

# **Clergy Effectiveness in Growing Churches**

## **Summary Report**

### **Introduction**

I have long dreamed of a sabbatical where I could travel around the country and study the best practices of my Lutheran colleagues. As time has passed, however, I have come to realize how contextualized many “best practices” are – worship styles, programming, staff configurations, etc. What works in one context rarely works the same way in another. So over time, my dream sabbatical has shifted, from programmatic learning to deeper exploration of the role of the senior pastor, particularly as it relates to church growth.

Having been blessed to grow up in the church, filled with faith and surrounded by loving faith communities, I have always been passionate about reaching the unchurched, dechurched and “nones.” I cannot imagine facing life without my faith in Jesus Christ, and I can’t imagine sustaining my faith without the community of believers, the church. So my ministry has consistently been driven by the question “What about those who aren’t here yet?” I have been blessed to experience growth in each congregation I have served (in two of which I served as an Associate Pastor). This has honed my passion for sharing the gospel and welcoming others into the church.

This evangelical bent (in the most Lutheran way possible) is also driven by a deep concern for the future of the church, particularly our ELCA. With only 202 congregations growing from 2009 to 2015 (as defined as an increase of 20 people in average worship attendance), that means that 98% of our congregations are not growing numerically. Also, given the fact that 38.5% of our congregations have an average worship attendance of 50 or less (68.6% have 100 or less), and the consistent decline in membership since the inception of the ELCA, I feel called to lift up the critical need for church growth, not as a quest for survival, but in obedience to and in love for the Great Commission.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to determine if there are consistent hallmarks (practices, gifts, passions, etc.) of the Senior Pastors of growing ELCA congregations and discern if such gifts can be taught or groomed in others.

Two caveats of the study:

- I do not believe that church growth is solely the result of the senior pastor. I greatly value the work of the whole team: other clergy, staff and lay leaders who accomplish great ministry. The senior pastor’s impact on growth, however, is often pivotal.
- I also do not believe that numerical growth is the end all and be all for ministry. However, each number represents a person hungry for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grounded in the Great Commission, numerical growth is a clear indicator of impacting lives with the gospel.

### **Process**

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Statistical data was provided by Research and Evaluation in the Office the Bishop, ELCA. Additionally, they provided the contact information for the pastors of growing congregations and a matched list of nongrowing congregations which was created to neutralize demographic variances such as church size, setting, length of existence, etc. In spring 2017, a survey (Appendix A) was sent to these 400+ pastors exploring how they go about their work, about their personal characteristics, and the skills and knowledge they use which impact their ministry.

In all, 98 surveys were completed, 57 from pastors of growing congregations and 41 from pastors of non-growing congregations. Out of this quantitative analysis, interview questions (Appendix B) were created for use in site visits over the summer while on sabbatical.

The more qualitative portion of my analysis included worshipping with a variety of congregations, visiting a total of 15 growing congregations and completing 38 interviews with both groups and individuals. Typical visits included an interview of the senior pastor followed by a group interview with lay leaders and staff members. I typed verbatim as each interview took place.

### **Findings**

I had hoped to find a secret sauce; that one ingredient that, if replicated, would change everything. I'm sure God chuckled in heaven at such a simplistic hope! In the survey results, no single personality type, set of spiritual gifts, preaching style or political leaning surfaced as a distinguishing feature between pastors of growing congregations and pastors of non-growing congregations.

At first glance, this was a disappointing result. However, with reflection, I find this to be tremendously good news. The fact that a wide variety of leadership styles, personality types, skills and gifts can be effective in growing congregations means that anyone can do this! You do not have to be an ENFJ, for example, to be a lead pastor of a growing congregation – there are a plethora of personality types, passions and styles who are effectively building up the Body of Christ. That's good news!

Through the interviews, however, consistent trends began to emerge. I would not consider them a "secret sauce" because many of these traits can be shared by all pastors. But the consistency of comments in these areas make them stand out as potential guiding principles for one's ministry, making a pastor more effective in regard to church growth.

My prayer for those who may study this report is that we engage in heartfelt conversation about our call to proclaim the gospel and the role of the pastor in inspiring and empowering church growth. I believe we have avoided this conversation as a denomination for fear of discouraging our hardworking pastors who lead nongrowing congregations. But rather than be discouraged, I find these consistent traits among senior pastors of growing congregations to be tremendously uplifting, convicting and empowering. Seeing their effectiveness has opened my eyes to ways I can have greater impact, not to build a kingdom in my name, but to proclaim the kingdom in Jesus' name. The fact that the following attributes are so accessible to all pastors, gives me hope.

