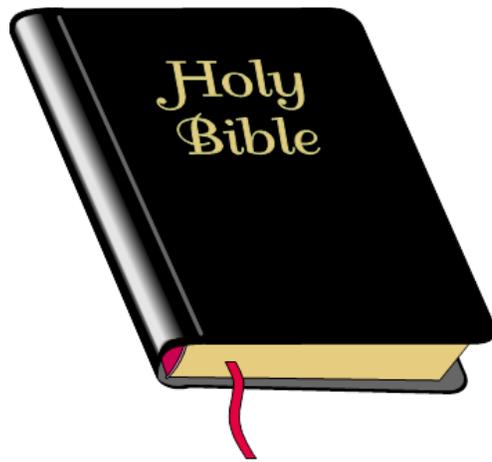


The Lay Person's Guide to Good Church Government



Written By: Gene White

Version 1.6

The Lay Person's Guide to Good Church Government

A review comment on this book

"Lutheran church officers are often befuddled by challenging issues confronting their congregation, and they find that resources specifically intended for Lutheran congregations are rare. Not only is Gene White's *"The Lay Person's Guide to Good Church Government"* a great resource for finding solutions to challenging issues, it is also giving the novice a good education in church government of the Missouri Synod type. Even experienced lay officers and pastors will find many "nuggets" of wisdom to benefit them here.

The Rev. Martin R. Noland, Ph.D., Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, San Mateo, CA

This book has also been reviewed by others, including a lawyer, who wish to remain in the background.

Free to download

While this book is oriented towards LCMS congregations there are many facets that can be applied to any Christian congregation.

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Foreword

If you are picking up this book for the first time you may be wondering what caused it to be written. Hopefully, you are also including a, "Well, it's about time, I could have used it a couple of years ago when I was on the church council," or similar comment. Our primary intent in writing this book is to provide a service to those who need help in sorting it all out and arriving at a point where the "big picture" of good church government makes sense. Without this big picture it is easy to get lost in the forest of church administration and fail to see the connection between Scripture and church polity. Lutheran polity is unique among Christian churches, and for good reason. A secondary intent is to provide practical advice to the laity on the importance of good leadership skills and good local government to improve the harmony in your church. You could consider the style of this book as being more "cookbook" in nature than other documents of this type. In other words, you can vary the amount of ingredients to "flavor" the result in your congregation, but don't leave out any listed ingredients. Consider these contents as "best practices."

People truly are the most important resource in supporting and fulfilling the command of Jesus in The Great Commission. Good information regarding congregations and the nature of a church can be found in *The Abiding Word Vol. 1 and 2*, published in 1947 and *Vol. 3*, published in 1960, by CPH. Another valuable resource is *Government in the Missouri Synod*, by Carl S. Mundinger, published in 1947 by CPH. These resources provide the history and basis for the development of the unique form of government adopted by the Saxon churches, and later by Synod itself.

A statement overheard in an organization working to set new technical standards indicated that "The problem with so and so is they will eventually find the right way to accomplish our goal, but they have to try all the wrong ways first." We don't want you to have to do that in your church as time and resources are too short for everyone. Too often we hear comments from people indicating that they don't want to go to Voters' meetings or have any involvement with "church politics" mainly because of past bad experiences due to back practices. That trend needs to be reversed, as an involved and well-informed Voters' Assembly is really the lifeblood of an active, God-pleasing church, a point we corporately seem to have lost sight of. Without that focus the proper equally valued input between clergy and laity cannot be provided in accordance with our form of government (polity). The advice given here is the result of considerable research, reading, and 50+ years of experience as an active lay person serving in 15 congregations, and living in five different districts, as God and my vocation moved me around the country. Applying a sense of urgency to what we do as leaders in the church is not only beneficial, but I believe, God pleasing.

Moreover, it is important that our attitude and service to the church are done with at least as much attention and quality as we would give similar responsibilities in the left-hand kingdom. Always remember, we are the church militant and this requires that we are active in moving the church forward. The best way to do that is to follow "best practices" in order to do so effectively.

Those who encouraged the production of this book were keenly aware of the need to reduce the number of hurt feelings taking place in the church today, which has an adverse impact on unity and membership in the church. This is largely the result of ineffective non-Biblical leadership, limiting or outdated Constitution and By-laws, insufficient policies, and weak or authoritarian administrative practices. Not to mention the need to discuss as Christians those differences that divide us in doctrine and practice. This book is intended to be of help in solving problems that often occur in the life of the

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church and its people. So, in the tradition of Martin Luther, we have written down what we think will help. We pray this book will be a help to you.

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Introduction

The need for good scripturally based church government is never more apparent than it is today, especially when you take into account how fast things change, and the impact of modern technology, as well as influences from other denominations. Thus, good Christian organizational practices (not mass marketing practices) need to be foremost in our minds. Complicating the issue is the apparent diminished understanding by the clergy and laity of the unique history and ensuing basic principles of correct and good LCMS church government. The many reasons for this are explored later in this document. When we collectively lose sight of why we are uniquely Lutheran, our people will lose sight of why they go to a Lutheran church rather than some other denomination. This is clearly, a lose-lose situation for all of us.

But what exactly does good church government mean? We will define “good” as being that attribute ascribed to a church that has a clear mission and all that goes with it, *and* understands and fulfills its role in following Jesus’ command in Matt. 28, The Great Commission. A “good” church is also organized and led using Biblical concepts and confessional teachings. Therefore, a “good” church will not only have its priorities straight, but its actions will be organized *effectively* using the principles set down by Jesus, the head of the church. Note we did not use the word *efficiently*, as there is a difference. Last but not least is the need to adhere to the unique form of government adopted by the churches of the Synod in the early days, which are based on the writings of Dr. Martin Luther. This form is no longer taught consistently in our churches, much to our common hurt. This is where the “equality of offices” principally between clergy and laity, and other offices, is derived. Understanding the Office of the Public Ministry is a must, including that it is a divinely instituted office. For example, the expression “the minister is the “highest” office and all other offices flow from it” has been misinterpreted and abused. Called teachers, professors in the seminaries, missionaries, chaplains, etc. all have some functions associated with the Office of the Public Ministry. In the earlier times these were titled auxiliary offices, but that term has slipped from use. The “higher office” has little to do with the elected administrative positions occupied by the laity, which are humanly instituted, but are also offices. The term “highest” has to do with responsibility and completeness, and being set apart from the laity by the office created by our Lord. It is not an elevated state, all ministers, of any type, are peers of each other in spiritual authority. (While as all clergy and laity are peers of each other in the Priesthood of all Believers.) Christ instituted His church without hierarchy, that being a device of man. We need to constantly reinforce this concept among all parties. It is the glue that binds us together.

We will also talk about your Constitution and By-laws. A good Constitution and By-laws will not create “success,” in and of themselves. However, a bad Constitution and By-laws, or ignoring them, will create more roadblocks and conflicts than most people will want to endure. People will react in how they participate with their time, talents and treasure. The key is well motivated, mission oriented lay people who understand that if the church is to fulfill its purpose it can do that best if it is well organized, good communications are evident and its members are, mature Christians who understand their vocations. There is more to “church” than just attending worship services and leaving all else to God and the pastors. “It means that wherever the church is active, there, Christ is at work. The structure of the church therefore is that of a sensitive and responsive vehicle which accurately projects the gracious intentions of Christ, just as a body has no other will than that of its head.” (*The Abiding Word, Vol. 3, page 367*)

One of the most important parts of your Constitution is the article dealing with the Lutheran Confessions. It is the basis for membership in the Synod and should have the same words as used in the Synod's Constitution. This article is one of the "unalterable" articles unless the intention is to leave the Synod. It is not just a requisite paragraph. Mature Lutheran Christians should know what the Book of Concord is all about by having studied it and adopted it in their personal lives. Similar "unalterable" articles serve as the basis for the distribution of property should there be a doctrinal split in the congregation, or the congregation dissolves. We pray this book will help our churches be so motivated that many will come to know Jesus more completely, enjoy His blessings, and give of themselves in loving service to Him as devoted disciples within their vocations. For LCMS congregations you can receive advice from the CCM to be sure you have the necessary elements in your document. The district's responsibility in their review is to ensure that the Confessional Article is compliant with Synod's. All else is advisory.

Myths about Business and Church Organizations

Let us first deal with some myths about organizations and how that relates to today's business world. Obviously, businesses have evolved much faster than churches in recent times. In some areas church development has followed the lead of businesses. After all, don't we usually have an organization structure that is modeled after a staff and line chart used in government and business?

Myth #1: "This is a church not a business!" How many times have you heard that in your lifetime? If you are as old as we are, plenty. This comment is usually heard when an updating of the Constitution and By-laws is taking place, or some change is being proposed to make things more effective. People naturally oppose official change and never are that feeling more alive than in most churches. That lead statement is actually true because our motivation is different, but that doesn't mean some business techniques or practices cannot be used to good effect.

There are many practical similarities between churches and businesses. They both provide a service or product, and the more they can provide it *effectively*, the more they will grow. In a church that growth is spiritually first, and as the Holy Spirit wills it, numerical. All we do is motivated by our love for God and our neighbors. We will discuss the pros and cons of church growth later. One mantra of the people who study church growth is that if your church is not growing (at least spiritually) it is dying, or soon will be. The difference with a business is that if it is not making money on its services or products, it will die much faster. Actually, a church very much resembles an employee owned and managed small business where the majority of the employees are stockholders (voters). However, the main difference is that a church has the Holy Spirit present at all times and thankfully, has different motivational models that are based on Scripture.

Please note we are not advocating the *mass marketing* techniques used by the Protestant mega church community, or the *Church Growth Movement*. The capitalization of the latter title is an important distinction and when we use it in the lower case it indicates we are talking about some dos and don'ts for helping your church grow in a natural way based on the Holy Spirit, not part of a movement.

Myth #2: "We are non-profit, so therefore we should not make a profit." First, we need to examine what kind of profit we are talking about. Our goal, of course, is not to accumulate an abundance of this world's goods, but an abundance of souls. Through the power of the Gospel, we are

to expend our time and money for the purpose of leading people to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His saving love.

