the latter is the case. That "the pastoral office is not coextensive with the preaching office, then we can understand commissioned ministers as being within the public ministry but still in a helping sense, as the office of pastor is the only office within which the public ministry which Christ specifically instituted and which is not optional for congregations" (Rueter, 2019, p. 114). Note that this claim both respects and uplifts the pastoral office while giving dignity and respect to the commissioned minister as well. In good Lutheran fashion, the attempt is to hold this tension keeping the doctrine in proper balance, neither so weighting things toward the singularity of the pastoral office in a way that dismissed the public nature of the ministry of commissioned workers, while at the same time not so elevating the commissioned minister so as to confuse

the distinction between the divinely mandated pastoral office and the humanly created offices that serve alongside and to support the ministry of Word and Sacrament to which the pastor has been called.

Why does this all matter? Are we as servants of Christ supposed to be seeking after prestige in our ministry? No, of course not. Far be it that we seek after our own glory. However, just as it is right to uplift the pastor who does not seek his own glory, giving him the honor that he is due for his life of service, so to it is right to uplift commissioned ministers: DCEs, Lutheran teachers, DCOs, DFLMs, DPMs, Deaconesses, and Lay Ministers.

There is however a rather pragmatic result in the ministry of those who are seen and able to see themselves as public ministers of the gospel and not merely hired hands. While this does not argue for the validity of the argument that the DCE and other Commissioned ministers are and should be afforded the respect due a public minister of the gospel, having already made such an argument, this goes to the matter of why placing an emphasis on how we uplift our commissioned ministers is of importance.

It has been my experience that commissioned ministers who are treated as "hired" rather than "called" approach their service to the church differently. This is not true in every case, and does not negate the many lay workers who are in fact hired for a similar role, however the solemnity with which the called minister is treated when called and placed into an office of service and ministry in a local church or school can, and in my experience most often does, have an impact on the approach taken in one's ministry.

The raising up of individuals locally is consistent with the theology expressed in this article with one major caveat. Walking together in the LCMS implies an agreement that we will work together in the raising up and training of church workers. This practice of local churches raising up their own workers and placing them into ministry positions similar to the role of the DCE is the rationale that we used at Concordia University Irvine in the launching of our distance DCE certification programs. It is hard, and I would suggest inconsistent, to expect the above-and-beyond ministry that we know so well from our pastors and other church workers from those who are treated as though they are merely hired for a task. Time and again in my work on district staff, I have seen lay people elevated to DCE-type positions who struggle. They often struggle due to both a lack of training and lack of empowerment that is given to one who is called and placed into ministry more formally by the local church.

Seeing oneself and being seen by those one serves as a public minister of the gospel can perhaps be conceptualized as the wind in our ministerial sails. A Lutheran understanding of the call into ministry is rightly two-fold. There is the

calling that the individual feels or in some way recognizes which moves them toward training and placement into ministry, as well as movement from one call to another throughout a career of ministerial service. This internal call, however, is always to be coupled with an external call. The external call confirms the internal call. One does not serve merely because of their desire or self-perceived calling. Neither a pastor nor DCE should nor can claim to be such or claim a particular call to a local congregation without being recognized as one prepared for ministry and suited for the particularity of that local calling.

The youth director who is hired from within the congregation should be encouraged to receive training and be rostered in the LCMS both for the benefit of the worker (this opens the door for service in other churches should the calling of God move them from one ministry to another) as well as providing for the congregation a worker well trained in the theology of the LCMS and historical Lutheranism as well as the norms and practices associated with DCE ministry. It has been my observation that workers trained and called to their congregations and schools have a closer association with the LCMS as a whole and their own congregation. Seeing their own congregation in its larger LCMS context often creates within the worker, who becomes rostered via colloquy or certification, a stronger bond with both the local congregation as well as the district and synod as a whole. Conversely a DCE like myself, who is not called to a local congregation, ought not to usurp the DCE who is called to the local congregation. I ought not to take on of my own volition a calling and responsibility not placed on me by an external call.

The local congregation ought to always respect the call of the DCE just as they would their pastor. While it is understood that the expectations for each are distinct, the ministerial service of the DCE should not be treated as discardable. Yes, there may be times when the ministry of the DCE is of necessity coming to an end. This took place for me at the conclusion of my first call, when I recognized the reality that the congregation lacked the finances to call a new pastor had I remained. I recognized that it was not likely that this uncomfortable question would be asked of me, and I did not want to put the congregation through having to ask me to seek another call after nine years of ministry among them. Given the reality that this kind of situation does take place whether for financial or other legitimate ministry-focused reasons, this kind of situation should be handled with the full knowledge and in open discussion with the DCE.

Conversely the ministry of the DCE ought not to be treated as a simple 9-to-5 job. While we all may have times in which we desire that simplicity, the truth is that the call into ministry asks far more of us. We are not to be without boundaries that respect our own time and the time we ought to be giving to the ministry of our own family, but ministry is not a 40-hour-a-week proposition.

Being present to connect with and minister to the members of our congregations is not something one can easily be hired for at an hourly rate.

An unfortunate example of hireling attitude took place in a local congregation and involved a lay youth worker who chose to attend another area non-denominational church on Easter Sunday because he did not have any specific duties that morning. There was clearly something missing in this individual's understanding of his ministry to this congregation. While there is no requirement to be at every event the church holds, being present to minister to and connect with those we serve is not optional. Opting out of all Easter services because you do not have a specific ministry duty that morning is not an option. Not to mention, I would wonder how he managed to not have anything to do on Easter in the first place. That was certainly not an experience that I had in any church that I have served. The DCE is a second-chair leader. As such, we support the ministry of the pastor and others called to serve on our teams. We are there to support them as they are present to support us, not attending everything, but being present for those things essential to our ministry together.

The most recent NADCE (National Association of Directors of Christian Education) Master DCE, Steve Schedler, was asked in a class on the Concordia University Irvine campus that I was teaching to discuss the team ministry that he shares with his pastor. The exchange between Steve and his pastor, Jim Henkell, was enlightening both about the ministry they share as well as for the shared ministry all church workers can to aspire to. Pastor Jim explained that for him the entire senior ministry staff is a team together, that they all shared the load and responsibly of ministry and ministry decisions together. To which Steve then pointed to Jim and said, "But he's the boss." The balance is perfect. As the pastor, Jim was open handed with his authority, sharing it with his fellow workers. Yet, as the DCE, Steve knew where the buck stops, not because Jim insisted upon it, but out of respect for Jim's calling as pastor and the responsibility placed upon him by the local congregation. Let us all aspire to such a balance.

I have been privileged to have served with several great pastors who have shared their authority in just such an open-handed manner. Joining these pastors in ministry in the local congregation, district, and university, they have been gracious in welcoming me into team ministry at their sides. It is my prayer that as DCE Ministry continues past 60 years that even more men and women will experience the joys of team ministry as co-laborers with their pastors and all those that God places with them, serving Christ and His kingdom in the many unique contexts of the LCMS. ***LEJ***

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In their own words:
Understanding why DCEs have left the profession, and how we can stem the leak of future loss.

By Sarah Elliott

(Author's note: Data and demographics were accurate to the best of the author's knowledge as of the 2016 original publication of this research. Where more recent data were available, it was included.)

Introduction

Since the 1847 inception of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), as it has been called since 1947, the Synod has been ministering to people in America through its churches and schools (Concordia Historical Institute, 2010). Through its university system, it has been issuing certification for Lutheran schoolteachers to those candidates who have completed an appropriate course of study in a teacher preparation program, who qualify for their respective states' teaching credential, and who have also satisfied the requirements to become commissioned in the LCMS as a Minister of Religion. Although the typical role of one of these Lutheran teacher graduates was teaching in a traditional parish-based PreK-12 classroom, many found themselves engaged in various other ministries of their local Lutheran congregations, to include teaching Sunday School, leading music ministries, facilitating Bible studies, or coordinating youth ministries, to name a few (Keyne, 1995).

By 1959, as congregations were recognizing the importance of this simultaneously educational and ministerial role in the parish, the LCMS in convention resolved "that congregations be encouraged to analyze their parish education program, and, where needed, to establish the office of 'Director of Christian Education' in order to provide additional leadership for the educational program of the congregation" (Proceedings, 1959, p. 224). Subsequently, the role of Director of Christian Education (DCE) was born within the LCMS. Similar roles have existed in Protestant churches since the early 20th century, and the role is also known in other church bodies as the Director of Religious Education (DRE).

At the 50th anniversary celebration of DCE ministry in 2009, it was reported that 1,753 individuals had been certified as DCEs in the LCMS (Karpenko, 2009). Six years later, according to the 2015 DCE Directory, that number had risen to 2,118 total DCE graduates, an increase of 21%. However, according to the 2015 DCE Directory, only 551 (approximately 26%) of all DCE graduates

were actually serving in an LCMS congregation These data do not account for DCEs who have moved on to other roles within Synod (like teacher, pastor, university professor, and the like), but it does indicate a significant opportunity for understanding why so many DCEs are not serving in congregational settings, and why so many have left professional ministry altogether.

In 2015, as I began narrowing the focus for my doctoral research, I took particular interest in the topic of DCE attrition rates after hearing and reading the stories of my DCE colleagues and classmates about their personal challenges in ministry and intended or recent departures from the profession. In some ways, what I was hearing and reading resonated all too personally. What follows are excerpts from that research, a qualitative inquiry that sought to understand each participant's unique story as to why they left the profession, shared in their own words, entitled *Stemming the Leak: Understanding the Departure of the Director of Christian Education from Professional Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (Elliott, 2016).

A review of the literature examined several elements that informed this qualitative inquiry. First, a thorough examination of the theoretical framework of the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory identified generational nuances and perceptions toward workplace dynamics. A further review of such topics as job satisfaction, burnout, and vocational calling were discussed as they pertain to the departure from ministerial professions specifically, and from all professions in general. These mirror some of the reasons DCEs gave for choosing a different profession in the Karpenko et al (2009) study. A review of the historical development of the DCE profession provided overall context to the topic.