## Attributes Held in Common

### They Are Well Grounded

#### *They have a deep prayer life.*

Almost unanimously, the pastors of growing churches describe their ministry as being born out their personal relationship with Jesus Christ and grounded in an active prayer life. Prayer defines their call, empowers them for the work at hand, and they speak, in terms not often heard among Lutherans, of the Holy Spirit specifically guiding their work. Whether it is a decision to personally participate in a global mission trip, selecting a staff member, or setting the vision and direction of the congregation, these pastors are incredibly intentional about praying over these decisions, even delaying decisions until they have a sense of direction as the result of ongoing prayer.

I am not suggesting that 98% of our pastors (those in nongrowing congregations) do not pray. But I am personally inspired by their example to pray more intentionally for my ministry and the work of my congregation.

They also “pray big,” (like “think big,” but the results are not dependent upon us!) They pray in expectation for specific guidance, deeply trusting that “all things are possible with God.” They do not douse ideas or possibilities with “let’s get realistic here,” thus tuning out God’s voice. They remain open to what God is calling them to do and let prayer lead them to bold action and big outcomes.

#### *They are deeply connected to scripture.*

These pastors engage in scripture study on a deep level. In most cases, these growing churches do not follow the lectionary. This forces the pastors to study scripture beyond what is “prescribed” for the week. I am not discouraging the use of a lectionary, but simply noting that it is very tempting for pastors to only study the Bible in preparation for something – sermons, weekly pericope study, or other teaching opportunities. Perhaps because these pastors prepare thematically for worship and seeking out examples from all of scripture, they are far more conversant with scripture, easily recalling a person or story that speaks to this point or that, connecting the Biblical narrative to daily life.

They are also bold in saying: “Look at how God acted in this event. We can expect the same provision from God today as well.” While this language sounds more fundamentalist than my more intellectual skepticism, I found these pastors to be very Lutheran in their theology. They are just explicit in proclaiming the promises of God. It was both convicting and inspiring.

#### *They are life-long learners.*

Not only do these pastors remain engaged with prayer and the scriptures, these pastors are relentless in learning about God, the church, and God’s work through the church. Most are voracious readers and those who learn more interactively attend conference after conference to increase their effectiveness as pastors.

Additionally, they do not limit themselves to Lutheran, liturgical or even mainline resources. When people learned that my church is in Roswell, a number of them expressed their envy that the educational resources of Northpoint Community Church are literally just around the corner. When I expressed my concern about the theology of Northpoint, the pastors and staff members said that they just listen through their own theological filters, and that leadership, staff supervision, and project management training, for example, can translate across denominational lines.

Additionally, these pastors do not shy away from resources developed by and used in corporate America. While the bottom line is different between a church and a business, many of the same leadership skills are required. A number of these pastors engage in leadership coaching by both sacred and secular resources. Why not learn from the world so we can be more effective in transforming the world?

Closely related to being lifelong learners, these pastors are *really smart* which leads to an innate curiosity about the inner workings of people, the church and the world. As previously noted, they invest the time necessary to fuel this curiosity.

***They know who and whose they are.***

When you are the pastor of a growing church, and you know you are in the top 2%, it is tempting to get puffed up with pride and a self-congratulatory attitude, and/or to judge others “who aren’t doing as well.” The devil likes it when ego steps into the driver seat, and that certainly could be a temptation in this situation.

But across the board, these pastors carefully and prayerfully keep their ego in check. They all insist “It’s not about me.” Not only do they point to God’s power and the work of the Holy Spirit, but they highlight the work of their team, the blessings of financial and/or intellectual resources in the congregation, and the gifts of pastoral mentors, past and present.

These pastors exhibit a healthy balance between self-confidence and humility. They are particularly self-aware, openly acknowledging their gifts for ministry and the areas in which they are not gifted for ministry. As a result, they do not spend a lot of time trying to overcome their weaker areas. Instead, they surround themselves with experts in those areas. They also accept that their staff members bring strengths and weaknesses to their ministries and allow the staff to shape their jobs around their strengths.

**They Have Clear Vision for the Congregation**

Being so grounded in prayer, scripture, who and whose they are, these pastors have a tremendously clear vision for their congregations and their impact on the broader community. In most cases, this vision is Senior Pastor created and driven, but they are tremendously intentional about building consensus around the vision with other staff members, council or strategic planning leaders, and the congregation at large. They communicate this vision in print materials, in announcements, in preaching, through building decor (think big building blocks in the narthex identifying the vision), social media, and writing.