Of course, it would be unrealistic for church leaders to say money is not important. It is vitally important for the ongoing ministries of the church. We need to strive to meet our approved budget year after year in order to keep our ministries alive and vibrant. The laity also needs to practice good stewardship over those God given assets. Over time churches will either spend more than they receive or receive more than they spend. In a healthy church this will balance out resulting in a strong and consistent Gospel outreach over the years, and consistent and strong growth, spiritually and numerically. It is when the trend is negative over succeeding years that the problem comes in the form of *cash flow* and then your ministries will suffer. You can't and don't run your household this way, so why should it be tolerated when the leadership allows it to happen in a church? The process defined in your Constitution and Bylaws would then have the Voters hold those leaders accountable for their bad stewardship or in the worst case, unauthorized expenditure of funds. More on this in the section titled Financial Management.

There are various organizations designed to be non-profit, just like all churches. That doesn't mean either one should never make a profit in a given year, or a series of years, especially if there is a goal in mind for spending the money in the future, like new ministries, remodeling or a building effort. Accumulation of large amounts of liquid assets is not the goal, and should be avoided. If a church begins to have cash flow problems, i.e., more expenses than income, expect that ministry will be curtailed, and church morale will suffer. The biggest expense is always salaries and associated benefits and those seem to be sacrosanct (untouchable). If ministries are curtailed, then the church is not *faithfully* meeting its spiritual purpose. Sometimes a church can get into financial trouble because it has too large a staff of full and part time people, which can be symptomatic of a weak volunteer program. This will be addressed in a following section.

Myth #3: "All businesses operate unethically, to some degree, so they cannot offer a model for the church to use." In order to fully believe this myth, one would have to claim that nothing unethical ever happens in a church or in Synod. The reality is sometimes unethical things do happen in churches and our Synod, to our Lord's great sorrow and our shame. Sin has no boundaries. Just as it is in the business world, it all comes back to power and money, plus in a church, theology issues. On the other hand, what is wrong with using the things that are good and do not conflict with Scripture or existing church polity?

Myth Summary The inherent bias in the above myths is that somehow there is something sinister, sinful, or otherwise evil about a business organization so therefore everything about it should be spurned. Nothing could be farther from the truth! First, that bias is a slap in the face to all those good people who run Christian businesses. We don't mean just things like Christian bookstores and the like, but owners and operators of businesses who manage them using Christian ethics. This is getting harder to do in today's world, but nonetheless that should be encouraged and supported.

These myths also proclaim that a true Christian business doesn't exist, but we know it does. The author of this book has 14 years of experience doing just that, as does the editor, the years before retirement. Additionally, one might ask the owners and operators of Christian businesses how they feel about applying scripturally sound and ethical business principles to running the church *correctly*. We would

strongly support the use of good ethical and scripturally based business practices in running the administrative functions of the church. The obvious example would be in the area of budget and bookkeeping, where standard business practices are required to be used, on a regular basis. Based on personal experiences this is often a serious issue in smaller churches. Other example areas are the handling of the general day-to-day functions of administration and meetings. Business practices must never take precedence over equality among the members of Christ's church (leadership is a servant function not a superior function), the right to be heard, or following the commands of Jesus. These principles are given to us in the book of Acts and also specifically in Matt. 20:20-28. Another resource in this area is *Management: A Biblical Approach*, by Myron Rush. See Additional Resources on page 45 at the end of this book for more helpful resources. A graphical representation of the superiority levels in a church should be a flat line, if not it is not Biblical. We are all members of the Royal Priesthood, clergy and laity alike, where none are superior, but each having different vocations.

Another area where businesses have an advantage is in training. A business can schedule and provide training for its employees as the needs dictate. In a church this issue is not addressed to any significant degree except, perhaps, in those churches that are growing at a good rate. Do you think there is any correlation? In most churches training on general leadership, our form of government, or specialty training, is seldom addressed and the Synod does not provide such materials for your use. Where do you find the needed resources? When it is scheduled, how can you "make" the people show up to receive it? They must first perceive that they need it, but often it is so foreign to their other vocations that it is resisted. Motivation to understand the need to have such training and how it will benefit the church's ministry must be provided by the leadership, not a "lone voice crying in the wilderness." This way it will identify the steps to achieve your training outcomes. Another way to look at the problem is to consider church leadership as a vocation and as in any vocation; training is needed to do it correctly and effectively. If no leadership training is provided to those who are serving on boards and committees then we shouldn't be surprised if they later become ineffective leaders of boards, and as church officers.

More pointedly, everything we are doing, including study of the Bible and Confessions, is to make us more *faithful* so we can accomplish our church' outreach into the community. That is the prime reason why we are a church, i.e., to serve sinners. We can then have the joy of hearing Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Organization Fundamentals for Churches

Every church is organized as a non-profit entity. Some are incorporated in a state that requires it. At a minimum the church is registered with the IRS as a non-profit corporation by virtue of its membership in Synod. Otherwise, you would have to apply independently. Most lay people don't pay much attention to the legal ramifications of the organization. State law may require that the church have a set of elected officers that are designated as the legal officers of the corporation, as well as other prescribed incorporation requirements, so don't assume, check it out. This could include periodic reporting to the state. Even without independent incorporation we need to follow that model so the church's business can be accomplished in good order. Your church' Constitution and By-laws prescribe these functions. The state usually defines who can be a "member" of the organization (corporation) in terms of age. This is an important consideration when trying to assimilate youth into the functions of the organization, as age requirements can vary from state to state.

The Constitution and By-laws also prescribe when regular Voters' Assemblies are to be held. Sometimes this is monthly, or sometimes quarterly, plus special meetings. We recommend that regular meeting never be less often than quarterly, otherwise the result could be an uninformed and uninvolved Voter's group that cannot be an effective check and balance to leadership strengths and weaknesses. They also cannot be personally involved with the decision-making process that is vital to a successful church, which is also their duty and right. The Voters' Assembly is the engine that makes the congregation run smoothly and faithfully. Anything or anyone that diminishes the involvement of the Voters in the decision-making processes of the church is actually weakening the church based on the historical equality between the clergy and laity in our polity.

It is true, some well-run churches have Voters' meetings on an annual basis, and it works because excellent two-way communications and delegation are provided. The weakness to this approach is that it may not last forever because it depends on having good leaders, a pastor who knows his proper role, etc. When poor or misdirected leadership comes into power things will go wrong, fast. Without good communications the Voters will become uninformed and out of the process of management of their own church. The main thing to remember is that the annual meeting approach undermines the inherent check and balance system adopted by the early LCMS churches, something they held as a key concept. One other point against less than quarterly meetings is the difficulty in making nominations for Synodical offices and the submission of overtures to circuit, district and synod meetings. This lack of interaction outside of your own church has done much to weaken our democratic based system of government that has served so well in prior years.

Your Constitution and By-laws needs to be modeled after New Testament passages dealing with authority, delegation and responsibility, taking into account that people are our most important resource. For more information see Chapter 2 of *Management: A Biblical Approach*. The New Testament Church was set up to have equality among all its members, none were superior to others, and administrative decisions on important matters were to be made by the congregation, not by the leadership in isolation. Our Voters' Assembly provides this function today and that view is incorporated in the contents of this book. Note: Scriptural matters are not subject to a democratic vote, they are always decided by Scripture and secondarily by our Confessions.

Fiduciary Responsibility and More This is an important aspect of any organization. Let us start with defining the term:

- **Fiduciary Responsibility:** This is something held in trust on behalf of a person or group. In a corporation the officers and the Board of Directors of the corporation hold this trust on behalf of the stockholders and is mandated by law. In a church this trust is held on behalf of the members of the "corporate" body, the communicant members. Examples: The Financial Secretary ensures all income is accredited to the correct accounts and is responsible to the congregant members for the proper performance of the duties of the office. In the case of the Treasurer, money is not disbursed that has not been properly authorized by the Voters, as this is a responsibility assigned by incorporation. Note: The Voters must approve any authorization of money through budget action or a specific motion. Regardless of incorporation in a state these same provisions still need to be spelled out in the Constitution and By-laws.
- From a legal sense embezzlement is embezzlement, etc. so civil or criminal law penalties apply even if you were not incorporated as a non-profit.

In a church *all* the officers have a fiduciary responsibility, not just the Treasurer and Financial Secretary. This fiduciary responsibility means that they must perform their duties in such a way as to ensure the *best interests* of the “corporate” membership, the Voters, are met. This is another good reason why all adult communicant members (meeting state minimum age requirements) should be Voters, and know they have “*entrusted*” the officers with certain fiscal responsibilities. Elected church officers are the legal signatories of the local church corporation and are placed in office at the pleasure of the Voters’ Assembly. It would follow then that they are elected, not appointed by Church Council, as one example. However, they could be appointed by the Voters.

Interestingly, the clergy do not share in the fiduciary responsibility to the “corporate” membership, for one reason. It is not assigned to him because he is not a “corporate” member of the local church; he is a corporate and voting member of Synod and as such is under their direct ecclesiastical supervision. This supervision is also true for all called workers in the church. Thus, it would follow that the clergy really do not and should not, have the power or responsibility to overrule, or circumvent, the elected officers of the congregation in the fulfilling of its congregational (corporate) responsibilities. Simply put, it is not the pastor’s vocation! The assignment of these administrative functions to a pastor would be totally contrary to his call to provide spiritual leadership, etc., upsetting the balance of authority between the clergy and laity that has been core to good church government since the early days of the Saxon congregations, before there was even a Missouri Synod. If there is that much administration to attend to each and every day then perhaps a part or full time Administrative Manager should be employed who has been properly trained in administrative functions.

How a congregation pulls together in harmony

In this section we will attempt to address the needed structure and resultant actions that will promote harmony within your congregation and its ministries. We will address these areas using your church organization chart. If you don’t have one it is recommended that you make one up based on the models on pages 14 or 19. Church harmony is an elusive target for a number of reasons, including long standing cultural differences. Nonetheless, the reader needs to be aware of the necessary ingredients that will make the best possible result, while at the same time avoiding those things that will unravel even the best intentions.