The research methodology was a qualitative inquiry with data collected through recorded interviews of a purposeful sample of participants. First, the population of DCE graduates who are not listed as Active, Candidate, Retired, or Deceased were identified based on a comprehensive list of DCE graduates who were certified between the years 1999-2014 as recorded in the 2015 DCE Directory. Then, through online recruitment efforts and the input of the six DCE program directors at the time, a sample of DCEs who left the profession were invited to participate in individual interviews.

Prior Research Lays the Foundation

In 2004, McConnell, serving as a DCE program director at Concordia Texas at the time, conducted research on job satisfaction among Directors of Christian Education in the LCMS. His findings were substantial in that he overwhelmingly found that although DCEs were largely satisfied in their roles, many still reported that they planned to leave the profession within a three-year time frame. Participants in McConnell's (2004) study were asked to project

why they might leave, to include career change, personal concerns, family issues, salary, and pastor/staff relations. In spite of overall satisfaction, nearly three in ten participants indicated they were somewhat or very likely to leave the profession, which led McConnell to propose that further research be conducted "to determine why they left and what interventions, if any, would have been significant enough to prevent their leaving" (McConnell, 2004, p. 96).

In 2009, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the formalizing of this ministry role within the LCMS, Karpenko and a team of researchers who were engaged in DCE ministry set out to determine the career paths of DCEs on the roster of Synod through the DCE Career Path Project – Phase I. In this study, [P]articipants were clustered into eight groupings (status categories) that paralleled the 2008 DCE Directory: congregational DCEs, non-congregational DCEs, pastors, teachers/principals, other commissioned ministers, individuals on candidate status, those no longer on the synod's roster, and retirees (Karpenko et al, 2009, p. 17). At the time of the Career Path study, 432 of the 769 DCEs who responded (56%) were still actively serving in a DCE position.

Karpenko et al (2009) ultimately determined there were certain "pull" and "push" themes that resulted in a DCE's change of career. In an attempt to understand the factors and experiences that either pulled these DCEs away from ministry or pushed them toward another profession – the why – gave framework to the focus of this inquiry. It was further framed by the two recommendations McConnell (2004) made at the conclusion of his research. These two recommendations were precisely the focus of this study, which is guided by the following two research questions:

1. What circumstances do former DCEs identify as significant to their decision to leave the profession?
2. From the perspective of the subject, what interventions, if any, might have been significant enough to prevent the DCE from leaving the profession?

Limitations

This study was purposely focused on DCEs within the LCMS. However, it may inform other ministry professions within the LCMS, as well as other similar ministries in other Christian church bodies. Additionally, the data published in the 2015 DCE Directory may not have represented the most recent locations or statuses of DCE graduates. In fact, this was proven to be the case when verifying information with several participants. Further, the findings of this qualitative inquiry are only representative of the experiences of the DCE graduates who participated in the interview. They did not take into account the experiences of DCE graduates who did not participate in the interview. Finally, it must be

noted that I am a DCE graduate of one of the DCE programs examined and have departed from the profession of DCE to that of Lutheran schoolteacher. It is important to disclose this potential bias toward the research; however, every effort has been made to minimize bias through open review of procedures and through the inclusion of components of my own story, alongside those of the other participants, as part of the overall narrative.

Generational Nuances, Vocational Calling, Job Satisfaction, and Burnout

A review of the literature indicated there were a number of factors that contribute to one leaving his or her profession. The Strauss-Howe Generational Theory suggests that all individuals within American society fall into generational categories based on a cyclical pattern and that their behaviors in relationship to others and their work may be influenced by the dynamics of the generation into which they were born. All the participants in this research left the profession between 2007 and 2012. The eleven participants were born between the years 1976 and 1986, which, according to the Strauss-Howe Generation Cycle, would place these DCEs as part of the Nomad/Generation X (born 1961-1981) and Hero/Millennial (born 1982-2004) generations (Strauss & Howe, 2000). Attributes of these generations, as posited by Strauss and Howe (1991, 2000), include hard workers with a get-it-done mindset who hold a somewhat jaded view of the world as a result of the tumult surrounding their upbringing (Nomads), and those who crave teamwork and work that is meaningful while valuing diversity and appearing somewhat less committed to their profession (Heroes). Among the participants, seven are Nomads (Generation X), and four are Heroes (Millennials). Interestingly, the four participants who fall among the Hero generation expressed that they would still be serving in DCE ministry had the congregational circumstances leading up to their departures been different. These Millennials perceived themselves to have been very committed, not only to the profession of DCE ministry, but also to the people they were serving at the time they changed careers, contrary to the generalities suggested by Strauss and Howe (2000).

Vocational calling plays a significant role in one's career path, and, in the case of the DCE, Karpenko et al (2009) suggested a call to another profession was a strong motivator in changing careers. According to Hansen (1994), "The idea of vocation has an ancient lineage. Its Latin root, vocare, means 'to call.' It denotes a summons or bidding to a particular form of service" (p. 410). Phillips (2011) suggests, "Exploration of the construct of vocational calling, although certainly applicable to specific employment, transcends the boundaries of jobs to include purposeful and meaningful involvements" (p. 3). Galles (2013) reports, "The construct of calling refers to the extent to which individuals feel summoned

or called to enter a particular career or life role" (p. 241). Similarly, according to the Lutheran tradition, "We don't choose our vocations; God chooses us for them. The Christian can understand the ordinary labors of life to be charged with meaning. Through our labor, no matter how humble, God is at work" (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2014). Buechner (1992) writes, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (p. 185).

For the DCE in the LCMS, this career path is considered a vocational calling. Transitioning to a different vocation would also be viewed as a calling, initiated by God as a means to focus the labors of the Christian worker toward a continued, purposeful, and meaningful involvement in a life of faith. Karpenko et al. (2009) suggest the change of career from DCE to a different profession was often the result of a "pull," the calling to a different position. Of DCEs-turned-teachers in his study, they expressed such sentiments as "I felt called to the mission field" and "God called me to go into full time leadership in a Lutheran school" (Karpenko et al., 2009, pp. 132-133). Vocation refers to more than just one's job; vocation is the whole life of the Christian. Brandt, Engelbrecht, and Mueller (2014) suggest:

> The monk or the priest did not do anything more holy than the mother who cared for her children or the cobbler laboring over a pair of shoes. God's hand blessed all of these things. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection gave meaning to each of these 'vocations.' The priest served God as a priest, but the cobbler served God as a cobbler. And the same needs to be said of the mother caring for her children, the stable boy cleaning out a stall, and the king exercising justice and making laws. (p. 4)

The impact of a vocational calling on the Christian is significant, because it truly highlights a two-part relationship, first with God, then with one's neighbor. "Christians have always lived within a tension between the kingdom and rule of God over heaven and earth and the pull and push of the work-a-day world" (Brandt, Engelbrecht, & Mueller, 2014, p. 4). Lutheran doctrine emphasizes the belief that the Christian is saved by God's grace, through faith, apart from the work of the Law, but for good work toward others (Eph. 2:8-10, ESV). Because, in this view, the Christian is justified by grace through Christ's death and resurrection, the Christian is free to love and serve his neighbor. "The relationship with Christ makes the difference. Vocation involves living out one's relationship with the neighbor based on one's Gospel calling in Christ" (Carter, 2006, p. 52).

Job satisfaction largely comes as a result of positive workplace relationships and the perception that one's work is meaningful. A decrease in job satisfaction increased the likelihood of a career change. The research of Karpenko et al. (2009) indicates among all respondents 23% of those who left DCE ministry for all

other careers did so because of conflict within the church. Interestingly, though, McConnell (2004) found that the level of satisfaction was not a predictor of a DCE's likelihood of leaving DCE ministry, as only 8% were somewhat or very dissatisfied with their roles, but nearly 28% indicated they were somewhat or very likely to depart from the profession of DCE within the coming three years. This seems contrary to much other research about job satisfaction and retention, and so it leads one to question whether the profession itself has contributing factors that seem to deviate from other research.

Finally, burnout among those in ministry is prevalent, even in the early years of one's ministry. Miner (2007, 2010) has written extensively on the causes and role of burnout among ministry professionals. Of particular importance to the body of research at hand is the relationship between burnout and reduced job satisfaction, higher turnover intentions, and declining professional commitment. She writes:

> Burnout is typically characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Consequences of burnout include impaired physical health, reduced job satisfaction/performance and higher turnover intentions, negative communication with colleagues, declining professional commitment, reduced self-esteem, and poorer overall life satisfaction. Chronic work stress has long been considered a major contributor to burnout. Workplace characteristics contributing to high levels of stress comprise excessive job demands, including role conflict and role ambiguity, and a lack of autonomy. (Miner et al, 2010, p. 167-168)

A greater degree of professional preparation reduces the likelihood of burnout (Miner et al, 2010). Karpenko et al. (2009) reported that 20% of the participants in their research left DCE ministry because of the demands placed upon them. The ability of the DCE to cope with and effectively balance these demands is an important, if not basic, skill. However, acquisition of such skills by these DCEs may vary, considering that several different institutions are preparing DCEs, each with their own nuances and ministry emphases. "Simple logic leads one to ascertain that if an institution's DCE program outcomes are not in alignment with the other five institutions, graduates from each respective institution potentially represent a disparity of basic entry level competencies" (Warren, 2008, p. 8). While certain baseline competencies are in place among the six DCE training programs, the degree to which each competency is addressed may vary from program to program.

Miner (2007) reports that burnout is more likely in the early years of one's ministry due to several factors. Stressors and distress during the initial years are likely to be high, especially for those who are given responsibility for

solo ministry, since they lack the buffering effect of supervision within a team. Particular problems included applying theological knowledge to complex situations in congregational life; negotiating expectations and relational patterns of the congregation; practical issues relating to the move to the new parish; and loss of supportive relationships (Miner, 2007). Just as Christopher (2001) found that DCEs were less satisfied in rural settings, the loss of supportive relationships from the college experience may lead to burnout and decreased satisfaction if other supportive relationships are not developed. Further, success in understanding expectations when one arrives in a congregation is due, in part, to the level of preparation achieved within the DCE's training program, coupled with the level of support provided to the DCE upon receipt of a Call.