When this vision leads to a significant decision or new direction in the congregation, these pastors and their leadership team really do their homework in preparation for bringing the vision to the congregation. They do appropriate surveys, analyze needed resources, host listening posts, anticipate questions from congregation, and can clearly articulate the story (the “why” of the decision.)

The entire ministry of the congregation is then geared around this vision. It is the litmus test for events, ministries, staffing decisions, budgeting, etc. If plans are being made that clearly connect to the vision of the church, then there is tremendous freedom given to staff, lay leaders and volunteers. Where plans do not clearly connect with the vision, leaders are called to accountability before resources are allotted. And if a current ministry no longer contributes towards the mission, it is discontinued.

This results in a tricky, but well-maintained tension between the leaders intentionally guiding the work of the church and being permission giving at the same time. One pastor described their process as follows. When a new ministry is suggested, it must answer 4 questions:

1. “Is it consistent with the vision and mission, including timelines, grids, dates and metrics. You’ve got to be able to say why this is something we need to do.
2. Is there provision to make it work? Does the money, space, time, personnel exist to make it work?
3. Is the timing right? Even though people are called/hired/elected for their passion about a particular ministry, the big picture of the congregations needs and priorities must be considered in regards to timing.
4. Do you have enough capital to get it done? Does the person initiating the ministry have “skin in the game” – are they sufficiently invested to make it work.”

Having such a process in place accomplishes multiple things. It assures that all ministries align with the vision. It keeps the senior pastor out of the role of gatekeeper or micromanager. It promotes ownership of the church’s ministries among the staff, lay leaders and church members.

### **They Are Unapologetic Leaders**

Because they are so grounded and because they are so intentional about the vision of the congregation, these pastors are **bold** in their leadership. They drive their ministries with an energy, vibrancy and passion that inspires and empowers others to incorporate that vision into their own lives and ministries. In the survey, pastors of growing congregations ranked achievement as a key personal characteristic more than pastors of nongrowing congregations. While nearly all the pastors interviewed described themselves as achievement oriented people, they all stressed that this drive is born out of their passion for their calling. Their drive to achieve centers around the church’s impact on people’s lives and our world, not on their own personal glory.

When asked how God’s grace relates to this achievement orientation, they repeated that this is not about them. They do not push for ongoing growth in their congregation for their own sense of self-worth, but because “sharing the good news is not optional.” When a ministry or program fails (and they freely said that many fail), they simply try again, thus grace abounds.

In settings with multiple pastors, many of those interviewed are referred to as “Lead Pastor” rather than “Senior Pastor”. This is indicative of how they approach their work – unabashedly leading the staff and congregation, but not viewing themselves as being “above” those with whom they work. One pastor likened it to moving a string on a flat surface – you can’t push it from behind or it just gets bunched up and you can’t get out ahead of it or you have no contact. A good leader knows how to walk alongside while leading the congregation in the direction you want it to go. I see this is the kind of leadership in these pastors.

Repeatedly, lay leaders and staff members say that they are not micromanaged by these pastors, even when they report to them as supervisor. The pastor allows the ministry leader to do his/her work and celebrates the successes. At the same time, these pastors expect excellence from staff and lay leaders, holding them accountable for fulfilling the vision for the church.

Nearly all pastors interviewed identified leadership as the area they would most like our seminaries to teach more intentionally. Leadership styles, project management, time management, human resources – each area was repeatedly requested for training new candidates for ministry. Lay leaders often added that pastors need to understand budgeting and basic business skills to better serve their congregations and their own personal finances. While these skills are required in a pastor to a greater and lesser degree depending upon the size of the congregation, they are needed in all settings.

### **They Deal with Conflict Directly**

This bold leadership impacts how pastors of growing congregations deal with conflict. In the survey, pastors of nongrowing congregations stated that conflict management was a high priority (more so than pastors of growing congregations) and that they felt less competent in dealing with conflict than pastors of growing congregations. Almost unanimously, the pastors of growing churches I interviewed said that they deal with conflict quickly, firmly, and with bold action where required.

When someone disagrees with some action in the congregation, they seek to listen carefully to what the person is saying, incorporating it into the plan as appropriate, and discerning if there are other issues at hand behind the presenting concern. After listening, the pastor seeks to build consensus, explaining how the decision relates to the vision of the church. In cases where the parishioner remains unwilling/unable to agree or tolerate the decision, then the pastor suggests that a different congregation might be a better fit for them.

One pastor went so far as to say, “I don’t lose in conflict.” He went on to explain. “When it comes down to a church member holding up the progress of the church or leaving to find a different congregation, I’ll help them go somewhere else. I’m not letting one person highjack the whole ministry and keep us from doing what God has called us to do.”