- A. The **church office** will be our starting point, as it is the hub of most communications in your church. Good communications is the key to prevention of mis-information caused by a lapse or vacuum in providing for the needs of the congregation. The office secretary plays a critical role in achieving good communications and coordination. Consequently, this position needs to have the proper personal skills and equipment on hand in good working order. You also need to have a trained volunteer, as an example, that can fill in for vacations and sick time as needed if a one-person office. Here are some ingredients: A monthly newsletter that informs the congregation of all the activities and opportunities in the coming month and recaps of any past activities as appropriate. It would be a good idea to attach the minutes of the last council meeting as well so people have that info at home for reference. The secretary needs to have an up-to-date job description, which spells out all principal duties and expectations. Your bylaws need to include an officer or officers of the congregation who performs the annual evaluation, does the hiring and firing and provides general guidance. This is not the pastor’s responsibility even though the major of the workload comes from his office; general administrative functions are not part of his call.

- B. A **Church Council** generally meet once per month and perform only those duties delegated to them by the Voters. Most of these activities will be documented in the bylaws of your congregation, but some may come by a vote from an assembly meeting. On the other hand, the council may from time to time exceed their authority and try to make decisions that are properly those to be made by the Voters at a future meeting. The preferred thing to do is to hold a discussion that could lead to a recommendation to be made at the next assembly meeting. The worst thing a council can do is migrate to a position with the sole functions of the Voter's Assembly are to approve the budget and elect new officers. Please don't think that hasn't happened, because it has, to the hurt of the congregation in the form of apathy and some animosity towards the council or individuals. People need to feel they are involved and have an opportunity to voice their opinions and have some control, much like a stockholder would in a small business.
- C. **Mercy and Compassion Ministry.** The content of this paragraph will speak to a number of different issues that cut across organizational lines. Perhaps a list of topics will suffice, rather than getting to how it should be accomplished. Prayers said on Sunday services need to be documented and kept up to date, plus inclusion in the Worship Bulletin. These prayers should include people who are having medical services, recovering from an illness or surgery, engaged, married, with child, etc. Visits to your shut-ins with service bulletins, recorded sermons, plus communion is especially important, as are visits by an elder or pastor to those individuals or families that are becoming irregular in their attendance. Some churches have a practice of annual visits to the members by their assigned elder. On occasion a member will be a hardship situation where some assistance from the church will be needed. Be ready for these situations too. Bottom line; cover all the bases of human care and do so in the most public way possible. Be careful not to confuse mercy work for evangelism as these are not the same thing.
- D. **Your youth.** Being of high school or college age in a congregation is one of the easiest ways to become invisible. Make an effort to include your youth in church activities to the greatest extent possible. That includes joining the Voters' Assembly, plus, boards like Evangelism, Trustees, and Mercy Committee. Other opportunities would include things like greeters and ushering. Make sure there is adequate space for the high school age Bible class that is arranged so there can be visual presentations and room is not used as a extra storage area when needed, All of this provides bad optics. Your youth counselor (s) should be in their mid-twenties to early 30's range and they are responsible people with good Biblical understanding.

The Foundation: Your Constitution and By-laws

Church membership is always defined in some way in the By-laws, including how they are added and how they are removed from the rolls. Baptized member needs to be defined as well. Most By-laws do not include sufficient membership detail to avoid confusion, as noted earlier. It should be taught among you that voting (corporate membership) is both a right and a privilege that should be exercised by every eligible adult communicant member. Corporate membership is usually defined as someone over age 18 (or 21) that is an eligible communicant member of the church, attends church regularly, and has signed a copy of the Constitution and By-laws. This latter formality is often stated, but rarely done these days. We would recommend that you really do this and provide each new member of your church with a current copy.

The Secretary of the Voters' Assembly is responsible for keeping a current list of eligible voters. This is an old church practice and still has considerable merit to this day. The fact that this isn't done, or

member qualifications are never referred to by the leadership, can lead to hurt feelings and confusion as to who really is a member of the Voters' Assembly and can legally vote as part of the corporate body. This can be important on critical votes, or when there are quorum issues to deal with. These are often emotional events and that is not the place to make these distinctions. Holding Voters' Assemblies immediately after a worship service can add to the confusion problem if not handled very carefully. It is also important for the Voters to be a participatory (not reactive) part of the decision-making process. Good leadership makes sure this is true, while not doing so can lead to an unfaithful church, or worse yet, one that fosters authoritarian rule by the leadership. Please be mindful that Christians coming into your membership from other denominations could well hold the view that by attending your church they are automatically members. If this is not addressed with them early on, like at a new worshiper orientation, the potential for hurt feelings and confusion are very likely, even if not verbalized by them.

Voter and non-Voter (Please refer to *Government in the Missouri Synod* for this early history.) Senior ordained and installed pastors are voting members of Synod when attending conventions as delegates, while assistant pastors and all other called workers are non-voting members of Synod unless they have been designated to be a delegate.

It should go without saying that a person cannot belong to more than one church congregation at a time, and in fact that is what LCMS practices. (This is totally separate from being a member of an auxiliary organization, such as LWML, various confessional organizations, or an independent Lutheran RSO, etc.) That is one reason why we do official transfers, the pastor cannot shepherd a person who is not involved in the ministry where he has his call. How this is dealt with in the By-laws is not always clear. Let us state it clearly; a voting member must be a communicant member of your congregation (the corporate body) and of the proper age, but not all attending communicant members are eligible to be voting members. The people excluded from voting are those communicants who are members of other LCMS churches or Synodical organizations but worship and take communion at your church. These people are sometimes referred to as "Guest Members" and attend regularly and take communion. Local military personnel and college students also could be examples. Pastors who are voting members of Synod should not vote, nor make motions or seconds, but may speak at assemblies and other meetings. They could be called upon to break a tie, if allowed in the bylaws. Other church workers in your congregation should have the right to speak and vote at Voter' meeting, just as every communicant member does, unless the motion has to do with pay and benefits. Also note that a communicant member of one Lutheran congregation cannot participate in another congregation whose confessions don't agree with each other. Either the member makes the choice of allegiance, or the Voters' Assembly makes it for the errant person by removing them as a communicant member.

The above is a historical principle that has been eroded away, mostly due to naiveté, which in turn aids the erosion of the equality between clergy and laity. Technically, a church can do as it wishes in this area, but our recommendation is that clergy, at a minimum, not be allowed to vote, especially on motions dealing with pay or benefits. The latter would be a clear conflict of interest. A twist to this situation would be if you had a communicant member who taught in your Day School and was not Synodical trained, such a person could vote. If that person completed the colloquy program and was board certified as a Lutheran commissioned teacher, called and installed, that person would no longer be eligible to be a voting member because they are now a member of Synod, if all called workers were excluded from voting. All else stays the same. This is somewhat of a sticky situation as commissioned

ministers are still classified as lay members of your church and could be voted to be a lay delegate at convention, as one example.

Membership It is important that your church's Constitution and Bylaws clearly define Communicant Membership, Voting Membership and Baptized membership. All three are under the spiritual care of your pastor(s) and secondarily, the Board of Elders/Deacons. It is recommended you include "Guest communicant membership too. Include in that verbiage the requirements for each type of membership and how transfers are handled.

In many parts of the country there is the situation where adults coming into the Lutheran church are from other backgrounds and are not aware of the historical distinctions concerning called workers, communicant membership, our unique form of government (polity), etc. This can lead to hurt feelings and wrong assumptions about proper conduct, The Lord's Supper, etc. We think this is a result of modern secular thinking about not wanting to offend anybody, inclusiveness, etc. When, in fact, by not being up front with new or prospective members about what your policies are and why they are this way, you are actually giving offense to the same person you are trying not to offend. This practice may also be compounded because there are no written policies and thus nobody wants to go out on a limb and speak up when the opportunity presents itself. This is another good justification to having written policies on important topics to supplement your bylaws.

General Aspects Part of the difficulty in maintaining good church government goes beyond common sense and past experiences. There are historical principles that have been slowly eroded for various reasons.

1. From the days of C.F.W. Walther, we have the principle of using Scripture and the Confessions to settle spiritual issues and using "democratic" principles for everything else. Also from those days is the equality of inputs between the clergy and the laity (priesthood of all believers) and that the laity is really in charge of the administrative areas of the church, but always works in concert with the pastor, and vice versa. Democratic in the modern sense is not the true historical understanding. Walther used the word "Christocracy," to mean that Christ is always in the center of all things we do. Word and Sacrament are the basis for all of your efforts.

These principles actually come from the writings of Martin Luther and are also expressed in C. F. W. Walther's book, "*The Form of a Christian Congregation.*" On page 39 we read a quote from Carpoz, "All of this however does not exclude the consensus (agreement) of the congregation, but rather includes it, so that bishops must always have a church agreeing with them, nor can such ordinances be made without the agreement of the congregation, or against its will." Luther himself adds to this point in this quote from page 40 of Walther's book, "A bishop as bishop has no power to impose on his church a single ordinance or ceremony without the assent of the church (recorded) either expressly or tacitly. The church is free and a queen [matron], and the bishop may not rule over the faith of the church nor burden or molest it against its will, for they are only servants and stewards, and not lords over the church. But when the church as a body agrees with the bishop, they may together impose on each other whatever they desire as long as godliness does not suffer from it; or they may discontinue [ceremonies] again as they please." As someone once quipped, "There is nothing wrong with Lutheranism that a strong dose of Luther won't cure." This is especially true in today's environment.

There are many types of "rules of order," so you should use the one you have, as defined by your Constitution and By-laws. These are similar but different for each congregation in Synod. Thus, the second principle is;

2. If an action is taken contrary to your Constitution and By-laws, then it is unlawful and is not to be allowed. Not following them can also land in the church in court if someone chooses to press legal charges. Areas of prime civil interest would be those of finances and property issues. This principle does not mean everything is voted on for a decision. You might want to try calling the question this way, "The following has been proposed by so and so. After reading the proposal then ask if that sounds reasonable and something the church should do? Look for nodding of heads in the positive, etc. Then state, "There seems to be general agreement, is anyone opposed to this action for any good reason?" If none, then state the motion carries. Those individuals empowered to make decisions in the name of the congregation have those functions delegated to them, in writing. Elected leaders are carrying out the will of the congregation as servants and are to model themselves after Jesus, not model themselves after some business leader in the secular world. Additionally, any actions taken by them under delegation from the Voters are to be reported back to the Voters at the next opportunity. This is a very important, but often ignored, communication principle.