Personal devotional life is critical toward minimizing burnout. "An internal orientation to the demands of ministry (where ministers depend on internal sources of authority and coping, such as spirituality and competence) is associated with low burnout in cross-sectional studies of ministers" (Miner, 2007, p. 9). Bousquet (2012) suggests several tips for minimizing teacher burnout, which may also apply to DCE burnout. These include praise and encouragement from superiors, maintaining healthy boundaries and a healthy diet, developing positive relationships, and meditation and prayer. Karpenko et al. (2009) reinforced the importance of commitment to a devotional prayer life as a key source of support in the DCE's professional career. Burnout has the ability to impact a worker both emotionally and physically, and the result of such burnout may lead to a job change or an entire career shift.

While generational traits, vocational calling, job satisfaction, and burnout may be significant factors in DCEs departing from this ministry profession, they do not encompass all factors and experiences that resulted in such a change, and there is a significant lack of literature on other causes. Understanding the factors and experiences that ultimately led DCE graduates to leave the profession provides valuable information to DCE program directors specifically, and the LCMS and its DCEs on a broader scale.

In Their Own Words

Eleven former DCEs, each of whom graduated from one of the six Concordia DCE programs between 1999 and 2014, participated in recorded interviews, constructed to understand the departure of the DCE from professional ministry in the LCMS. These eleven former DCEs represented all six of the Concordia DCE programs. Six participants were male, and five participants were female. These former DCEs served a total of 53 years in DCE ministry, with the average (mean) years of serving being 4.82 years. Seven standardized interview prompts provided participants the opportunity to share their personal narratives on their transition away from DCE ministry:

1. As you think about your decision to become a DCE, who or what motivated you to pursue that profession? Were there any other professions you were considering at the time?
2. What was your DCE cohort like, and how did you fit into it? Did you see it as a supportive community? Do you still keep in contact with any of your DCE classmates?
3. What types of professional development did you receive while serving as a DCE? What brought you joy while serving in that profession? When did you feel most successful as a DCE? When did you feel most unsuccessful?
4. How would you describe your level of job satisfaction as a DCE? What stressors did you face that contributed to your decision to leave the profession?
5. Describe for me the setting in which you were serving when you made the decision to leave. What was the community, both inside and outside the congregation, like? What did your support system look like?
6. Tell me about your transition out of DCE ministry. What were the reasons behind your decision to leave? Can you walk me through the thought process you went through before leaving? Did you speak to or seek advice from anyone before leaving? What feelings do you have now about your decision to leave?
7. Can you identify anything that, for you, might have kept you from leaving the profession? Would additional training, resources, or support have been helpful? From whom?

While in their respective congregations, the roles of the participants varied. Some were tasked exclusively with youth ministry, while others also engaged in children's and adult ministry. Responsibilities such as outreach, community life, small groups, campus ministry, and confirmation were also noted. Several of the participants indicated their congregation had minimal awareness of what a DCE is or does, and they suggested that that brought with it several unique challenges in terms of understanding expectations. These participants' narratives not only gave context to the circumstances surrounding the DCE's entry into the profession, but also some of the many joys and challenges experienced while in the profession. Additionally, an account of the specific circumstances surrounding the DCE's ultimate departure was included. In the telling of their personal narratives, these participants underscored the significance of a support system (or lack thereof), the tension in finding an adequate work-life balance, and the importance of a quality relationship between the DCE and his or her pastor, congregation, and district. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to protect their anonymity.

Through their personal narratives, several themes emerged that specifically focused on mentoring, work-life balance, and relationships with one's pastor, congregation, and district. Participants expressed the influence of a significant person in their lives, which had led to them becoming DCEs. In most cases, these influences came from people involved in ministry opportunities, such as youth group, camp, or peers and faculty already affiliated with a DCE program. During their training, most of the participants expressed a great sense of support within their DCE programs, some even expressing that their DCE classmates have become life-long friends. Those who did not find the same depth of friendships in the program largely attributed that to their more reserved personalities, though, overall, they felt supported and equipped by their respective programs. While participants identified some areas where they could have been more adequately prepared through the DCE program (i.e. working with a pastor and other staff, handling conflict, understanding one's role within the broader church community, etc.), they felt equipped, for the most part, for the profession into which they were entering. Several participants also indicated they felt they had a skill set that was minimally marketable in a position outside a ministry setting.

Congregational dynamics and the relationship with one's pastor appeared to be the two most significant factors that ultimately contributed to most of the participants leaving DCE ministry. Although each participant expressed great joy in working with the people of all ages within their respective ministries, congregational challenges, particularly in the areas of leadership, vision, and finances, were a major detriment. Several participants expressed burnout, while others expressed that if it were not for finances (either their own low salary or the congregation believing they needed to cut the position due to budget constraints), they believed they would still be in ministry. The two participants who expressed the most burnout were Logan and Henry, who found themselves filling a pastoral role in addition to their DCE role during a pastoral vacancy. Several participants expressed that if the congregational dynamics were different, they may have stayed. However, many of the participants expressed that because the congregational dynamics were as difficult as they were, they were unwilling, even fearful, to "risk" being in a situation like that again, and so they chose not to return to ministry. "I'm not doing it again…I can't go back…It's a risk…It's so hard emotionally."

Interestingly, participants expressed a high level of job satisfaction while they were serving in DCE ministry. Coupled with this, though, was a high level of imbalance between work life and home life. Several of the participants shared that they had a strong level of support in the home or from other family members, and although they felt like their congregations were supportive of them overall, they did not feel like they could approach their congregations or their pastors

directly when they were struggling. Many attributed this to the fact that their place of worship was also their place of work, and their pastor was also their boss. They were lacking spiritual care outside their workplace. However, for the two participants who had a very strong spiritual care and support system outside their churches (for Henry, a retired pastor in the area; for Zoe, a young women's group that she established), their reflections on and support of, the ongoing success of DCE ministry are very high. Contrasted with the other participants, these two did not express any sense of hurt, fear, or resentment about or toward DCE ministry. Henry's comment was "If I didn't have my mentor, I don't think I'd be a pastor, and I don't think I would be in DCE ministry."

When considering whether anything could have made a difference in their decision to leave DCE ministry, several of the participants spoke to the level of district support. In some cases, it might have been a lack of awareness of the role the district plays in congregational matters or in supporting the church worker, but several participants wanted, even needed, to hear from their respective districts and never did. Rita's comment was "I never, ever received a phone call… nothing. And I don't know if that's intentional or not…I just felt very unsupported." Logan's comment was "We were all talking to people at the district saying, 'Hey! We need help!' and we didn't get it." Along the same lines, participants needed outside spiritual support, whether that was from other DCEs, a pastor who wasn't their boss, or even a counselor. Illuminating this concept, Elsa said, "I felt like my pastor did not provide me with much, if at all, any real spiritual context of how to handle that situation." From Richard we hear "I was in over my head."

Congregational readiness for a DCE was another significant factor that might have made a difference in the DCE's decision to leave. Congregational dynamics varied greatly from one setting to another, although several participants felt their congregations called them without really knowing what to expect or without having any expectations of moving a vision forward. This lack of awareness and readiness was sometimes attributed to the congregation at large, but it was also attributed to the pastor and the degree to which he prepared the congregation for what to expect as a DCE was added to the staff.

Some of the participants expressed that they didn't fully understand just how difficult it would be to navigate challenging situations with sinful people, being sinful themselves, when one's place of worship was also paying one's salary. While they thought it would be helpful to have had this made more clear during their training in a DCE program, they also acknowledged whether they would have taken it seriously in their training, or have potentially been scared away from the profession. Several of the participants expressed that, upon their departure, they were careful with their words to the point they do not believe the members

of the congregation truly knew why they were leaving, or that they had any idea the difficulties that were occurring behind the scenes. Those who expressed that opinion shared that although they wanted to protect the congregation, they were also contributing to, or perpetuating, a problem. Nonetheless, most of the participants expressed that they knew their departure was the right decision and they had peace about it. From Marcus we get "I was not pushed out or it wasn't something I was fed up with or left because I was ticked off. I felt God called me someplace, and I think it is just important." From Alex we hear "I had no more mentally, physically to give." In addition, Felix remarked "I really kind of felt like God was saying, 'You've got to let something go."

When comparing the projected reasons for departure DCEs gave in the McConnell (2004) study and the reasons former DCEs who participated in the Karpenko et al. (2009) study gave, to the reasons given by the participants in this 2016 research (n=11), the overarching themes were quite similar, even though the percentage of DCEs whose decisions were influenced by these themes varied greatly. Most of the participants in this study chose to depart the profession following congregational dysfunction or budget/financial reasons. Table 1 provides a comparison between the projected reasons a DCE was considering leaving in the McConnell (2004) with the actual factors that contributed to the DCE leaving among participants in my research.

Table 1

Projected vs. Actual Reasons DCEs Left the Profession (2004/2016)

Rationale for Departure:	McConnell (2004) | (n=101)	Elliott (2016) | (n=11)	
Career Change	25.7%	2	18.2%
Personal Concerns	22.8%	0	0%
Family Issues	17.8%	3	27.3%
Salary	14.9%	5	45.5%
Pastor/Staff Relations	14.8%	8	72.7%

Further, Table 2 provides a comparison between the reasons former DCEs left in the Karpenko et al. (2009) study with the actual factors that contributed to the DCE leaving among participants in my research.