Again, I reiterate how deeply grounded in prayer and scripture these pastors are in setting the vision and direction of the church, *and* the amount of flexibility church members and staff have in carrying out their work, as long as it aligns with the vision. This prevents many conflicts, because the senior pastor is not trying to force the whole congregation into one particular method or style. The more direct conflict management described above is used when facing significant issues and missional direction.

### **They Are Passionate Evangelists**

These pastors are unequivocal about their passion for evangelism. They exhibit an entrepreneurial spirit which leads them to the constant pursuit of growth: numbers of participants, depth of spirituality, activeness in mission and service to others, etc. Being “hardwired for evangelism,” they are unwilling to settle into their “success” or be satisfied by any particular goal or marker.

Lay leaders and staff were asked to pick 5 personal characteristics which have the greatest impact on their pastor’s effectiveness. Full results can be found in Appendix C. The top five characteristics are:

Passion (71)	Empathy (43)
People Person (68)	Integrity (37)
Authenticity (59)	

Having a passion for one’s ministry, exhibiting the ability to relate to people and to proclaim the Gospel in relatable ways are keys to the effectiveness of these pastors. Most pastors interviewed state that seminary trained them well to be small church chaplains – grounded theologically, biblically sound, and knowledgeable of basic worship skills. They did not feel well equipped, however, as evangelists, strong preachers and worship planners. They also did not feel encouraged to exhibit passion in their ministries. In fact, one staff member stated that “seminary kills passion” and focuses on academic acumen instead of the heart.

Additionally, both pastors and lay leaders stated that often the seminarians (and pastors) they meet are not trained in basic people skills like making eye contact, shaking hands, initiating and carrying on conversations, remembering names, and greeting members and visitors prior to services. When pastors do not do those things, they lose credibility as people who care.

### **They Are Authentic**

As seen above, authenticity and integrity are other key characteristics of these pastors. This impacts their ministry in several ways.

#### ***Preaching***

While still exhibiting appropriate boundaries, these pastors are very open about their own spiritual questions, struggles and journey while preaching. This vulnerability makes them highly relatable, particularly to the unchurched and dechurched. It gives permission to ask the difficult faith questions and to shape theological reflection into daily life application.

### ***Leadership Styles and Staffing***

Their high level of authenticity enables these pastors to recognize and work within their gifts and weaknesses. While most church growth literature teaches that when a congregation grows, the senior pastor must move away from direct pastoral care into a more executive leadership role, I did not find this to be so among these pastors. While all are bold leaders, their specific job descriptions vary greatly, as they work out of their strengths. The broader staff configurations also vary greatly, as the lead pastor's weakness is filled by other staff members, who then find volunteers to fill their voids, etc. This allows for a high level of authenticity and integrity because no one is expected to have all the answers or to be skilled in all areas.

### ***Community Engagement***

These pastors project a consistent persona in a wide variety of contexts. They openly engage in community events, from tap dancing in a local senior citizen's talent show or fostering multiple children in their home – their behaviors are consistent across the board. This adds to the integrity of their ministry and of their congregations.

## **They Keep Firsts Things First**

First, let me say that these pastors are tremendously mission minded and their congregations have significant impact upon our hurting world, both locally and globally. In fact, most of these pastors attribute their church's growth to this outward focus engaged in direct mission and ministry to the most vulnerable in society. They also affirm the mutuality of these missions. Both the "giver" and "receiver" are transformed through these acts of mercy.

With that said, however, these pastors are all intentional about keeping first things first. I interviewed very liberal pastors, very conservative pastors and everything in between. And they consistently stated that it is their primary job to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to focus on high quality worship, to build ever deepening relationships with God. Mission and social justice *are then born out* of that relationship with Jesus Christ.

With very little exception, these pastors expressed their concern that "the ELCA" leads with "social justice" rather than the gospel and they are very clear that a person can't be "social justified" into a relationship with Jesus. The relationship has to come first. They intentionally do not hang a rainbow flag outside the doors (even those who are tremendously liberal) nor do they align with more conservative causes (even the conservative churches). They emphasize that such identities are not core to who they are. Who they are is the Body of Christ and all of God's children are welcome – liberals and conservatives alike.