Many times, we hear "Well, they (Constitution and By-laws) are outdated so we don't follow them exactly anymore." Sorry, that is not justification for ignoring the problem, but it is justification for fixing the problem. Historically, it has always been expected that Constitutions and By-laws be periodically updated to meet current circumstances evident for your congregation, they are not static documents. It would follow that the By-laws should be reviewed for accuracy about every five years, while the alterable parts of the Constitution would be reviewed as needed or no less than 10 years between reviews. Updating does not have to be a laborious problem as most might contemplate. In modern times Robert's Rules of Order now use a combined format for a Constitution and Bylaws document instead of two documents. You are free to do a one or two document implementation. The two-document approach is regarded more like a constitution that sets the incorporation function, definitions, offices and policies while a Bylaw document states procedures to implement those stated policies. "Each document carries its own rules for making changes. If you go the one document approach then review it every five years and the rules for changing are the same. Two documents are recommended for congregational use.

One other important function of the bylaws is to ensure that all functions of the congregation are elaborated in the bylaws. This is especially critical when there is potential for a future liability. Your church insurance covers the functions of your church that are addressed in your corporate documentation. If a function is not covered then the liability rests with those in the congregation that authorized the function outside of corporate documentation.

Dos and Don'ts Here are some practical "dos" and "don'ts" to use in updating or generating new documentation:

1. Do start at the top or higher level and work down; don't start at the bottom with word changes first.
2. Do make an organization chart first of how you want the finished product to work.

3. Do remember who the head and leader of the church is, Jesus, and you might want to try to put that on the chart too. See Figure 1 for an example of how to do this.
4. Do spend a good deal of time on how the boxes on the chart relate to each other.
5. Do include on the chart every permanent auxiliary organization and committee and to what board they report. Normally, ad hoc committees are not shown; however, we would recommend that call committees be shown as reporting to the Voters' Assembly.
6. Do make your charts hierarchal and don't put boards and committees at the same level. Boards are a higher level than committees.
7. Do try to organize along spiritual and administrative lines; don't make the Board of Elders/Deacons subservient to the Church Council. This could lead to the possibility of the council taking upon itself to overrule a spiritual matter because it can do so according to the Constitution or By-laws. The Pastor and Elders/Deacons are responsible to the Voters for the proper conduct of spiritual matters of the congregations only.
8. Do remember that the constitution is a high-level policy document; don't include procedural information in it. Some congregations also have a supplemental procedural and/or policy manual, which can serve an important function in the education of new leaders; however, they must be kept current, to be useful. Usually, procedural manual updates are approved by council action.
9. Do use a word processor to show paragraph by paragraph comparisons in two columns, with a third column for notes, explanations, when editing the current version of your documents. In some cases of badly outdated documents, it might be better and have more clarity to start with a new document.
10. Do remember that the Voters' Assembly is the supreme and final authority for administrative matters in the church and *any* function or action it does not delegate in the By-laws, or by special vote, is reserved for itself and no one else. For clarity this statement also needs to be in your By-laws, "Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions are the final authority in all matters."
11. Do remember that you are also building an inherent system of checks to ensure equality and fairness in the roles people and boards play in the organization. This is for everyone's protection. If this balance has been upset it needs to be restored. If you think that just because this is a church organization there are never problems ever, you are sadly mistaken. Your documentation needs built in protection for the "bad" times, not the good times. It is difficult, if not impossible, to make needed changes during the middle of a conflict. Remember Satan works his hardest inside a church body.
12. Do remember that even after the Voters have adopted changes, the entire document must be submitted to the district office for approval of the doctrinal statement (Synod requirement) and is not in effect until that approval is obtained.
13. Do include a section on how to deal with conflict within the congregation that leads to a peaceful resolution of the issue. Do not use Synod's resolution process unless absolutely needed.

The Head of the Church The main purpose of Figure 1A is to demonstrate that the organized church on earth has Jesus as its head, and it should be divided into two realms, the Spiritual/Worship and Sacrament area, and those centered on Administrative and Contractual (legal) activities. It further illustrates that the Board of Elders/Deacons and the pastor(s) are answerable to the Voters' Assembly, not the council. It is the Voters who elected and called them to be responsible for the spiritual life of the congregation. This is a ministry team with the lead pastor as the spiritual leader and teacher.

However, this leadership role should never be justification for the Elders/Deacons to just 'leave everything to the pastor' or for the pastor to have a superior attitude. Remember, Bible based leadership is a servant function not a superior function. Likewise, it is the Voters who elected, at a minimum, the officers and the board chairs to be responsible for the administrative and contractual activities. Except for retired pastors there are no honorary positions in a congregation, leaders are elected and appointed to fill a defined need and perform a service. These are all action words. The spiritual and administrative areas are two different but interdependent realms. Interestingly, Luther's two-kingdom theology concerning government and church on the national level uses this same principle. For more information on the latter refer to *The Anonymous GOD*, by CPH.

In any organizational structure there must be some resemblance to a business as to who is in charge of specific areas of management. The main difference is, in a business it is usually a designated person, or a point of contact, while in a church it is sometimes a person, but usually is a council, board or committee. By default, it is sometimes the pastor. Committees come in two varieties, ad hoc and standing. Ad hoc committees exist to accomplish a specific task, or set of tasks, on behalf of the congregation. They may be short term of one to six months, or long-term lasting in excess of a year. In the latter case think long range planning or building committees. Short-term ad hoc committees generally report to the council or the Voters, with the Vice President usually chairing one of them. An example of an Ad Hoc Committee reporting to the Voters would be a Nominating Committee, which should also strive to provide a minimum of two candidates for each elected position. Pastors should not generally be members of a nominating committee other than to verify the spiritual qualifications of possible candidates. Again, this is a "balance of inputs" issue. Another exception to this general reporting rule is an Ad Hoc Call Committee, which always reports to the Voters' Assembly. Standing committees are identified in the By-laws and report either to the council or a board. The President and Vice President should never chair a standing committee. This rule is part of a good check and balance system, as well as shared leadership. Examples of standing committees could be worship, compensation, budget or finance.

The example shown in Figure 1A is a model for the small to medium sized church; however, it may not be appropriate for a large church. This structure has been designed so if your church is small one can implement the committee reporting to the council first and then expand into the board/committee structure at a later date. Examples, instead of implementing a Board of Stewardship you implement just the Finance Committee functions, which are a subset of the required functions vital to any size church. Some thoughts on this point, and another possible organization model, Figure 1B, are shown in the next section.

Another difference between a business and a smaller church is that a layperson may be a paid secretary, janitor, etc., but not be in a position that makes key day-to-day decisions. Saying that, we know that many a secretary unofficially acts as office manager, main coordinator, or whatever, as do pastors. The point is this is all "unofficial," and therefore subject to interpretation. Another problem is that a person in a leadership position, official or otherwise, can evolve into a person who practices authoritarianism. Unfortunately, these situations can be abused depending on personalities, like the strongest personality wins, etc. Besides this abuse being non-Scriptural, these situations can lead to hurt feelings and loss of volunteer hours for your church. In the worst cases it can contribute to back door losses of your membership. God never intended for any leadership position to assume a superior level over anyone else in the church, we are all equals having different functions (different members of

the same body). See 1 Corinthians 12:15-21. Clear leadership roles and defined responsibilities are never a bad thing and are to be based on Scripture, basically from the Book of Acts, where appropriate.

Called to Serve Now a few thoughts concerning pastors and the reasons they are called to serve a congregation. The three main reasons for calling a pastor are;

- To fulfill the office of religious teaching or instruction,
- The authority to administer the sacraments; and,
- The exercise of the Office of the Keys (in the non-controversial cases).

(Paraphrased from Zion on the Mississippi) The Office of the Keys is not exclusive to a pastor; the congregation (Voters) also exercises this office. See the later section on Church Discipline for an example. The above three areas are the *primary focus* of activities for a pastor filling the Office of the Public Ministry, and let's be honest; this is what pastors are *trained* to do. It seems logical that this is what a congregation should have its pastor *doing* as his primary work. This should be clearly stated in the pastor's job description. It should also be noted where he is to spend the *majority* of his time, as he ministers to the spiritual needs of the congregation. If the growth of the congregation were such that additional staff support is needed, I would strongly recommend you hire a trained administrator (office manager, perhaps a Deaconess) rather than a second pastor. This manager needs to primarily report to the President of the Congregation and serve as the administrative extension of that office. This would go a long way in maintaining a balance of influence and keeping the laity more involved in the workings of the church.

The Board of Elders/Deacons is to assist the pastor in the spiritual oversight of the church and to make sure that the pastor understands that he has been called to serve the congregation as its spiritual leader. Because spiritual maturity is a "must" qualification for Elder and Deacons, some churches have made the term of office greater than two years. Experience is especially important and a two-year term just starts to make the average new Elder or Deacon useful. Experience; Working knowledge of the Book of Concord, Active in Bible study and, a member of your congregation for two years or more. Any less is a receipt for a loss of spirit driven activities that support the pastor.

A Worship Committee and the Altar Guild also fall into this board area, as well as Ushers because it all has to do with the proper conduct of worship services in an effective and reverent manner. How else can we better serve our Lord God? Under this area also falls two other important functions; Our church practices (adiaphora) and the mercy work of the congregation both internally⁸ for its members and externally for the community. Be mindful not to confuse mercy work with evangelism outreach.