Table 2

Comparative Factors Why DCEs Left the Profession (2009/2016)

Rationale for Departure:	Karpenko et al (2009) (n=124)	Elliott (2016) (n=11)
Marriage, spouse transfer, childbirth, raising the family	38%	2
Burnout, congregational mismatch, inappropriate behavior by DCE, need for healing	18%	10
Graduate School	15%	1
Vocational exploration and/or expansion	15%	2
Congregational dysfunction, downsizing, budget crisis	8%	9
Decision to go to the seminary	8%	1

Clearly, congregational dynamics and relationships with the participants' pastors and congregations were significant factors contributing to their decisions to leave, more so than the projected reasons in the McConnell (2004) study and the actual reasons from the earlier Karpenko, et al. (2009), though it is important to note the different sample sizes and research approach between these three studies. Interestingly, though, as a result of congregational dysfunction or budgetary constraints, as the DCE was exiting the profession, the participants in this study chose to become stay-at-home parents, to pursue graduate school or vocational exploration, or they experienced significant burnout and a need for healing, which were some of the projected and actual reasons DCEs left in the two previous studies (McConnell, 2004; Karpenko, et al., 2009). While these were not the reasons the DCEs left in this current study, they were certainly by-product decisions that resulted from the challenging congregational dynamics the participants experienced.

Another significant factor that led to the departure of several of these DCEs from the profession was the work-life imbalance they experienced. The impact of work hours and workplace conditions, including staff relationships, coupled with reality that the participant was struggling to make a livable wage in his or her locale, was a contributing factor to the DCE's departure as well. Transitioning from intern to called worker, some participants reported no significant pay raise when they remained at the same location as their internship.

For others, the position's salary was not adequate to compensate for the high cost of living in the area. None of the participants reported being compensated at the district pay scale, though several offered they believed their pastor was being compensated according to district pay scale. When considering the financial challenges alongside the challenging congregational dynamics, at least three of the participants indicated departing the profession and pursuing an alternate profession with a livable wage was a welcome change.

All of the participants reported a high level of job satisfaction, in spite of those congregational challenges. Just as McConnell (2004) reported that satisfied DCEs were planning to depart the profession within three years, these DCEs are evidence that even satisfied DCEs leave the profession. To this point, it is important to discuss, then, how a DCE can seemingly separate his or her level of satisfaction with the position itself and the components of the position that bring them joy, from the feelings of frustration, hurt, and anger over congregational dynamics. The majority of DCEs in this study demonstrated that even a high level of job satisfaction could be and, in fact, was trumped by some of the more challenging relational pieces of ministry.

Similarly, the relationship with one's pastor proved to be critical toward one's decision to depart the profession in several cases. Christopher (2001) indicated that DCEs reported a higher level of job satisfaction based on their pastor's leadership style. Although the participants in this research reported high job satisfaction overall, they experienced and shared very dissatisfying circumstances because of the pastor's leadership style, or lack of leadership in general.

The literature suggests job satisfaction can directly impact employee turnover (Chen et al., 2011). Whereas both McConnell's (2004) and this research found a high level of job satisfaction, the projected and actual turnover presented a different story. For the Millennial in particular, job satisfaction, retention, and commitment to one's employer was directly connected with the relationship with the immediate manager (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). In this case, that relationship would most likely be between the DCE and his or her pastor. Hultell and Gustavsson (2013) found that burnout is minimized when quality relationships exist within the first year. Bousquet (2012) similarly suggests burnout can be minimized when the supervisor gives praise and encouragement and develops a positive relationship. Both of these are significant in that they speak to the influence of mentors and a quality relationship with one's pastor.

While all participants expressed they were prompted to pursue DCE ministry at the encouragement of a significant person in their lives, they also attributed their pursuit of the profession as something they felt called to do. Similarly, though, many of the participants expressed they felt called away from the profession at the time they departed, as well. While Karpenko et al (2009)

spoke of this as a "pull" away from DCE ministry rather than being "pushed" away from the profession, most of the participants made it clear that circumstances from within the profession were a decisive factor in their departure.

Whether that is considered a push or pull is less significant than the fact that there were specific circumstances and reasons from within the profession that made it almost easier to leave. Many of those same participants expressed that those challenges they experienced while in the profession are significant to their decision to not return to the profession as well. Several of the participants expressed great fear and unwillingness to risk being in a congregational setting again, as they were afraid any new congregational setting might mirror the dysfunctional dynamics they were experiencing when they chose to leave the profession. For these participants, it was very clear that their fear of being hurt in a ministry setting a second, or third time was significant to their decision to both leave and stay away from the profession. This fear, this hurt, was echoed repeatedly by many of the participants.

Meanwhile, for Zoe and Henry, who departed the profession to purposefully stay at home and to pursue seminary respectively, fear and hurt were never a part of their narrative. Although the demands of the role were tiring at the time, and finding balance was essential, they transitioned for a specifically different pursuit, as opposed to finding an alternate pursuit out of necessity. In both of these cases, these participants had incredible mentors who affirmed them in their respective ministries. The mentors were certainly difference makers, as those participants have very favorable thoughts about DCE ministry, as opposed to feelings of hurt and fear resulting from their time in the profession as expressed by several other participants.

Emergent Themes and Shifting the Narrative

As the participants in this research shared the people and circumstances that were meaningful to them in their time of DCE ministry, as well as the people and circumstances which were factors in their subsequent departure, several implications for the future of DCE ministry became evident. Five primary recommendations come from the findings of this research. They center around three major themes: mentors, work-life balance in relation to having children, and, perhaps most importantly, relationships with one's pastor, congregation, and district. Specific discussion and recommendations for each of these areas follows.

Mentors. Several of the participants shared the significant struggle they had in asking for and receiving pastoral or other Godly counsel during difficult circumstances because their pastor was their boss, and their place of worship was also their place of employment. For the two DCEs who departed the ministry

with generally positive feelings as compared to the other participants, having a Godly mentor was absolutely essential. In both of these instances, the mentor was someone from outside the congregation or home, with whom the participant had a very open, honest relationship during one's ministry. They perceived this person as one to whom they could go for advice, wisdom, celebration, prayer, and accountability. Each of the remaining participants lacked a specific mentor for these purposes. While having a mentor did not preclude these DCEs from leaving the profession, it certainly provided these two participants with incredible support during their time in the profession, as well as much more favorable feelings toward the profession following their departures.

While a DCE graduate is on his or her internship, the student is assigned a supervising DCE, who serves as a mentor, providing specific feedback and a required number of contacts over the course of the internship year. However, without that requirement once the DCE takes his or her first call, the newly commissioned DCE will not have a mentor unless he or she takes the initiative to seek one out, or the congregation is intentional in providing one. In 2015, 38 DCEs completed internship and received certification to serve as a Director of Christian Education within the Synod (DCE Directory, 2015). Considering the number of DCEs who remain active in DCE ministry with at least ten years of experience or who have retired from the profession, there are several hundred potential mentors (DCE Directory, 2015) available throughout the Synod who could be recruited to serve as mentors for beginning DCEs. This pairing could, and ultimately should, become an expectation for every DCE graduate.

Work-life balance when having children. While it is certainly acceptable to depart DCE ministry, or any profession, to focus on raising a family, several of the DCEs reported a desire to both raise a family and remain in ministry, though the dynamics of their respective settings appeared too challenging to make such a combination work. Balancing the demands of work and home are challenging in any profession, and balancing those demands are essential to safeguarding satisfaction in both pursuits. Working individuals of any generation must find a balance between the personal and professional demands of life. Boles, et al. (2003) write, "for both men and women, the two primary roles as an adult are work and family. Frequently, expectations from these two major life roles can be incompatible, resulting in a form of inter-domain conflict called work-family conflict (WFC)" (p. 100). For several of the participants, navigating this WFC was challenging. Participants were uncertain how to effectively have a family and raise young children with the demands of the DCE role, coupled with the low salary. While only one of the participants specifically left the profession because of the desire to be a stay-at-home parent, several of the participants expressed the desire to be as involved in their children's lives as possible and questioned how

their profession would support and not hinder that desire.

While this dilemma touched both male and female participants in this study, the female participants expressed a greater burden in being able to spend significant time with their young children and wondered how their role as a DCE could fit alongside their role as wife and mother. It is, therefore, proposed that research be conducted with those female DCEs who are still in the profession and have raised children in order to better understand what practices were implemented both in their congregations and in their homes to make this work-life balance successful. Understanding what their congregations did, and even what they asked of their congregations, to make such a set up work will be important in encouraging future female DCEs with strategies they could employ to navigate WFC. Obviously, there will be circumstances where female DCEs desire to be full-time stay-at-home mothers, and that's okay! The proposed research would simply provide strategies and questions to ask their congregations for the women who desire to manage both. This resource might also prove useful to male DCEs considering a similar dual role.

Relationships with the pastor, congregation, and district. The most significant reason many of the participants in this research left DCE ministry centered on troubled relationships with one's pastor and congregation. Several participants indicated their congregations had either minimal or unrealistic expectations of how a DCE's ministry could support their congregational mission. A strained relationship with one's pastor made the times of conflict that much more difficult. Further, in those difficult times, the participant had a limited understanding of the role of his or her district and the resources that district provides in walking beside him or her through those challenging times.

Much of the conflict reported by participants in relation to their pastor was the result of a lack of understanding of the significant roles each played in the overall ministry of his or her congregation. A few of the participants even expressed that whereas DCEs are specifically trained to work in team ministry, knowing they will always be working with at least a pastor, they did not believe their pastors had the same level of training in how to manage employees in such a setting. Even for the participant who subsequently went to seminary, he indicated his seminary training was exceptional in many ways yet lacked this team ministry, manager, leader understanding. Glass' (1976) study suggested a greater emphasis was needed in seminary training programs to equip pastors with the skills needed to develop and foster trust relationships within their ministries. According to the DCE-turned-pastor in this research, that additional training didn't seem to be present; he said that it is because of his training as a DCE that his present pastoral ministry looks different than it would had he not first served as a DCE.