Most congregations also had some statement or acknowledgement that they live in the "messy middle" (thank you Pr. Fred Nelson, Park Ridge IL). St. Andrew, Mahtomedi, MN posts on their Connections Card: "At St. Andrew's, we are a broad mix of people who represent various social and political viewpoints, backgrounds, and ages. Our opinions may differ, but we are united in our mission." These pastors do not avoid justice issues, but they are tremendously careful not to align themselves with one stance or the other, drawing a line and forcing the congregation to take sides. Most pastors and lay leaders expressed concern that "the ELCA" does too much of that and it distracts people (or drives people away) from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



### **They Have Concerns about the Future**

Every senior/lead pastor I interviewed was a white male, most in their late 50s to mid-60s. Among the 202 senior pastors of growing congregations in the ELCA, only 15% are women (as senior or lead pastor – there are far more as staff pastors.) Even with Bishop Eaton's leadership, there remains a significant glass ceiling for women clergy. I believe there are a number of factors discouraging leadership among women clergy, which could be the subject of a whole new study. But at this point, it seems worth noting.

In many cases, these senior pastors are working on succession planning for their retirement, and express having poor results. One pastor stated that he has not heard one pastoral candidate or seminarian state clearly that he/she wants to grow the church. They are so trained in servanthood and pastoral care that church growth is not even on their radar. Lay leaders also stated that they have not had a single pastoral candidate express confidence about their leadership abilities, i.e., their ability to steer a congregation toward continued effectiveness. Other pastors referred to an overemphasis on self-care among recently trained clergy – that their concern about their own well-being far outweighs their passion for the gospel. This adds up to a central concern that church growth is not a high priority among seminaries.

Similarly, a number of these pastors expressed frustration that they are rarely asked by others in the ELCA about what works, why they are growing, how such growth could take place in other contexts. Some even expressed a sense of being isolated by their growth, that their ministry was resented or it was viewed as suspect, that somehow they had “sold out” (to fundamentalism, to consumerism, to . . .) in order to grow. I found these pastors to be tremendously grounded in their Lutheran theology although their terminology sometimes had shifted. I also found them to be eager to share their learning with the greater church. This seems to be a missed opportunity.

### **Additional Observations**

While not evident in all interviews, there are a few other noteworthy items.

#### **Contemporary and Thematic Worship**

While worship practices are extremely contextualized, I would be amiss if I did not note that most of the growing congregations I visited have either contemporary or blended worship, sometimes instead of, but most often in addition to traditional worship. There was a consistent concern expressed by musicians and pastors that seminarians are not well trained in worship planning, particularly when worship is thematic and contemporary.

#### **Congregational Polity**

In a number of cases, these growing churches have moved away from a more council driven polity to a staff driven polity, where the council/board acts as a high-level board of directors, allowing significant freedom for the lead pastor and church staff to develop and run the ministries of the congregation. This more streamlined, staff driven model seems more effective, but matters of accountability and mutuality would need to be examined. Are pastors/seminarians adequately trained to examine such polity shifts?

### **Intentional Men's Ministry**

In response to the gender gap in worship attendance (the typical U.S. Congregation draws an adult crowd that's 61% female, 39% male) a number of these growing congregations are intentional about reaching out to men. One church designed its building to resemble a Wisconsin lodge, thus attracting men to it. Another chooses songs and liturgical elements that are more action oriented and less emotive in language – thus making it more accessible for men. These pastors did not do this out of a desire to go back to a more patriarchal time, but to be places where men will become engaged in mission and ministry, thus more often engaging the entire family in mission and ministry.

### **Staff Development and Supervision**

While these pastors seek quality learning for their own ministries, most of them expressed a frustration at how little training they received or have found in the areas of staff development and staff supervision. Perhaps pastors of large congregations find such training and discussion in their annual gatherings, but smaller multi-staffed congregations do not have access to such training.

### **Sermon Quality and Length**

Each pastor in this study said that preaching is a major priority. Likewise, the sermon is the most cited reason new members join a congregation. While sermon length varied greatly in the congregations surveyed and studied, in the fastest growing ELCA churches the pastor preaches 25-40 minutes, incorporating more teaching with proclamation.

### **Attitude**

Through both the site visits and the survey results, there was a striking difference in attitude among the pastors of growing versus non-growing congregations. In most cases, pastors of non-growing congregation expressed a sense of bitterness, anger, and defeatism. While pastors of growing congregations express a sense of energy, enthusiasm and joy – they also exhibit a great sense of humor in their ministries. While this could certainly be a cause and effect situation (no growth leads to a negative attitude), I also found myself wondering which came first – the attitude or the results? Do congregations perhaps, grow because the pastors believe they can grow, because the pastors exhibit passion and joy for sharing the gospel, and because the pastors emphasize growth to such a greater extent? I do not have an answer to that question, but it seems an important one.