MODEL ORGANIZATION CHART FOR A SMALL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

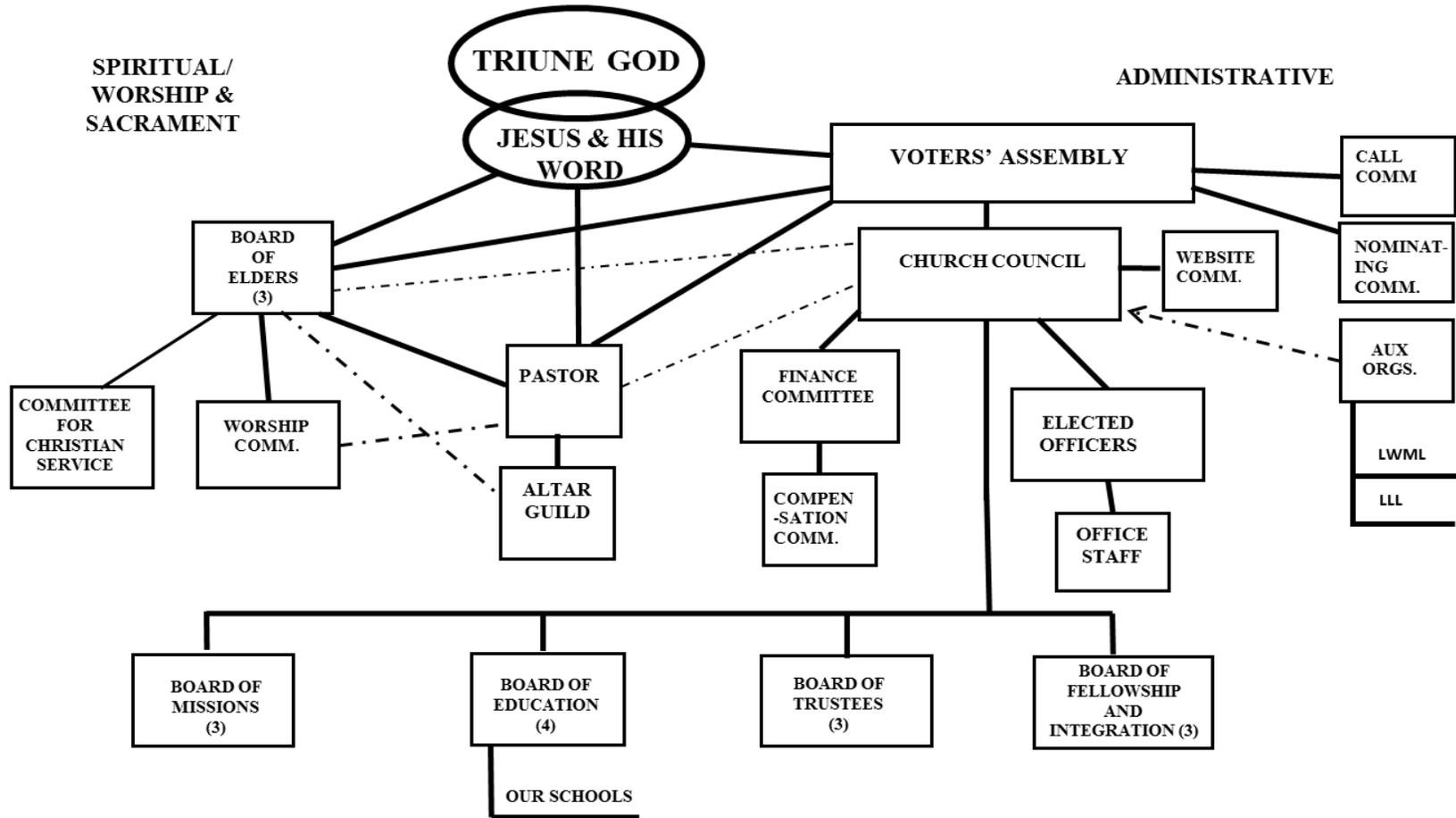


FIGURE 1A

Direct ———
 Functional - - - - -

The same two points are true for Board of Education members when a Day School or Pre-school is involved.

You may think at first that we have spent more time on these points than necessary, but actually this is a very important area for our day and age. If the pastor is allowed to be burdened with, or assume, administrative functions that other staff or lay volunteers should be doing, then spiritual ministry will suffer. Sometimes more than ministry will suffer. Is this what a congregation really wants to happen? Well-trained and motivated laity are needed to manage a church properly.

Delegates, Conventions, etc. As a member of Synod or association of congregations a congregation will from time to time have the need to elect delegates to attend such gatherings. The senior pastor always becomes the clergy delegate, unless it is agreed to send the associate, etc. The lay delegate is to be elected by the Voters since he is representing the corporate body of the congregation. This is serious business and should not be dealt with lightly, nor should it be rotated each time, etc. The congregation should send the person most knowledgeable on church polity and Lutheran theology to enable them to engage in discussions and voting. The engagement of the congregation outside its own four walls is also one of the cures for apathy.

Broader Issues A larger problem arises when the pastor believes that “he is the man in charge” of all administrative functions, including superintendent over the school principal and the affairs of the school. This is not LCMS polity, but more closely resembles Catholic, and other Episcopal/ecclesiastical denominations, including ELCA. The pastor truly does have spiritual supervision responsibilities for called workers, but not administrative. In times past these called workers were called “auxiliary offices” and considered extensions of the Office of Public Ministry. In later times these distinctions have become blurred so it is no wonder that misunderstandings have resulted. LCMS church polity is unique and more ‘Presbyterian’ in style and substance where the Voters’ Assembly is the final authority in all things not delegated. The right level of Voters’ involvement in the functions of the church is critical to good communication and sound government. This is a hard lesson in “You reap what you sow,” for both pastors and laity alike.

To be more specific, in an ‘episcopal’ form of church government the pastor is *in charge* of the local congregation. He probably was *assigned* to the church by a higher church official, such as a bishop. Likewise, the local congregation might not have autonomy to sign legal documents, incur capital debt, does not own its own buildings, etc. In a ‘Presbyterian’ form of government the local congregation is autonomous, owns its own buildings, officers can sign legal documents, incur capital debt and decides when and who it will call as workers to serve in their midst. It is the laity that do these things, not the clergy. The clergy, or other called workers, are also never responsible for any debt, even though they might have been a factor in creating it, unless of course you have granted them voting rights. As you can see these are important distinctions. Unfortunately, some pastors and laity seem to forget these differences and allow a blending of the two polity styles when it suits their purposes. This is not a healthy situation nor in accordance with the founding precepts of LCMS churches or the writings of Martin Luther. Those who seek to undermine our form of government (polity) and the upset the equality of inputs between clergy and the laity should be called out and labeled for what they are; deceivers of men and unlawful agents bent on tearing down our historical church structure and the foundational writings of Martin Luther. Read on for more details.

Text in *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 3, says it much better, where you can read "... we witness that the structure of the church is that of a real society, not the construction of the human imagination, just as we must assert against the Roman Church and liberal Protestant theologians that the structure and function of the Christian church is not that of an institution. No! We assert that the structure and function of the church is that of a spiritual society, of a communion of persons, a community of Spirit-filled believers, who are in the world but not of the world. This is the plain, unadorned and sober doctrine of the Scriptures. As such it agrees with the Biblical view of history, and with the record of world history that we have." (Page 369 & 370)

Who is this community of believers? "All of who have the true Christian faith, all who have been made spiritually alive by the Holy Spirit, and who are now in the spirit and in truth call Jesus their Lord and draw near to God through Christ, worshiping the Father of Jesus Christ as their God and Father in the Holy Spirit – all these are true members of the one true Christian and universal church. But all those who do not have this true Christian faith regardless of their external conduct or membership in Christian organizations or congregations, are outside of the church. Therefore, it is not just the manifest and express despisers and enemies of Christ and of God, nor the flagrant scoffers and blasphemers who by their ungodly and unholy words and actions profane their Creator – it is not these only are *extra ecclesiam*. Far more! This includes all hypocrites, though they may appear to be outstandingly pious and holy, though they may join in the external activities of the church, participate in worship, customs and ceremonies, its works of education, mission and charity. These are not members of this spiritual body of Christ, the Church; they are not part of its structure." (Page 368)

One more quotation is appropriate from *Government in the Missouri Synod*, by Carl S. Munding, where the summary chapter provides concise information on the laity's role in the church. "A share of the credit for the success of the Missouri Synod in group perpetuation and group promotion must no doubt be attributed to congregational and synodical polity. Though this polity was not made of contemporary German materials, much less contemporary American materials, it was made in America, and it surely was tailor-made for the nineteenth-century American frontier." (Page 218)

"By putting real power into the laymen's hands the founders of the Missouri Synod nurtured and developed a sturdy and informed laity. The laymen learned by doing. The difficult problem of teaching men and women who had been brought up in the State Church of Germany was the task of paying for the maintenance of the Church was solved by giving laymen the privilege and the duty of important decisions in the Church. The problem of getting laymen interested in the education of ministers was solved by giving laymen something to say about the institutions in which an indigenous ministry was trained. The problem of generating interest in the well-being of the Church at home and abroad was brought nearer to solution by giving the laymen a voice in making decisions which affected this well-being. The zeal which the early Missouri Synod laymen showed for their Church in that they attended meeting after meeting was produced, no doubt, in part by the fact that these men knew that their decisions were final." (Emphasis mine) (Page 218 & 219)

Suffice to say, there has been a continual erosion of laity power over the years, in favor of clergy. I believe this to be one of the contributing causes of voter apathy. This same erosion has also been noted in Synod's polity and the removal of the laity from having a say in the spiritual matters of the Synod's discipline processes. Equally important is to note the erosion caused by blurring of the roles of clergy

and laity brought on by imported polity from the neo-evangelical movement based on "Every Man a Minister," a scripturally incorrect theology.

Large Church Organizational Structures

It is common in any business that as it grows larger its organizational structure will need to accommodate the new reality. The same is true of a church, so let's look at how that may be accomplished. First, the principles laid down in the previous section still hold. What is now needed are new ways to ensure the structure is still responsive to the Voters and changes in activities and individual ministries and do not get burdened down with bureaucracy and slow decision making. The sense of urgency in going about the business and ministries of the church still applies. Another concern is the span of control and expertise needed to manage a much larger staff of skilled and professionally trained people. This creates a need for "professional laity" who must have basic leadership, technical or administrative skills. Thus, the goal is to create a structure that still has the appropriate checks and balances, an involved Voters' Assembly, minimal delays in the decision processes and some sense of synergism among the groups making up the whole. In creating a chart, we again must be mindful of the basic form of local church government in LCMS. The relationship to Jesus part has not changed, so therefore we can begin Figure 1B using the top portion of Figure 1A.