The individuals perhaps most equipped to lead the conversation about the DCE-Pastor relationship and the training Pastors need to be effective in working with, managing, and spiritually caring for their DCEs and other staff, are the DCEs-turned pastors in our Synod. Like the DCE-turned-pastor who participated in this research, there are 158 men (DCE Directory, 2015) who could lead change in this area. (Note: This number is potentially higher as of the 2019 DCE Directory with the alternate routes to ordination now available to men within our Synod.) These men are both trained as DCEs and trained as LCMS pastors, so they can speak fully to the training undergone for both roles. They know, very personally, the needs of a DCE in a congregational setting, and they also know the needs of a Pastor in a congregational setting. They can speak to the understandings and sensitivities people in each role must have for people God has called to serve in the other role. To both the DCE and to the Pastor, these DCEs-turned-pastors are colleagues. They have a voice, experience, and wisdom in both roles. Initiating a task force to include several of these DCEs-turned-pastors, seminary and DCE program leaders, and Synodical leaders to engage in the critical dialogue of how DCEs and Pastors can better support one another and work together in ministry is essential.

Another area of relational challenge for most of the participants was the congregational relationship, where several participants expressed their congregations didn't know what to expect from having a DCE and didn't necessarily know how to support, financially and otherwise, their DCE for the long term. Additionally, participants expressed such great hurt in ministry and fear of returning to ministry because of the experiences they had in their respective congregations. In a collaborative effort between DCEs, DCE Program Directors, and District Education Executives, an online training module can be created, which would include an explanation of the history of DCE ministry, the various roles a DCE can fill in a congregation, the baseline competencies obtained and training received by the DCE, and various ways a congregation can support his or her DCE, both financially and emotionally. As a congregation pursues a DCE, the district leadership (or the DCE program director, if a first Call), would share a link to this training module.

Follow-up would be important to ensure the congregational leaders reviewed the training module, and there might, perhaps, be some required documentation involved. This could include some congregational planning as to how they might utilize, fund, and support their DCE to fulfill their congregational mission, as well as provide an opportunity for the congregation to ask the district (or program director) any questions they may have. Discussions of financial compensation in relation to district salary guidelines would be important here. Greater congregational awareness prior to extending a Call could dramatically

increase the level of support a DCE feels from his or her congregation while dramatically minimizing potential conflict while walking together in ministry.

A final relational challenge discussed by many of the participants was a perceived lack of support from their respective district offices, acknowledging they often lacked awareness of the resources the district could provide when they were struggling in ministry. In some cases, the participant as a called worker faulted their respective DCE program for not reaching out to them during times of conflict, not knowing that there is a hand-off from Concordia to the district once the graduate receives his or her first Call; the responsibility then would lie with the district, not the CUS institution. Toward that end, there needs to be a more intentional hand-off, where the DCE program makes the graduate fully aware that they are being released to the care of the district and where the district immediately reaches out to the DCE upon receipt of his or her first Call. This is not to say the DCE program leaders can't serve as a sounding board or additional resource, but that the DCE must understand who is within his or her "chain of command" when challenges arise so that the DCE can seek the needed support from the correct people.

Conclusion

With the 60th anniversary of the inception of DCE ministry upon us, understanding why more than half the DCEs certified in this profession have departed is crucial. Coupled with declining numbers of students enrolled in DCE training programs (Ross, 2015) and the impending retirement of a significant percentage of these workers (What a Way, 2010), making every effort to retain more DCEs, and then subsequently recruiting prospective new ones, is a matter needing immediate attention for the sake and strength of this ministry.

Through this research, I have identified a significant attrition rate, compared to attrition rates for similar roles like those of teacher or pastor. Through interviews with former DCEs, their narratives have informed this research by sharing their personal stories about their departure from DCE ministry. Several of the participants expressed similar circumstances that contributed to their departure, resulting in themes being identified to help the CUS leadership of the DCE training programs across the country address the issues and provide solutions. Five recommendations for future research or for immediate action steps center on three major themes: mentoring, work-life balance, and relationships with one's pastor, congregation, and district.

While it is unknown whether any specific interventions would have absolutely made a difference in these 11 participants' decisions to depart the profession, the common themes suggest that interventions, if effectively put in place as soon as possible, might impact change and prevent additional DCEs

from departing the profession in the future. Although job satisfaction was high, congregational dynamics, family circumstances, and the lack of a supportive mentor negated the positive influence job satisfaction had toward their feelings about the profession. Ultimately, these challenges proved to be so significant that the participants perceived that departing the profession was their best alternative. Further, the deep hurts some of these DCEs experienced while in the profession have solidified for them the decision to never return for fear of experiencing that same hurt.

DCEs have played - and will continue to play - a significant role in the ministries of various entities within the LCMS. Ensuring vitality in this ministry by combating a dwindling workforce through the necessary interventions will be essential toward the future success of this ministry. Active and former DCEs, DCE program directors, congregational leaders and pastors, as well as district and synodical leaders, must intentionally work together now to stem the leak of DCEs departing this profession, so that there might be a better future for the Director of Christian Education in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the years to come. For 60 years, DCEs have shared the love and light of Christ with the people He has placed in their care. And, God willing, DCEs will continue to do so for the next 60 years and more. The future is bright; the time is now. ***LEJ***

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How Well Do Psychology Classes Prepare Students for Lutheran Ministry?

By James Bender, Lindsey Bartgis and Mary Abo

Introduction

For students to excel in church-ministry professions, a specific skill set is required. They need strong interpersonal abilities, which can be acquired through training in communication, leadership, and group dynamics. Within the helping professions, individuals engaging in church work also need to be flexible with robust relational skills. Concordia University Chicago (CUC), part of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Concordia University System (CUS), requires two courses (*Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions* and *Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills*) aimed at addressing these skills for students majoring in ministry work.

The Director of Christian Education (DCE) major prepares students to work within church congregations leading educational programs, youth ministry, and family ministry, to name a few of the ministry options. Another avenue for LCMS service is the Deaconess Program. Completion of the Deaconess Program leads to a certification in the LCMS. After completing required coursework and an internship, female students are prepared to engage in various types of ministries, such as visiting ill or incarcerated individuals, leading Bible studies and the like.

According to CUC program directors (Wassilak & Arfsten, personal communications, 2019), 20 Deaconess students and 28 DCE students are enrolled in these program(s) on average, per year, at CUC. There are roughly five deaconess and seven DCE students per year that are completing their programs. There are 308 deaconesses and 847 DCE workers nationwide (LCMS, 2019). These estimates illustrate the prevalence of these professions and support the need to evaluate preparation programs for them.

There is limited research on the value of university courses on Christian ministry work. However, several studies are tangentially related to Christian education, leadership and pedagogy. For instance, Roso (2019) measured the application of service-learning experiences to real-world problems and their Christian practice. The final project of these experiences required students to connect learning to a real-world problem by implementing a curriculum concept

discussed in class to meet an educational need in a low socioeconomic educational setting. Roso had 32 graduate students in a hybrid, online, and in-person "contemporary curriculum" course. The author measured several data points, such as self-reflective essays, observations, and the self-administered Service Learning Benefit (SELEB) scale. Roso found that although service learning in a blended graduate course did include a level of anxiety, students moved beyond the anxiety and found the projects very helpful and personally rewarding. The study argued for inclusion of service-learning experiences to enhance students' personal Christian faith and to better serve others. While Roso's study promoted a specific type of course activity rather than an evaluation of the course as a whole, it still suggested the importance of evaluating courses and real-world usefulness goals.

In a study conducted by Irwin and Roller (2000), 99 pastors of the Northeastern District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) were given a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to collect data on pastoral satisfaction with ministry preparation as it relates to management issues, pastoral perceptions of church management issues, the role of church management, and pastoral understanding of management systems (Irwin & Roller, 2008). Of the 99 participants contacted, 53 completed and submitted their questionnaire. The researchers' analysis found that many of the respondents wished they had had better management training before entering the ministry and felt that their current ministry would be improved if the training had taken place (Irwin & Roller, 2000). In addition to that, researchers found that the majority of the respondents felt that issues in management and leadership are highly related to the efficacy of their ministry (Irwin & Roller, 2000). Although this study was conducted with a group of pastors, DCEs and Deaconesses also take on roles related to church governance. In some cases, DCEs and Deaconesses could be considered extensions of pastoral management.

Chatira and Mwenje (2018) conducted a study in Zimbabwe that sought to evaluate the development of church management skills in pastoral preparation programs. For this study, there were three seminaries, three in-house training churches, and 53 pastors from Pentecostal and Evangelical churches that were considered participants. Respondents indicated a variety of management challenges. According to Chatira and Mwenje (2018), 39% of the participants expressed that they struggled to manage church budgets and leadership development. Only 13.2% of participants highlighted other challenges, which include issues of teamwork, commitment of members to church activities, church growth strategies, retention of members, personnel management and resource management, which can all be classified as church management and administration issues (Chatira & Mwenje, 2018). These results illustrated that pastors appear to be facing greater management challenges than spiritual

challenges. Much of this study analyzed how these skills were developed, but it still highlighted that people within the field of ministry feel that being a church leader requires management preparation and training. Understanding the impact of a church worker's training on their ministry is necessary in order to improve current church-work preparation programs and ensure quality leadership.

Gardner (2019) wanted to develop a course aimed at enriching students' public service and professional effectiveness through religious literacy. After course completion, the author administered a qualitative survey to determine how the students viewed the strengths and weaknesses of the class. Gardner had seven students in the graduate semester-long seminar. Six weeks after the semester ended, the author solicited a questionnaire from the students reflecting on the course impact. Gardner's (2019) article included a qualitative analysis of seminar students' responses to the survey. The survey responses were coded into themes, and Gardner found that overall, students reported their experience working with the faculty was "great" and "interesting" (2019, p.134). In their responses, students also directed Gardner to areas where the class could be improved in the future. For example, one student explained he had difficulty adjusting to the class because he was expecting a traditional lecture atmosphere. Instead, the seminar was collaborative, with group-directed projects. The professor learned he could help adjust the students' expectations by spending more time on their initial assumptions at the beginning of the semester. Although the article was concentrated on a small group of graduate students, it highlighted the significance of gathering feedback after a course is completed.