### **The Relationship between Affluence and Church Growth**

This is an area which needs further exploration. While all of the congregations I visited were in affluent, primarily suburban environments (similar to my own), I may have self-selected those congregations because I was looking for geographic clusters of churches where I would feel safe travelling alone. I encourage further exploration of the economic demographics of the 202 growing congregations to see how great a factor money is in relation to church growth.

### **Conclusion**

When I began this study, I had hopes of personally growing in my ministry, being inspired and encouraged to work towards greater effectiveness in proclaiming the gospel. That goal has been met.

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I dream, however, of this study having a wider impact on our ELCA, stirring conversation around our call to live out the Great Commission. I do not pretend to be an expert, nor do I disparage pastors whose congregations are not growing. There are *many factors* influencing church growth. But we are clearly called to GO, MAKE DISCIPLES, BAPTIZE. . . and I pray that this report may inspire other pastors to look at their own ministry habits and heed this call anew.

In hopes that this report can be shared on a number of levels within our church, I send this report to Dr. Kenneth Inskip, Department of Research and Evaluation, Office of the Bishop. Perhaps this report can influence priorities and budgeting, seminary training and candidacy requirements. At a minimum, I pray that it opens the door between churchwide leadership and some of these growing church pastors who feel so isolated and distanced from the ELCA. They have many gifts to offer our church and it seems wise to embrace their leadership.

I also share this report with my Bishop, Julian Gordy, in hopes that this conversation can take place among our Conference of Bishops and within our own synod. Perhaps other pastors, who may feel disheartened or defeated, can find the kind of hope and energy I've found in undertaking this study.

In closing, I do not forward these learnings to higher levels of the church out of a sense of grandiosity or self-congratulation. Instead, I sincerely believe that God can do all things. I'm inspired to pray and dream big, and to anticipate the great things that God can accomplish when we give our best, flawed as it is. Soli Deo Gloria!

+ Pastor Terri Stagner-Collier +  
Cross of Life Lutheran Church  
Roswell, GA

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- Participating Growing ELCA Congregations:
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  - Resurrection, Oro Valley, AZ
  - Bishop Steve Talmadge, Grand Canyon Synod
  - Spirit of Grace, Surprise, AZ
  - Lutheran Church of Hope, Bloomfield, CO
  - Community Lutheran, Las Vegas, NV
  - Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Naperville, IL
  - Redeemer Lutheran, Park Ridge, IL
  - Shepherd of the Prairie Lutheran, Huntley, IL
  - Lake Park Lutheran, Milwaukee, WI
  - Christ Church, Mequon, WI
  - St. Luke's Lutheran, Middleton, WI
  - Midvale Community Lutheran, Madison, WI
  - First Lutheran, New Richmond, WI
  - St. Andrew's Lutheran, Mahtomedi, MN

## Appendix A

Clergy Practice	
General Information	
<p><b>These first questions pertain to your church setting, then we will move on to your work as a pastor.</b></p>	
<p>1. Please enter your Congregational ID Number below. It can be found at the top of your Congregational Report Form A.</p>	
<input type="text"/>	
<p>2. In what geographic area is your church located?</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> Rural farming</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> Rural non-farm</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> A small town under 10,000 population</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> A small city or town of 10,000 to 50,000 population</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> A medium city of 50,000 to 250,000</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> A suburb near a medium city (50,000 - 250,000)</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> A large city of 250,000 or more</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> A suburb of a large city within 10 miles of the large city</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> A suburb of a large city outside of 10 miles</p>	
<p>3. What was your average weekly attendance in 2016?</p>	
<input type="text"/>	
<p>4. How does that number compare to your 2015 weekly attendance numbers?</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> 2016 is <u>higher</u> by 20+ attendees</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> 2016 is <u>higher</u> by 6-9 attendees</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> 2016 is about the <u>same</u> as 2015 (&lt;+/-5)</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> 2016 is <u>lower</u> by 4-19 attendees</p>	
<p><input type="radio"/> 2016 is <u>lower</u> by 20+ attendees</p>	
<p>5. To what do you attribute this growth or decline?</p>	
<input type="text"/>	
<p>6. What seminary did you attend, and in what year did you graduate?</p>	
ENTER NAME OF SEMINARY	<input type="text"/>
ENTER YEAR OF GRADUATION	<input type="text"/>
<p>7. Myers-Briggs Typology is one method people use to identify their natural tendencies. Please indicate your MBTI below (E or I, S or N, T or F, J or P), or <a href="#">follow this link</a> to determine your MBTI.</p>	
<input type="text"/>	