Let me also state that I have only been a member of one large congregation in my entire adult life, and at the time it was not far removed from that depicted in Figure 1A. My advice then is to just go forward based on good organizational principles. What is shown in Figure 1B may not look like your large church organization, and that is fine as long as it is faithful, Christocracy and does not circumvent the checks and balances and the authority of the Voters' Assembly. Good communication is still a must, in fact, even more important because poor or incorrect information passing among the laity impacts a larger group of people. It is also harder to "undo" miscommunication due to size.

What I have modeled is a structure based on groupings of activities under a director, where the activities have common threads among them. The exception to this is the Executive Staff, which contains all of the administrative, property and financial activities, and in those areas' functions much like a traditional church council. The President of the Congregation also becomes the Director of the Executive Staff, and that office or the Vice-President, would still conduct the Voters' Assembly meetings, most likely on a quarterly basis. If your church hired an Executive Assistant, or Office Manager, that position would report to the President. If a Deaconess is providing this function, she would report to the pastor only on spiritual matters.

In addition to the Executive Staff there are three other groups, Spiritual Ministries, Education, and Outreach and Assimilation. Perhaps you may have the need for a fourth, or wish to group activities a bit differently, just be faithful to the principles. A Director, who is not autonomous and reports directly to the Voters' Assembly, heads each grouping of activities. Depending on the size of the congregation you may want to have the Director also serve as one of the board chairs, with all of the chairpersons acting as a mini-council for their area of interest. An option would be to have the Director of the Education and Outreach & Assimilation groups rotate among the board chairs on an annual basis, the most experience board chair taking over in their second year of a two year, or more, term.

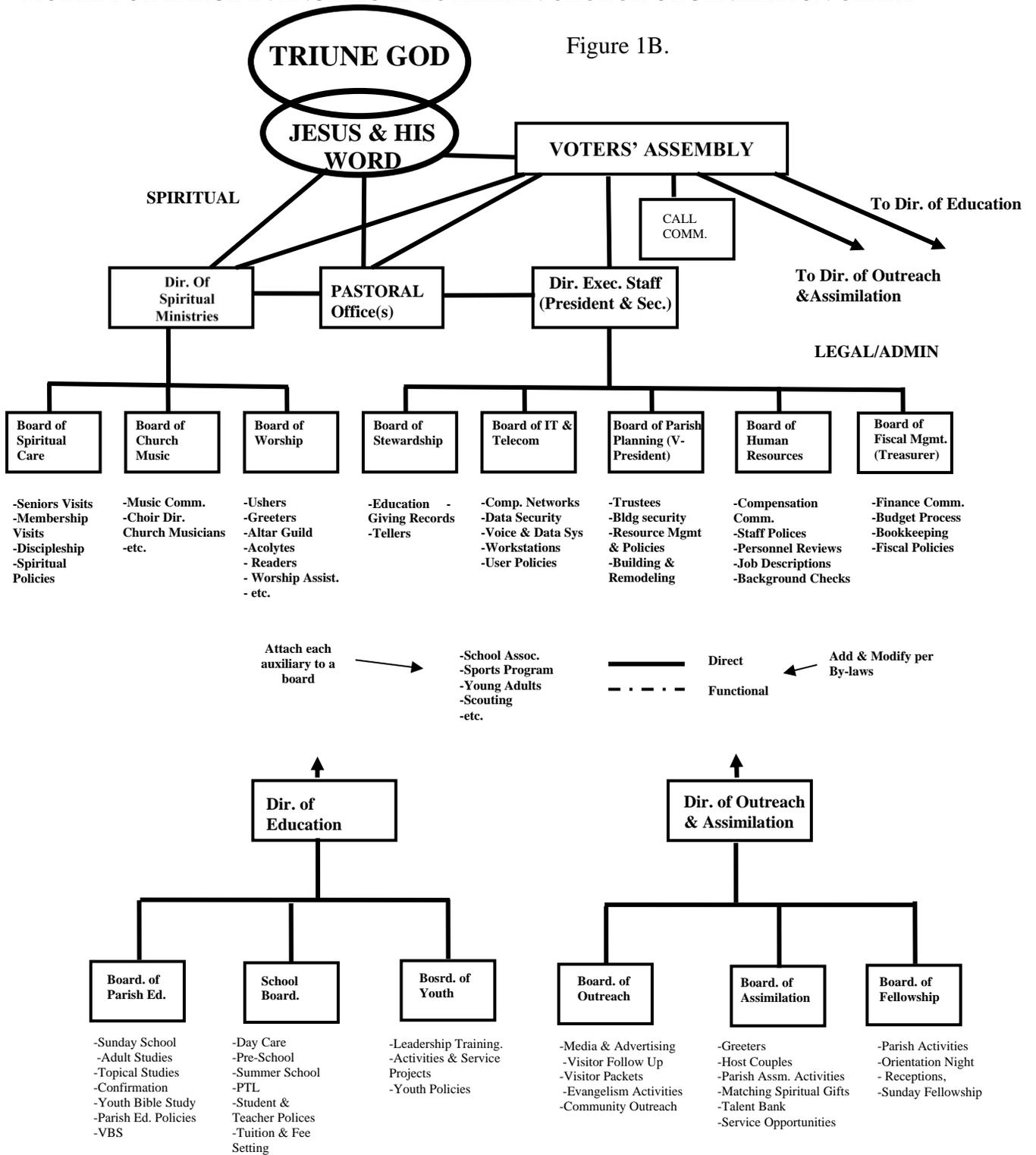
Organizational Details Now a few words about each grouping:

- ***Spiritual Ministries*** – This grouping contains all of the activities associated with the conduct of spiritual care of the congregation, all types of worship centered music activities and worship services. As you can see the activities are beyond the ability of a traditional Board of Elders/Deacons to handle effectively, so they have been elevated to a peer level under a common Director to ensure coordination, needed actions take place, and for reporting purposes. The Board of Spiritual Care is essentially the Board of Elders/Deacons with reduced responsibilities plus policy-making authority (oversight) for the other boards supporting this Director. The Director could be the Chair of the Board of Elders/Deacons. This grouping would also be a place where a Deaconess and other paid staff associated with worship music efforts could serve faithfully.
- ***Director of Education*** – This grouping brings together all of the educational activities. Day school activities have been separated from Sunday and evening activities. This group would manage contracted and called teachers. It also includes a Youth Board or Committee, as much of the emphasis should be on “educational activities” leading to well-rounded young communicate member of the church who will one day be a well-informed Voter and lay leader. Teach your youth correct church polity, how your church is organized and how it functions to achieve its mission and purpose, before they reach the age of 18. (This applies to a church of any size!) Only then can they be prepared to step into their full responsibilities. This group is the focus for all adult and youth classes on discipleship, Confirmation and Bible studies, etc. It would be appropriate for a commissioned DCE, principal or teacher to take a full or part time position in this grouping. It is also be appropriate to recuse them when salaries and benefits are being discussed and voted upon.
- ***Outreach and Assimilation*** – This grouping brings together those activities which have to do with the outreach into the community and those things that help the newcomer, by transfer or evangelism, to become a faithful and active disciple in Christ's church. If you have an athletics program, it also could go here. This is a very important group as it is the complement to spiritual care, and along with education, it provides most of the opportunities for fellowship and individual growth outside of worship services. This could also be a place for a Deaconess to serve faithfully, as well as a parish nurse.
- ***Executive Staff*** – This grouping brings together everything that is left over, as well as some new boards needed by the size of the congregation. The Vice President would head the congregational planning board, which includes day-to-day and strategic planning. The Treasurer heads the Board for Fiscal Management and Policy, and the remaining boards are held by elected chairpersons or paid staff having the needed qualifications. Finance and Budgeting could also be organized as a committee reporting to the Board of Stewardship

Organizational Summary In an organization of this size the need for effective policies is critical for the organization to be responsive to everyday activities without needing to initiate a prolonged decision-making process. In other words, good policies create good delegation of responsibilities, which encourages responsive and responsible actions. Remember, delegation of responsibility must include the delegation of authority to go with it to make the resultant actions carried out effectively. It is recommended that at least one of the boards under each Director be given the responsibility for generating policy for that group. In some cases, additional boards may also be given this task.

MODEL FOR LARGE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH ORGANIZATION CHART

Figure 1B.



Proper Balance

Another related area of concern is the proper balance between the Church Council and the Voters' Assembly. If the council perceives itself as the real power and authority in the congregation it will act this way. Its actions will also tend to bypass the normal deliberation process and recommendations developed by boards and committees and make decisions it is not really empowered to make. Often it may not keep the Voters fully informed. Leadership (pastors or laity) who overturn decisions (without authority) made by council, boards or the Voters' Assembly commit a serious offense and this needs to be *dealt* with accordingly by the Voters. A church "problem" arises from the resulting isolationism (from the Voters and board viewpoints) and authoritarianism (over everyone) that this situation breeds. It essentially creates a mini-Vatican of centralized power at the expense of the communicant membership. It is also most likely, or should be, inconsistent with your By-laws. This is "definitely" out of step with the New Testament and what Jesus intended for His church, as well as the subsequent writings of Martin Luther.

We submit that many of the 'sloppy' administration activities apparently going on in some congregations are the result of apathy or naiveté among the members. Your congregation was not always like this. Remember the "vocation" comments in the second section? Look at your mission startup days. In mission congregations throughout the world there is a genuine zeal by all to get the Word of God out into the community and there is strong Christ-centered worship and leadership and little apathy. Look at your adult classes, is anyone teaching the laity about the Confessions? In my 50+ years in LCMS I can recall only once that I received any such classes. Is anybody currently teaching correct church polity? I hope so, but I personally have not seen it happen in those 50+ years.