Our study built on Gardner's theme of course feedback by connecting quantitative course evaluation responses with real-world usefulness. The purpose of this study was to measure the preparation effectiveness of two courses (*Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions* and *Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills*) in DCE and Deaconess Programs for real-world church work. These two courses, typically taught by a professor in the psychology department, are degree requirements for students in these programs.

The Interpersonal Skills course introduces students to the basics of counseling. The curriculum covers a variety of topics, such as establishing a therapeutic relationship with the client, listening and responding to the client, and decision-making. In addition, this course discusses the importance of an individual's values, both spiritually and professionally, along with the implications of those values for counseling. Students learn about ethical issues in counseling and communication techniques through the use of role play, interviewing practice, listening to audiotapes, and watching video tapes. *Interpersonal Skills for the Helping Professions* provides the groundwork for the *Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills* class. The latter course focuses on a variety of group structures

and the interplay of communication styles between group members. It also explores an individual's ability to integrate one's self within a group. Additionally, the course aims to educate students on assuming leadership roles and managing conflict, specifically within a group setting. Together, these courses provide students in the DCE or Deaconess Program with the groundwork to counsel and lead groups of various dynamics and ministries.

Previous research has found that church leaders want practical training and that student reflections on the usefulness of their courses helps determine their effectiveness (Gardner, 2019). Our study built on that idea by using reflective quantitative course feedback as a tool for measuring course value. Church work requires excellent communication practices and ideally students are equipped with knowledge and skills for interpersonal relations before starting the required internship. Investigating the effectiveness of courses allows programs to adjust their curriculum, tailoring the material to the practical needs of students seeking DCE or Deaconess ministry. After a thorough literature review using the EBSCO databases, we could not find any study that addressed the utility of specific psychology classes in training future LCMS church workers.

Methods

Participants

Our sample consisted of all students at CUC who completed coursework for either the DCE or Deaconess Program in the past four years (2015 to 2019) and are either current or former DCE or deaconess interns. This four-year window coincided with the third author's experience as the exclusive teacher of both *Interpersonal Skills for the Helping Professions* and *Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills* classes. This eliminated a confound of different teaching styles and different professors. The directors of the DCE and Deaconess Programs at CUC gave the investigators contact information for the 14 people who met inclusion criteria. They were all contacted and invited to complete a survey (see Appendix A). Nine responded, for a response rate of 64.2%.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this study is found in Appendix A. It was administered online via SurveyMonkey.com. The survey covered the main tenets of both classes along with learning activities and it asked how valuable and relevant each was to the job of DCE or Deaconess using a 5-point Likert Scale rating, with 1 being "Not at all useful/waste of time," 2 being "Not useful," 3 being "Somewhat useful" 4 being "Useful" and 5 being "Very useful." The survey then asked for open-ended feedback on the best and worst parts of each class along with suggestions to make each class better. The survey ended with an open-ended question asking for suggestions on how to improve each program.

Design

Our goal was to determine what aspects of the two classes (*Interpersonal Skills for the Helping Professions* and *Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills*) were useful for DCE and Deaconess students as they transitioned into their "real-world" roles of ministry.

Some respondents took these courses up to four years ago and may not remember them well. To control for that, we asked respondents to rate how well they remembered each course on a similar 5-point Likert Scale. We then weighed their responses for their overall impression of each course by multiplying their reported overall usefulness by the Likert rating of how well they remembered the class.

Results

Five respondents (62.5%) reported being a current DCE, two (25%) reported being a current Deaconess, and one (12.5%) reported being a former DCE intern but not currently serving as a DCE. One person did not answer the question.

Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions

Overall, respondents considered the Interpersonal Skills class to be highly useful, with a weighted mean of average usefulness of 18.5. Every student rated the class as either "very useful" (62.5%) or "useful" (37.5%). There were three main aspects to the class that were surveyed. The first aspect was three individual therapy sessions each student role-played with another member of class. These sessions required the student to practice a particular therapeutic technique, such as reflective listening, paraphrasing, and asking open-ended questions. The mean usefulness of this activity was rated 4.5 out of 5 (SD=.54).

The second aspect of the class that was surveyed was a reflective listening exercise. In it, the student practiced reflective listening with an unsuspecting friend or coworker. The student engaged in a normal conversation, but refrained entirely from asking questions. They did nothing more than paraphrase content, reflect feelings and purposefully use silence. The mean usefulness of this activity was rated 4.5 out of 5 (SD=.76).

The third aspect of the class that was surveyed was a presentation. In it, the student researched a particular therapy modality or way to treat a particular disorder and then gave a 10-minute presentation on it during class. The mean usefulness of this activity was rated 4.25 out of 5 (SD=1.04).

Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3 show each response to the open-ended questions regarding *Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions*.

Table 1

Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions Open-ended Responses to "What did we not cover in class that you wish we did?"
How can we funnel this information to God instead of absorbing the emotions ourselves? How can we process and calm our thoughts when we hear really hard things like thoughts of suicide, or depression, or disturbing things?
When to refer to a mental health professional
It was too long ago for me to remember if we did or not but I would've appreciated talking about how to talk more about suicide/talk to those left behind and how to do so more effectively.
How exactly it can be used in DCE profession and at what point am I stepping outside of my training?
I don't know if there was anything that needs to be added, but maybe go into more depth.
How to find actual professionals in the field to recommend to people since we have limitations as church workers. Not sure how to find the best people to help our people.
How to make referrals/partner with other helping professionals

Table 2

Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions Open-ended Responses to "How could the class be improved?"
Cover what I listed when I asked "How can we funnel this information to God instead of absorbing the emotions ourselves? How can we process and calm our thoughts when we hear really hard things like thoughts of suicide, or depression, or disturbing things?"
Additional instruction and practice in listening for the patient's needs and concerns, rather than imposing what I think their needs are and directing the conversation toward my idea of solutions to those needs. I know this was covered, but I know my own tendency to listen selectively and want to fix perceived problems, and it's a tough mindset to alter.
Talking about how to talk more about suicide/talk to those left behind and how to do so more effectively.
Interview someone from our profession about how they use these skills in their vocation.
Not much. The class has been useful within my first year of being a DCE.
More practice
I loved the class
By talking about the other helping professionals and what they are qualified to do

Table 3

Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions Class Open-ended Responses to "What was the best part of the class?"
Practicing active listening through rephrasing, asking questions, body language etc.
Learning and practicing counseling fundamentals. This is the only counseling course that many DCE and deaconess students take, and a basic knowledge of these skills is essential for one-on-one ministry.
I loved being able to practice counseling skills with the same person 3 times.
Being able to "practice" what I learned
I enjoyed the instructor and the way we practiced interpersonal skills. Also enjoyed the way the instructor taught.
I enjoyed all of the class honestly
It was a top 3 class at CUC for me
Learning how to talk and listen to others

Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills

Overall, respondents had a generally favorable view of *Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills,* even though it was rated as significantly less useful than *Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions.* A paired sample t-test found the Group Dynamics class had weighted mean average usefulness of 9.64 (SD=6.64), compared to the Interpersonal Skills class, which had a weighted mean average usefulness of 18.5 (SD=4.0); t(7)=-3.44, p=.011. The survey asked questions about each main part of the Group Dynamics class.

The most useful aspect of the Group Dynamics class as reported by the respondents was how to manage conflicts, with a mean score of 4.38 out of 5 (SD=.92). Tied for the second most useful aspect of Group Dynamics were leadership (types of leaders, personality styles of leaders, traits good leaders have in common) and communications (communication styles of different people, "masculine" and "feminine" communications styles, the dangers of email). Both aspects had a mean rating of 4.25 out of 5.

Tied for the third most useful aspect were power and social influence (types of power, types of influence, informal and formal power and authority), problem solving (ways to select solutions from a list of possibilities, factors that help and hurt problem solving), diversity (pros and cons of diversity, types of diversity, how to manage diversity) and team, organizational, and international culture (different types of organizational culture, liking vs. avoiding risk-taking, ,individualism vs. collectivism). These aspects had a mean rating of 4.13 out of 5.

Tied for the fourth most useful aspect were case studies, (brief examples of an issue regarding group dynamics that were discussed in class), cooperation and

competition (pros and cons of teams competing with each other and competition within a team), creativity (pros and cons of being creative, how to foster a creative environment, factors that make people creative), and evaluating and rewarding teams (how to determine if your team succeeded, how to reward a team). These aspects had a mean rating of 4.0 out of 5.

Tied for the fifth most useful aspect were basic team processes (what a team is, when to use it, when not to use it) and decision making (different ways to make decisions, such as majority voting, survey technique, consensus). These aspects had a mean rating of 3.88 out of 5.

The sixth most useful aspect reflected two articles students read and wrote about regarding positive psychology and social loafing. That aspect had a mean rating of 3.63 out of 5. The seventh most useful aspect was watching and discussing the movie "12 Angry Men". It had a mean rating of 3.38 out of 5. The least useful aspect was an in-class assignment where students visited different departments at CUC and assessed each department's institutional culture and made comparisons. This had a mean rating of 3.13 out of 5.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 show each response to the open-ended questions regarding *Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills.*

Table 4

Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills Open-ended Responses to "What did we not cover in Group Dynamics that you wish we did?"
Nothing that I know of.
I think all ministry courses undersell the impact of parents on group dynamics in youth ministry. They may be "outside influences" but they may have more control over a youth cohort's dynamics than the kids in some ways.

Table 5

Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills Open-ended Responses to "How could the class be improved?"
Good as it was.
Not sure
Unsure
Not sure

Table 6

Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills Open-ended Responses to "What was the best part of the class?"
Learning about conflict management and how to asses culture through water cooler conversations
Group counseling session practice
Everything was useful.
Not sure
Unsure

Finally, we asked a general question, "Is there any other way we can improve the DCE or Deaconess Program? All responses are listed in Table 7.