11. Of the same skills and areas of knowledge, indicate how competent you feel in each area.

	Wish I had more training						Highly competent
Ability to Read People	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administrative Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conflict Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counseling Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decision Making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exegetical/Study Habits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motivating Others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multi-tasking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negotiation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oral Communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problem Solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spiritual Direction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff Supervision/Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training Others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of Technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vision Casting/Strategic Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Written Communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Clergy Practice**

**Personal Characteristics**

**In addition to skills and knowledge, your personal characteristics influence your work as a pastor. We'd like to know more!**



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12. For each characteristic listed below, indicate how much of an impact, if any, this characteristic has had on your work as a pastor. Keep in mind that while all characteristics may seem desirable, we each have unique characteristics. So please use the points on the scale to distinguish which traits impact YOUR MINISTRY the most.

	Little Impact		Moderate Impact		High Impact
Achievement Orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adaptability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attention to Detail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Authenticity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Autonomy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooperation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dependability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empathy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Integrity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intelligence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning Orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Openness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Memorization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Passion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Patience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People Person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Persistence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Risk Taking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self Awareness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self Control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stress Tolerance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Willingness to Seek Help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Clergy Practice

Worship and Preaching

Since the Ministry of Word and Sacrament is at the core of our ministry, we have a few more detailed questions about these areas.

13. Which style of worship is your *personal* preference?

Contemporary                      Blended                      Traditional                     

14. How many hours do you typically spend preparing a sermon?

15. How many minutes do you typically preach?

16. For the next section of questions (17-22), please indicate which of these qualities most closely describes your preaching style.

Manuscript    Extemporeaneous                     

17. As . . .

Afflicting the comfortable                      Comforting the afflicted                     

18. Is it . . .

Exegetical/Teaching    Story Telling                     

19. Do you use . . .

Personal Illustrations    Third Party Illustrations                     

20. More often . . .

Serious    Light hearted

21. Are you typically . . .

Thematically based      Narrative Lectionary based      Revised Common Lectionary based

22. How often do you preach about money?

Not if I can help it      Once a year      When the text presents it

23. How would you describe your political/social point of view?

Traditional      Moderate      Progressive

24. How often are your political/social views expressed from the pulpit or as a leader of your congregation?

Never      Sometimes      Often

**Clergy Practice**

**Spirituality and Calling**

**You're almost to the finish line! We'd like to know more about your personal sense of calling and your personal spiritual life.**

25. How would you describe your spiritual health?

Needs some attention      Feeling on track

\* 26. Of the following spiritual practices, please choose the TOP THREE which most positively impact your personal spirituality.

- Acts of Generosity
- Contemplative Prayer
- Corporate Singing
- Corporate Prayer
- Exercise
- Fasting
- Hands-on Service
- Individual Faith Conversation
- Meeting with Spiritual Director
- Personal Hymn Singing
- Public Worship
- Reading
- Scripture Study
- Self-Examination
- Small Group Faith Conversations
- Time in Nature
- Other (please specify)

27. Please describe how your sense of call impacts your work as a pastor -- be as specific as possible.

28. Please describe effective performance in ministry, as you view it. What does "success" look like to you? How might it be "measured?"

29. THANK YOU for taking the time to answer this survey. Please indicate below if you would like a short summary of the results. And remember, your response prompted a donation to ELCA Good Gifts! THANK YOU!

Yes -- my email is:

No thank you.

**Appendix B**  
**Clergy Practices**  
**Discussion and Observation Guide**

**Clergy Interview**

**Section 1: Introduction**

Opening Prayer and Word of Thanks

Introduction:

Who I am, where I've served, a bit about my sabbatical

Why I've embarked on this study?

- Decline in mainline congregations (only 202, or 2% of all ELCA congregations)
- Desire to discern if there are hallmarks of effective clergy (practices, gifts and passions) and if such gifts can be taught or groomed in others.  
*(A word about pastoral humility. These conversations center around what makes you most effective as a pastor, ways in which you are particularly gifted. I approach this discussion assuming that these gifts are from God and used to God's glory. But we need the conversation to be as open and candid as possible. Please don't hesitate to identify your gifts in this context.)*
- Personal desire to learn from those who are most effective in their work to inspire my own pastoral work.

Two caveats on the study.

- There are many factors influencing church growth – this is just one factor I'm studying. I mean no disrespect for the varied gifts of the team in a church staff or lay leaders.
- Church growth is not the end all/be all. But it is clearly part of our calling (Great Commission.) It is what personally drives my ministry – not the numbers but the people behind the numbers.

Confidentiality.