Apathy. Apathy can set in because everything becomes more or less routine and there are no challenges or actions in the important areas of evangelism, Bible study, fellowship, discipleship and community outreach. Apathy of the Voters can also result from authoritarian leadership, which creates an unhealthy climate in the church. Naiveté results from losing knowledge on what proper rules of order or processes are to be used in what situations, or the Voters have become isolated. So, if you are using the excuse that the general laity or Voters are apathetic, don't care, etc., remember *something* made them that way. The question is what is the right choice now? Work on correcting the apathy, or to take advantage of it? This question should not have to be asked in a church, but unfortunately, it is necessary to ask. Too many times the choice is the wrong choice because it is easier. We wish there was time and space to deal with solving the apathy issue here, but it is a complex topic all its own. Maybe this can be the topic for the next book. Taking advantage of the apathy by short cutting due process by the Voters is an example of church leadership emulating a non-Christian business and doing so "unlawfully."

Transfers, etc. Most By-laws reserve the right to transfer members in and out, or to drop them from the rolls, based on a recommendation from the Board of Elders/Deacons, to the Voters' Assembly. Some allow the Board to do this and report what they have done to the Voters at the next Voters' Assembly meeting. Either way is okay in and of itself, but we favor the first method. The important point often overlooked is that the "corporate" body, the congregation, needs to know as general information who is being added and who is being subtracted, and why, unless there is a privacy issue. At this point in the process, it is an administrative function, not a pastoral function, yet there have been cases where a pastor has released families from membership and neither they, nor the Voters, blinked an eye about it. Sorry, but that is not good administration or spiritual care. Take a look

at how your congregation handles the paperwork or phone calls for transfers. What is your church *policy* for dealing with them, written or verbal? Either way the constitution should assign the responsibility (policy), not the process. Written requests should be addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Elders/Deacons, not the pastor. The pastor would normally field telephone requests for transfers, as he is most likely to be in the office. The verbal request should be forwarded to the Chairman of the Elders/Deacons so he can put it on the agenda for the next meeting. Anything less than this would give the illusion that this function is pastor oriented rather than board/voter orientated. It is hoped that pastors would read this book too and understand their important role is making appropriate spiritual recommendations on membership matters, not administrative matters. A good practice is to obtain a recommendation from their prior congregation, preferably by letter or email.

Another related area is the reception into membership by profession of faith, or adding to the church roles by confirmation. (The pastor essentially takes full responsibility for this area to certify that those recommended are qualified for communicant membership, based on the minimum requirement of knowing the Small Catechism. The pastor then presents his recommendation to the Elders or Deacons who then vote to accept, or recommend acceptance to the Voters.) This is an area where a policy statement would define the qualifications needed for a membership recommendation. Usually, the procedures for this area are addressed in the By-laws, but not always sufficiently to cover the topic completely. Do not think that every church and pastor do this function the same way. Those days are long gone. As hard to believe as it may sound, one of us personally knows of a LCMS pastor who recommended adults (coming from other non-Lutheran denominations) for communicant membership who had not taken even an hour of catechism, or any other type of instruction. Think check and balance here. This important policy needs to be in place before the “horse gets out of the barn.”

Your By-laws need to clearly address the area of “self-exclusion” such as failure to attend worship services, take communion, etc. over a defined number of months or years. Make a policy, which should include exceptions for school and military absences, and stick to it.

The Use of Policy in Your Church

Policy, in the truest sense, is one of the more important aspects of good church government and effective leadership. Effective leadership can only come with clear understanding of what the main objectives, (or *ends*), of the congregation are, all supporting its mission. Good policy will then ensure that all the important bases are covered which not only protect the local church body, but also will ensure that the church's business is conducted scripturally, effectively, and fairly. The latter three elements are critical to good leadership. Being up to date with good policies is a must. For example, does your church have a policy concerning background checks for volunteer workers who administer children's programs in your church? If you don't, you are not up to date with the need to protect your church from sexual and verbal abuse lawsuits that can and do take place in Lutheran churches and schools. Please note we are not talking about Policy Governance concepts, which are an entirely different animal and application.

Now exactly what is a policy? It is a statement of a principle; an intent or action that the local church body has adopted that control future events. A policy can be positive in stating what will be done, or negative in stating what won't be done. Both types are valid. The highest levels of policies in your congregation are stated in your Constitution and By-laws. However, this is not sufficient to get the total job done. Many additional policies are needed to address specific lower-level areas. A council, or

board of directors, and various boards will usually need more than one defined policy to guide the normal conduct of business. Policies of this type are subservient to your constitution and bylaws.

Policy Objectives Policies are sometimes referred to as “ends” or *objectives*. They state what is to be achieved (positive or negatively), but they never spell out the procedures to achieve that end. The procedures are sometimes referred to as “means.” Surely, you have heard the expression, “The end does not justify the means.” We are talking about the same thing when we say, “The goal (end) is good, but you can’t use improper or unlawful means to achieve it.” This brings us right back to hurt feelings again, if we use improper *means* to achieve our *ends* in doing the business of the church, hard feelings will result, at a minimum. This is simply the by-product of not acting in accordance with Scripture and sound rules of order principles. People will recognize this lack and react negatively to it, even though they may never verbalize it in public. Typically, the “great debates” in Synod are led by the clergy, but when the issues hurt the laity they often just become ‘pew warmers’ or leave the Synod.

Policies, or *ends*, can be developed to define goals within an organization and how that organization deals with other organizations or entities external to it. Using a typical church organization, as an example, a Board of Education, would need to have several policies concerning its management of a day school, pre-school, or daycare operation and Sunday school. Most of these policies would deal with personnel (internal), and parents (external). However, there may be other policies that address issues like accreditation and tuition. Likewise, a Board of Elders/Deacons, could have policies concerning Baptisms, weddings, or funeral services for non-church members. These could be positive policies defining under what conditions they will be done, or negatively, stating that they will not be done for non-members, for example. Other policies could address the use of video and flash cameras during church services, which can be a real distraction, plus various areas dealing with the worship life of the congregation.

One often-overlooked area is the “commissioning” of the laity to perform spiritual functions on behalf of the congregation. This is a good early church practice that has fallen out of favor in many churches. Newly elected officers and elected or appointed board members need to be commissioned to work on behalf of the local church. Other commissioning examples often overlooked would be a male serving as a communion assistant who is not an Elder or Deacon, serving communion to shut-ins, worship assistants, etc. Commissioning of the laity to act on behalf of the church is very much in accord with Biblical teaching

It is not correct to allow a pastor of the church, to implement whatever personal policies he might choose in the above areas. There are several reasons for this, chief among these are; “Do you want your policies to change (and they usually will) each time the pastor changes?”, “What then are the policies during a pulpit vacancy period, which could last for a year or two?”, “What basis is there for a non-member of the “corporate” body to be setting policies for the “corporate” body?” The latter concern is more important than it may look at first. It also violates the basic principle of policy being developed by a group of people, for the people, not by an individual, for a group of people.

To this point the implication has been that groups of people be they boards, or council, make needed policy for their own areas of responsibilities. This is the correct way to make policy and provide God-pleasing and effective leadership at the same time, including recording it in a book of board policies.

Sometimes there might be a need for a joint policy between two groups, and that is okay too. Never, never, do individuals make policy, be they laity, or called workers.

Also, so called “unwritten policies” are *not* to be tolerated. The main reason for this is that unwritten policies may be changed due to personalities or misremembered or details forgotten, over time. They can also be the vehicle for misunderstandings and hurt feelings in your church, especially by those who didn't forget. Our view is that no policy statement is better than an unwritten one. Likewise, there should be a limit in your organization as to what groups can create policies. For example, you may have a policy that states that auxiliary organizations, ad hoc and standing committees are to develop and implement procedures to achieve the policy or policies adopted at a higher level.

As mentioned earlier, there is a close kinship between policy (*ends*) and procedures (*means*). However, policy is more permanent, while the procedures (*means*) to achieve a given policy can change over time as circumstances dictate. Procedures are in many cases less formal than policy statements, and are most certainly more detailed. Good clear policy is noted by its brevity and crisp statements that can't be misinterpreted. Both policy and procedures need to be kept up to date.

If your congregation is starting from scratch in developing policies by its council and boards you are facing an educational process. In other words, you may need to bring in an outside trainer, or have someone put together a training package to use in educating your people who will be charged with developing and implementing the new policies. It is way beyond the scope of this humble document to attempt to teach this important topic in a few pages. Perhaps the congregational services department of your district has resources to help in this area. There are textbooks available on this topic, but be careful you don't get let down the garden path with complex secular musing on the latest and greatest, maybe.

Policy Handbook Once a church starts making policies for its internal use it would be remiss if it didn't create a place to keep them for handy reference, thus the need for a handbook. A three-ring binder would suffice including an index for policies generated by the Voters, The Board of Elders/Deacons, The Board of Education, The Board of Trustees, etc. The Voters are the highest administrative policy setting body and no other board, council or committee can establish a policy that would conflict with those set by the Voters. The Elders or Deacons are the highest spiritual policy setting board and no other entity in the congregation can establish a policy that would conflict with those set by the Elders or Deacons. There is also the need to have joint board policies for some instances. For example, setting a policy for the use of church facilities for weddings and receptions would be a joint policy between the Elders or Deacons, and the Board of Trustees. Each policy must be clear, complete for the topic, and unambiguously stated and written down for the Policy Handbook. A sample form for doing this is provided as Attachment 2. When a policy is superseded or replaced by a new one, write in large letters “Cancelled By _____ on _____” diagonally across the old policy and file it behind the new one.

Policy Summary The importance of good policies cannot be overstated. It is a critical part of effective leadership in your congregation, and is one of the best projections of positively communicating how things are done. We also cannot overstate the importance of the point that good policy supports and extends good order and principled action in the congregation and can be one effective remedy for some types of apathy. It is our view that misunderstandings and hurt feelings in

churches, not theology, are two of the main contributors to “back door” losses in the Lutheran Church today.