Table 7

Open-ended Responses to "Lastly, is there any other way we can improve the DCE or Deaconess program?"	
Type of Respondent	Response
Current DCE	Discuss how to respond to bombshells like when a kid attempts suicide, someone dies, etc. How do we respond to the parents, kid, congregation, youth group and their parents, manage the group and their emotions while guiding them?
Current Deaconess	Continuing/Being able to get experiences in which to use the skills we are learning
Current DCE	Stress the importance of being well-rounded. All classes are important. Leadership, interpersonal, education, and theology all play their roles in a DCEs vocation.
Current DCE	Not that I know of.
former DCE intern but not currently a DCE	I would recommend that LTE students take the Interpersonal skills class as well.
Current DCE	Start teaching like we are entering a ministry vacuum.
Current DCE	Talking more about volunteer recruitment/how to lead support groups at church

Discussion

One advantage of our small sample size is the ease of analyzing qualitative data with a small sample. Every response to the open-ended questions has been given verbatim, making it easy for readers to draw their own conclusions. It appears the respondents wanted more training in interpersonal therapy (which is closely aligned with the Interpersonal Skills course). Specifically, they seemed cognizant of their training limitations and wanted to know when and how to refer to a higher standard of psychiatric care. This conclusion is consistent with the third author's experience teaching the class.

Individual therapy is a skill that takes several years to hone and perhaps longer to master. Imparting a level of expertise at the undergraduate level while still allowing time for other coursework is simply impractical. However, adding another therapy course to the required curriculum might be worth consideration.

The Group Dynamics course does not seem to have a place in the training for future church workers. Perhaps these students would be better served with a class that emphasizes conflict management, leadership skills, and communications, with less emphasis on institutional culture and social psychology tenets like social loafing.

The obvious weakness in this study is the small sample size. This made externally valid comparisons between DCE students and Deaconess students impossible. We invite others in the CUS to survey their former church-work students to see how the undergraduate psychology curriculum prepared them for ministry. The authors would be happy to collaborate and allow use of the same survey instrument as a way to increase sample size and facilitate comparisons. Strengthening DCE and Deaconess training programs can help to strengthen ministry in the LCMS overall. ***LEJ***

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Appendix A

Thank you for participating. Your participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be kept strictly confidential. All answers will be reported in group and aggregate formats only, meaning there is no way you can be linked back to your answers. Completion and submission of this survey constitutes your consent to participate.

I am a (chose one only):

- current DCE intern
- current Deaconess intern
- current DCE
  - How many years have you been a DCE?
- current Deaconess
  - How many years have you been a Deaconess?
- former DCE intern but not currently a DCE
- former Deaconess intern but not currently a Deaconess

The following items refer to **Interpersonal Skills of the Helping Professions.** In this class, you learned the fundamentals of psychotherapy and counseling. You practiced therapy on each other for 3 sessions. You also conducted interviews on each other as both "patient" with a mental illness and as a therapist, and did presentations on specific therapy techniques. For each item, please rate how useful it was for your job as either Deaconess or DCE on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all useful and 5 being very useful. By "useful," I mean did the skills and knowledge you gained from that aspect of the class help you in your ministry.

1. How useful were the 3 individual therapy sessions you conducted with another member of class?
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
2. How useful was the reflective listening exercise? In it, you practiced reflective listening with an unsuspecting friend or coworker—someone with whom you were not that close. You engaged in a normal conversation, but refrained entirely from asking questions. You did nothing more than paraphrase content, reflect feelings and purposefully use silence. You then wrote a 2-3 page reflective paper.
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
3. How useful was the presentation? In it, you created a presentation on a particular therapy modality or way to treat a particular disorder and then presented it during class.
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
4. Overall, how useful was the class to your job as a DCE or Deaconess?
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful

5. What did we not cover in class that you wish we did?
6. How could the class be improved?
7. What was the best part of the class?
8. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not at all, 3 = somewhat, and 5 = very well), how well do you remember your Interpersonal Skills class?
    a. Not at all
    b. A little bit
    c. Somewhat
    d. Fairly well
    e. Very well

The following items refer to **Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills.** In this class, you learned about work teams, the basics of how groups work, managing conflict, and decision-making. For each item, please rate how useful it was for your job as either Deaconess or DCE on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all useful and 5 being very useful. By "useful," I mean did the skills and knowledge you gained from that aspect of the class help you in your ministry.

1. How useful were the articles you read and wrote about regarding positive psychology and social loafing?
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
2. How useful were the case studies, (brief examples of an issue regarding group dynamics that we discussed in class)?
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
3. How useful was the movie we watched, "12 Angry Men," which was about minority influence?
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful

4. How useful was our "field trip," where you walked around campus and assessed the culture and subcultures of various departments at CUC?
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful

Of the following topics that we covered, please rate the usefulness of each using the same 1 to 5 scale

5. **Basic Team Processes** (what a team is, when to use it, when not to use it)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
6. **Cooperation and Competition** (pros and cons of teams competing with each other and competition within a team)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
7. **Communications** (communication styles of different people, "masculine" and "feminine" communications styles, the dangers of email)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
8. **Managing Conflict** (where conflict comes from, how to manage it, why it happens)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful

9. **Power and Social Influence** (types of power, types of influence, informal and formal power and authority)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
10. **Decision Making** (different ways to make decisions like majority voting, survey technique, consensus)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
11. **Leadership** (types of leaders, personality styles of leaders, traits good leaders have in common)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
12. **Problem Solving** (ways to select solutions from a list of possibilities, factors that help and hurt problem solving)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
13. **Creativity** (pros and cons of being creative, how to foster a creative environment, factors that make people creative)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful

14. **Diversity** (pros and cons of diversity, types of diversity, how to manage diversity)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
15. **Team, Organizational, and International Culture** (different types of organizational culture, like risk taking vs. risk avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
16. **Evaluating and Rewarding Teams** (how to determine if your team succeeded, how to reward a team)
    a. Not at all useful/waste of time
    b. Not useful
    c. Somewhat useful
    d. Useful
    e. Very useful
17. What did we not cover in class that you wish we did?
18. How could the class be improved?
19. What was the best part of the class?
20. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not at all, 3 = somewhat, and 5 = very well), how well do you remember your Group Dynamics and Leadership Skills class?
    a. Not at all
    b. A little bit
    c. Somewhat
    d. Fairly well
    e. Very well
21. Lastly, is there any other way we can improve the DCE or Deaconess program?

Thank you for your help!

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Book Review
by Kevin Borchers

Called to serve: A theology of commissioned ministry

by Rueter, D. L., 2019.
St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House

Rueter is a DCE and commissioned minister in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and currently serves in a dual role as the assistant DCE program director at Concordia University – Irvine, CA, and as the youth and family ministry facilitator of the Pacific Southwest District of the LCMS. Like many other individuals that have been categorized as commissioned ministers in the LCMS, Rueter wanted answers to questions often pondered but only occasionally raised publicly by non-ordained yet Divinely Called professional church workers:

- Am I a minister, or is such a title reserved only for the pastoral office?
- "If commissioned ministers are…in ministry, how does their ministry relate to the Office of Public Ministry?" (Rueter, 2019, p. 8).
- Why are only ordained ministers (i.e., pastors) and elected lay persons allowed to vote at synodical and district conventions, and commissioned ministers, though they far outnumber the ordained, only serve as advisory delegates?
- What is my place in the LCMS? Clergy? Laity? Somewhere in a ministerial limbo?

While one could assume that Rueter could use his research in order to build a case to support the inclusion of commissioned ministers as voting delegates at conventions of the Synod and its districts, for the most part the author refrains from dwelling on the issue of equal representation in ecclesiastical governance.

In many instances, the view of the commissioned minister is shaped by a personally-shared view of local pastors. In chapter 2, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Office of Public Ministry," Rueter (2019) skillfully and strategically uses biblical narratives and commentary, the writings of Dr. Martin Luther, and more recent documents published by the LCMS's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to

provide a clear definition and description of what it means to be a priest in the priesthood of all believers. In no way does Rueter speak out against the pastoral office. Rather, he seeks to establish that all Christians are priests by calling from God (1 Peter 2:5), capable of bringing the Word of God and speaking words of forgiveness to each other in the name of Christ, our Great High Priest, and those who are uniquely called into a vocation as pastors are uniquely set aside for just that, public ministry on behalf of the priesthood of all believers (i.e., the Church).

The point of *Called to Serve,* however, is to answer the question, "Where do the commissioned ministers fit?" As the author states, "The typical dichotomy of clergy and laity…fails to address the status of those in auxiliary, or helping, offices" (Rueter, 2019, p. 34). Using the work of LCMS theologians past and present, Rueter discussed theological and historical practices in early Lutheranism that identified points of tension related to the question of fit. The pastoral office was clearly viewed as being chief among the public ministry offices and provided the foundation for the existence of all other offices. However, those "other" auxiliary offices were created as a means to assist the pastor in meeting the needs of the church, just as the Apostles enlisted the assistance of deacons to care for and to meet the needs of people in the first century church. Speaking to the early church writings on the office of public ministry, Rueter concluded that those early writings clearly established the pastorate as the highest ministry office, and the creation of auxiliary offices and congregations' calling of individuals to fill such offices also had validity. However, none of the writings of the Lutheran forefathers explained ways in which commissioned ministers fit into the Office of Public Ministry.

In his discussion of C. F. W. Walther, early LCMS history, and twentieth century developments, Rueter (2019) provided clear testimony that commissioned ministers were to be viewed with high esteem by virtue of their calls to serve in LCMS congregations, most notably as teachers. Furthermore, he noted that all who answered God's Call into ministry, regardless of whether that Call was to the pastoral or teaching offices, received the same initial educational training as teachers in the Church. However, he indicated that even though the Synod's first President, Walther, struck a balance in how both the pastoral and auxiliary offices should be viewed, tension remains even today. All duly-called workers continue to be synodically trained. Both ordained and commissioned ministers serve on commissions and committees of the Synod. Yet, [commissioned ministers] "remain disenfranchised when district and Synod meet in convention" (Rueter, 2019, p. 68). Commissioned ministers fit neither among the clergy nor the laity.