I'm here to learn from you. I'll be asking some verbal questions as well as observing you and the church. Anything you say or show me, I will hold in confidence. Responses will be summarized in order to identify key themes.

To start, can you share with me a bit about your pastoral career – a quick glimpse into your call story, what seminary you attended, what calls you've had and how those congregations have grown or not grown during your tenure.

In looking back on your calls (including current call), of what result or professional accomplishment are you the most thankful and proud? What skills do you possess that contributed to accomplishing that result?

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What have been the central frustrations of your ministry? How have you evolved over time in handling those frustrations? Where could you have been more equipped by your seminary education to handle those frustrations?

Think about the beginning of your ministry in your current congregation. How did you develop your first goals or objectives for this congregation? How do you go about setting ongoing vision and planning? How do you communicate such vision? How do we see that mission in action in the congregation?

In both setting and carrying out your ministry, how would you describe your day-to-day polity with the President and/or Council leadership?

### **Section 2: In response to the survey**

*PGC = Pastors of Growing Congregations      PNC = Pastors of Non-growing Congregations*

In the survey, achievement was ranked higher by PGC than PNC as a key personal characteristic. Would you describe yourself as an achievement oriented person (competitive in sports or cards, etc.)? How does your sense of call relate to your desire to achieve?

In the survey, PGC ranked communication as a higher priority (than PNC). What core content do you seek to communicate with the congregation and what are some of the ways you try to do so?

In the survey, staff development was a task which PGC listed as important, yet having a lower sense of competency in that area. What skills do you bring to staff development/supervision? What challenges do you face, and what continuing ed. or training have you sought (or would you like) to increase your competence?

PNC rank Conflict Management as an area of high importance (more than PGC), and they feel less competent in dealing with it than PGC. What skills do you bring to conflict management? How are you personally impacted when there is conflict in the church?

### **Section 3: Open ends**

About what are you most passionate in your ministry?

How do you measure your “success”?

Can “talent” be taught? If so, how? What are the best ways this can be achieved? If not, what’s limiting this from occurring?

What do you wish you had learned in seminary to equip you for ministry?

What advice would you give a newly ordained minister? What do you now know that you wish you knew when you were first starting out?

### **Section 4: Going Forward**

What advice would you give me as I finish up my research? What do you want to make sure I learn or understand?

### **Staff/Lay Leader Questions**

#### **Section 1: Introduction** *(same as clergy above)*

Pastor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ has been here \_\_\_\_\_ years. When you first met him/her, what was your first impression? How do you see that trait in action? How did you select him/her? What specific characteristics were you looking for?

Most church/staff members have experienced a number of different pastors throughout their lives. In what ways does Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ differ from other pastors you have known? What sets him/her apart?

How does Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ communicate the vision of the church? How does he/she inspire and equip others to live out their calling?

There are many intangible factors that go into making someone effective as a pastor. Out of this list of attributes, which 5 do you believe have the greatest impact on \_\_\_\_\_'s effectiveness, particularly in relation to church growth. Authenticity

Integrity	Initiative	Autonomy
Dependability	Creativity	Willingness to seek help
Cooperation	People Person	Attention to detail
Adaptability	Self Control	Achievement
Passion	Stress Tolerance	Learning Orientation
Openness	Persistence	Balance
Self Awareness	Patience	Memorization
Empathy	Risk Taking	

In what aspect of ministry do you most see your pastor's passion? What gets them fired up?

#### **Section 2: In response to the survey**

*PGC = Pastors of Growing Congregations      PNC = Pastors of Non-growing Congregations*

PGC ranked communication as a higher priority than PNC. What core content does your pastor communicate and what methods do you think are most effective?

PNC rank Conflict Management as an area of high importance (more than PGC), but felt less competent in dealing with it than PGC. How do you see Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ dealing with conflict?

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**Section 3: Open ends**

How do you measure a pastor's "success"?

Can "talent" be taught? If so, how? If not, what limits this?

What do you wish pastors learned in seminary?

**Section 4: Going Forward**

What advice would you give me as I finish up my research? What do you want to make sure I learn or understand?



**Appendix C****List of Attributes Compilation**

Attribute

Passion	71
People Person	68
Authenticity	59
Empathy	43
Integrity	37
Risk Taking	33
Intelligence	29
Openness	27
Willingness to seek help from others	24
Persistence	23
Initiative	22
Attention to detail	20
Learning Orientation	15
Creativity	13
Dependability	12
Achievement	12
Adaptability	11
Patience	10
Self Awareness	7
Balance	6
Cooperation	5
Memorization	4
Autonomy	3
Self Control	3
Stress Tolerance	3