In the final two chapters of the book, Rueter (2019) sought to provide a biblically based-model through which ordained and commissioned ministers

serve together. In that model, pastors who serve as the sole called worker in a congregation undertake all of the roles (e.g., preacher, teacher), whereas in congregations with both ordained and commissioned ministers, those in auxiliary offices work to help the pastor fulfill all of the responsibilities of the Office of Public Ministry in that congregation. In a call to remember Luther's opposition to a hierarchical structure and Walther's elevation of both ordained and auxiliary offices as being important, Rueter reminds his readers that congregations in Christian liberty may establish helping offices as needed in order to meet the ministry needs of their community.

In his conclusion, the author established a positional fit for commissioned ministers "under the headship of the pastor" (Rueter, 2019, p. 111). He called for all workers to walk together in unity of theology and practice as it relates to the calling of workers in the local congregation to fulfill the responsibilities of public ministry. Recognition that ministry in congregations with both ordained and commissioned ministers should continue to be led by the local pastor. "Like the pastor, commissioned ministers are members of the Priesthood of All Believers called to serve in the various church vocations that have been established in the LCMS" (Rueter, 2019, p. 115).

While Rueter provided clarification that commissioned ministers share in the work of the Office of Public Ministry, he indicated that commissioned ministers often continue to be treated like second-class citizens. In many ways their feelings of disenfranchisement are justified when they see districts and Synod provide disproportionate levels of care to pastors and their wives. Rueter (2019) indicated that even in the 2016 LCMS *Handbook,* circuit visitors were specifically responsible for providing care to their brother pastors, but their responsibilities to care for all workers, including commissioned ministers, was not specified, something that if it were done with regularity in all circuits could contribute to greater collegiality between those serving the Church together.

This would be a facilitation tool to read and discuss for congregations having both ordained and commissioned ministers serving on their called ministry staff. It provides solid doctrinal and historical substantiation for their mutually shared ministry in their community. While it clearly establishes the pastoral office as the highest among the ministry offices, it speaks against a hierarchical form of church leadership modeled after the Roman view of the priesthood. The book would also be a good read for congregational leaders on an informationally instructive level, particularly as it relates to caring for all church workers. Finally, and more importantly, this text would best be used as an instructional text for students preparing to embark on lives of service in the church as called workers – both ordained and commissioned – in order to establish their collegial thinking as partners in ministry and service to the Lord. ***LEJ***

So what does a DCE do all week?

While this is typically a question posed to pastors, it applies to DCEs as well. DCEs are lifespan Christian educators in a congregation so their responsibilities can span all ages from cradle to grave. A congregation member might see a DCE teach on Sunday morning, do youth group on Sunday night, and confirmation on Wednesday…but what about all those other days?

A large portion of a DCE's time is spent in administration. Prepping for Bible studies, planning events for children and youth, arranging details for the next mission trip or youth gathering, creating an intergenerational activity, writing children's messages, recruiting and training volunteers, doing PR on social media, staff meetings, board meetings, pre-school and school chapel, organizing service projects, and the list goes on.

In addition to these administrative tasks, a DCE spends a large amount of time in relational ministry including counseling with youth, advising parents, building relationships with volunteers, etc. They also spend time in the community serving others, making connections with local schools and other agencies, and seeking ways to connect others to their church and ministry.

Here at CUC we teach about time management, creating budgets, writing reports, creating Bible studies and more, but at the heart of what we do, we teach that ministry is about relationships. First and foremost, their relationship with Jesus is most important and we have opportunity to teach them spiritual disciplines to grow and enhance that relationship. We spend time learning about our God-given preferences in how we work so that we can have healthy staff relationships. We learn about dealing with conflict in a healthy and God-pleasing way so that challenging situations can be resolved and ministry can move forward.

In everything DCEs do, it's all about pointing people to Jesus. There is no such thing as a "typical" day in the life of a DCE because ministry is unpredictable. Whether it's a day in the office doing administrative work, or a day in the community helping out at a soup kitchen or visiting someone in the hospital,

or a day spent equipping and encouraging people to be part of ministry, it's all about bringing people closer to Jesus and creating a community of grace and hope for all. ***LEJ***

Words for Thought
by Shirley K. Morgenthaler

It Was a Good Year

A good year. 1959. Think about it. Training for Directors of Christian Education. There were a few teachers in congregations already serving as DCEs. In July 1959, the LCMS in convention approved the beginning of DCE programs in synodical schools, as well as the calling of DCEs by congregations. Thus, this new ministry finally had a name and official approval.

A good year. 1959. This new thing called rock-and-roll music was becoming popular. Elvis Presley was a new phenomenon, changing the sound of music forever. 1959 was the year that Buddy Holly died in a plane crash after a seven-year career in rock-and-roll music. College students, even at Concordia Teachers College, were listening to Buddy Holly and Elvis Presley.

1959. The presidential campaigns of Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy were getting started, with both of them becoming front runners for their respective political party. And when President Kennedy was assassinated less than three years after taking office, VP Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) moved into the presidency. It is no accident that Johnson had been trained as a teacher, and that he had taught in a one-room school on the southern border of Texas. His concern for the children of Texas resulted in his War on Poverty. I have a hunch that that national perspective had an impact on the focal lenses through which DCE ministries have been developed.

Now fast forward to 2019. Sixty years have passed. DCEs are now called and commissioned, and are a visible force of ministry in Lutheran churches across the country. DCE programs are offered at five of the nine Concordia Universities of the LCMS. It's an impressive growth Dedicated majors in the fields of faith formation, spiritual development, management, and leadership. All of these are vital foundations for the person in the ministry of Christian Education.

DCE ministry was initially envisioned by the synod as particularly important for congregations without Lutheran schools. That concept even made its way into the language of the 1959 synodical resolution. But not all DCEs serve as stand-alone congregational servants under the pastor of a congregation.

Some, maybe even many, serve as commissioned ministers alongside the also-commissioned principal and teachers of a congregation.

DCE ministry is a cradle-to-grave approach to congregational ministry. There is no limit, except that adopted by an individual congregation, for the range of age levels and program foci for the DCE. What a buffet of options! Live in a congregation for a year, and you will have a good idea of where the ministry focus needs to be. But the buffet goes on. Only the pastor and DCE have the focus to limit their buffet choices; to limit them into a ministry that builds on congregational strengths and needs.

It took almost a decade for official DCE programs to be in place at CUChicago and at CUNebraska. DCE ministry and ministers often take a path of creativity toward solving the challenges of their ministry. Preparing future DCEs for this ministry with a moving target of needs and solutions is a challenge that all five of the DCE programs face. This is not a ministry for the follow-all-the-rules person. It is not a ministry for the person who expects a 9-to-5 schedule. It is not a ministry for the person who would like a roadmap, or at least a curriculum, to show the way for ongoing and emerging ministries. The congregational DCE must be able to dance between the lines of the curriculum, the congregational needs, and the possibilities of new responses to those needs.

And now we come to the preparation of individuals for this DCE ministry with so many options and possibilities. Those at our Concordia Universities who have been called to the academy for leadership toward DCE ministry must themselves be creative and courageous. Their challenge is to form young Christians into leaders and doers. What a challenge! Maybe that's why it took River Forest and Seward half a decade or more after the first resolution of the LCMS in convention to put DCE preparation programs firmly in place.

It is with awe and gratitude that I lift up the leaders in DCE ministry over the first sixty years. They are not named here because Dr. Karpenko has done a great job of naming both current and former leaders in this field. These leaders began with a need. They saw how creative teachers-turned-DCEs were already meeting congregational needs. They identified and developed courses that would help future DCEs prepare for these new roles. They became experts in communicating the faith and its formation to new and future DCEs so that they would do the same in their ministries. They modeled leadership for these future leaders. They showed servanthood and servant leadership to these emerging servants for their entry into ministry.

Their work provided the template for the leaders who have followed them. Their courage has instilled courage in those they taught and those they mentored into the leadership of these fledgling programs. Their servant leadership has provided the model for future servants and leaders, especially those on university

campuses. I thank God for these courageous leaders and servants and for the preparation of DCE ministers for this important congregational need. The saints in heaven rejoice with me. ***LEJ***

The Last Word
by Russell Dawn

Celebrating DCEs

It is a joy to create something new. Whether a work of art or architecture, a story or an academic program, a game app or a makeshift bridge across a creek, creators will attest that the creation of something lovely or useful or fun is a source of joy.

The joy of the creative process is not, however, the purpose of creating. The joy is an additional gift from God, but there is a greater purpose behind our creativity: service. We create in order to provide some benefit, some service, to others.

Sixty years ago, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod created something new. The Synod created a new office of ministry: The Director of Christian Education. I do not doubt that those who created the office experienced great joy when they saw it come to fruition. But they knew, as do so many DCEs since then, that the purpose behind the program is service. People in the Synod saw that many congregations had an educational need – or really, a variety of such needs – that would best be met by faithful women and men who are specifically trained and tasked to meet those needs.

Interestingly, the origin and legacy of the office of DCE is a bit like the origin and legacy of the Synod itself. Those courageous Saxons who crossed the Atlantic and settled in Perry County, Missouri in the late 1830s had feared that they would no longer be able to educate their children faithfully if they remained in their homeland. They braved ocean and frontier in order to serve their children's educational needs.

Almost a century and a quarter later, the same Synod founded by those Saxons expanded its educational ministry through the DCE program – again perceiving a need and meeting it creatively. Although forming a new office of ministry is not quite as radical as making a new life in a new land, the goal was similar: serving through education.

The historic practice of educating its people thoroughly and effectively remains alive and well in the LCMS. The creativity of this church body has provided us many reasons to rejoice across the generations. Service, however, is and always has been the reason we create. To our DCEs around the country, thank you for the creative service you provide to our congregations each day. We rejoice with you! ***LEJ***