The Role of Planning in the Church

Some may say that planning is not needed in Christ's Church, “Just take what the good Lord gives us, according to His timetable, and everything will work out fine.” Some churches operate very similar to this model. However, one must ask, “If God is going to gift His church with something how will we recognize it?” The same way we recognize all spiritual gifts, by its fruit. For example, if you have a struggling school that needs a new building and a couple of new people show up, one who is a good school administrator having extra time, and the other a good project manager/planner type you just may have the nucleus to initiate an effort to start the planning for a new school building. Actually, it works just like that in real life, in God's time. Our task is to recognize when it really is God's time, and then get to work to make whatever it is, happen. That is one example of a long-term planning effort.

One has to be open to recognize when the pieces are in place to go forward. Moving forward doesn't have to be a “lowest common denominator” event. If you believe that Jesus can and does provide for His Church by using people to fulfill a need then you will believe that the above example is true. I hope this is what you believe because the example is a true-life story. Here is another example; a small church is pondering a move from rental space to some other more compatible space. An organizer joins the congregation, helps them make it through a decision-making and fund-raising process, while at the same time an older church building being used for a museum becomes available. The decision to purchase is made, but a lot of renovation is needed. Just then two recently retired contractors move to town and join the congregation just in time to take over the planning and execution of the building renovation. God's hands were all over this effort, but without the skilled people showing up at the right time and assisting with the planning and renovating, the opportunity would have been lost. Now that small church is twice as big as it was in less than one year prior.

There is also a need for another type of planning in a church, known as short term planning. This process can be initiated by questions like, “Now that we are doing X, is there something else that will complement it that would build up our church? Or, “Last year we did not have enough of Y to make it work; do we have it this year?” Short term planning should happen as a matter of routine and could be associated with a critique by leadership on how well things have been going over the past year or two.

Planning efforts are also directly related to how big your church is, and hopefully how it is growing. There is no formula that will work for everyone. So, here are some ideas that might help.

Short Term Planning This is an effort your congregation should undertake every few years. It will help energize people and keep them focused on what your church is supposed to be doing in its ministry areas. The first step is to take all of the major activities/ministry areas of your church and give them a label, such as: Worship Services, Music Programs, Outreach, Fellowship, Assimilation, Building Improvements, Education, etc. In an open congregational (not Voters') meeting, in a freewheeling style discussion, take each topic and solicit ideas on what we should be doing that we are not doing, or could be doing better. Do not get involved in *how* it will be done, only *what* should be considered and if convenient, *why*. You will be amazed by the time you get to the second or third item of discussion on how the enthusiasm and quality of the input will pick up. One way to do this is have a moderator and a recorder, where, as the discussion leads to a solid idea, the recorder writes it out on a

large sheet of paper, using one sheet for each ministry area. Pick a lay moderator who is a good speaker, enthusiastic and quick on their feet, if at all possible. Better perhaps if not an elected leader. After everything is finished post all the large sheets on the wall in a public place so they can be looked at the following Sunday, including those who missed the first meeting. After a week or two, have the congregation vote on their two or three top picks of what should be done first, in each category. This will give the leadership a sense of what items should be implemented initially.

Long-Term Planning This area of planning generally looks at the bigger issues, like should we start a Day Care, Pre-school, Day School, add on to the sanctuary, add a senior's care program, Stephens Ministry, etc. The list of possibilities may be derived from leadership discussions in a retreat, or similar activity. The congregation would then meet to hear a short presentation of each item by an advocate, that would include some idea of *what*, *when* and *who* this particular item will fit in with what the church is *currently* doing. At the conclusion of the presentations the congregation should be led by a moderator to *discuss* how the ideas/efforts fit together in any complementary way, and determine which should be studied further. Bear in mind that these ideas/efforts *all* will have budgetary impacts of varying intensity and thus most likely cannot be achieved, no matter how worthy, in the current budget year unless your giving is way above budget. Note the term "moderator" is used in the examples, and for several good reasons, including a person who doesn't have a known agenda.

Once some sense of approval to go forward (such as the formation of an ad hoc committee to provide more detail) has been achieved, go on to the next item. *Don't* try to solve all the problems in the meeting, let the ad hoc committees do that. Several months may go by before one or more of the committees are ready to report back to the congregation. Leadership will have to decide on taking them on one at a time, some sort of grouping, or maybe all at once, as you consider the next steps. Each committee should be charged with developing the *pros* and *cons* of their topic, plus staffing and budget impact (initial and reoccurring) and a proposed *start* and *end date* for completion of the planning process. At this point the progression of the effort will take Voters' Assembly approval. Once Voters approval has been given for each item then the leadership needs to again appoint a committee to complete the planning process as it was approved. It stands to reason that some of the initial ad hoc committee members will also be carried over to the new ad hoc committee. Most likely the committee will now have more members. Note: The above flexibility is dependent on the by laws allowing the President to appoint ad hoc committees as the need arises.

The key to good planning is to be open, honest and keep the ball rolling. Once the momentum stops even the best items will find it difficult to get moving again. A byproduct of good planning is implementation of good ideas and ministries of the congregation. With the expanded enthusiastic participation by a larger number of people you have also dealt apathy a serious blow. Try to make it a permanent one.

Personality Types and Groupings in the Church

It may not be immediately clear why this section is included in this book. Here is why. As you go through a planning effort there will be groups of people who don't get involved, or have a particular point of view that may not be based on good theology or polity. Thus, a better understanding of the people dynamics involved could be beneficial in arriving at the best solution. This section also has the greatest potential for misinterpretation by the clergy and laity than any other. This is true because we are now talking about personal matters, which may involve ourselves. As the old Pogo saying goes,

“We have met the enemy and he is us!” When we sense we are the ones being described we may not like what we hear or see. The number of groups we have listed is not meant to be all-inclusive so “if you don't find yourself” don't be alarmed. For example, we have not included positive groups, such as a Discipleship and Ministry Group, which in a perfect world would be the only one. Also, this group should not need help.

Importantly, we are not attacking anyone's faith here. We are trying to show how unawareness of where you “hang out” could be stifling your own spiritual growth, and that of your church. The whole purpose of this book is to help the church improve the use of the assets over which it has control. In any organization that is effective, business or church, the net value of the organization should be “worth more” than the sum of its parts. In a church the net value would be our people, facilities, and ministries. If the value is “worth” more than its parts then we say that organization has positive synergism, and most likely that church is in good shape. If that is not the case there is definitely some “wheel spinning” and ineffective activity going on. That church most likely is not growing, or already failing at some rate of decline in spiritual life and membership. Mediocrity and apathy are acquired habits; thus, they can be changed.

The “***Sunday Club Bunch***” is typified by a group of people that relish coming to church on Sunday morning for worship and to have a good time with their friends in fellowship. They may or may not attend adult Bible class, and they may or may not hold an elected position. They most likely would call their friends during the week, and socialize with them outside of church. They generally like the status quo, and don't look favorably on any activity that would change this, even though they would provide verbal support of it. They won't admit it, but they really don't support anything that is associated with growing in discipleship or the size of the congregation, they like things the way they are. Evangelism is supported in the abstract sense, like sending money to foreign missions, but not anything local, as they may be asked to make a personal commitment. They consider their *bunch* to be the best bunch and everybody really should belong to it and accept their standards. They are standoffish to anybody not in their bunch. They consider themselves to be good Christians and would be offended if anybody implied otherwise.

The “***Shopping Mall Bunch***” is typified by a group of people that come to church on Sunday morning, sometimes out of a sense of duty or abstract need. They generally do not attend adult Bible class and they rarely volunteer and never hold any office or attend Voters' Assembly meetings. Their teenage or adult children often don't come to church or Sunday school. They generally would not call any of their church friends during the week, or socialize with them except on Sunday morning. They expect church and all of its services to magically be there on Sunday morning when they may need it, and take things pretty much for granted. There is no concept of how all of the preparations for worship and the “running of the church” take place. Since they are generally not involved in anything outside of attending church on Sunday mornings there is no commitment to spiritual growth or becoming mature disciples. Anything to do with expansion of facilities, outreach into the community, etc., is just beyond their interest. They consider themselves pretty good Christians, but as a group they are vulnerable to having their faith shaken by a crisis in the family or the church. They are susceptible to silently going out the back door at the first or second bump in the road.

The “***Disenfranchised Bunch***” is often hard to distinguish from the Shopping Mall Bunch, but they do differ in a couple of ways. Note the name we have given this bunch and ask you to think of past active

members of your church who no longer are. We would include those who have 'burned out' in this bunch too. Also note that where they are currently is indicative of a change from a previous status. This bunch usually attends church fairly regularly and engages in some limited fellowship activities. They most likely have other family members who also attend your church. The prime reason they are in this bunch and have not left your church is due to family, or they are loyal to the Lutheran Confessions and they have no alternative Lutheran church to attend in the area. Neither case is positive or productive for a church to have. Perhaps some of your churches' practices has forced them into this bunch and they could return to be active members if those un-Lutheran practices were modified or discontinued.

The "***Over and Under Achievers Bunch***" contains opposites, but we are grouping them together because people outside of their group view them more or less the same way. That view is a mix of positive and negative reactions and can vary widely based on personality. Let's take the over achiever first. This is a personality type that is always active in more than one area and definitely not satisfied with the status quo. A fairer statement might be they abhor the status quo. They are always involved, sometimes too much according to their detractors. This type of person most often knows their spiritual gifts; often they are mature Christians and are actively serving. In general, people have two opinions of the over achievers, assuming they are doing positive things and not spreading themselves too thin. One opinion is "Thank God for them, they are filling a lot of vacuum areas that nobody else is filling." The other opinion is more along the lines of wariness or veiled hostility because of a lack of trust, jealousy, or understanding of the forces at work. Is it correct to fault someone for contributing too many hours of service in the Lord's vineyard? Apparently so, based on the criticism that is verbalized. The true test is looking at the fruit of their labors.

The under achiever is a person who tries to take an active part but somehow just doesn't get it done. Many times, this is a subjective judgment because one does not know someone else's heart. This type of person may well be ripe for some type of training to improve their skills for the service they are trying to perform. Likewise, there may be a complete mismatch between the type of service being attempted and their individual gifts and talents. There are many examples of this including a recent situation where a person reluctantly agreed to serve as Sunday school superintendent, but did not care for the job. Because of this attitude he was not able to do a good job. However, this experience provided the opportunity for him to substitute teach one of the classes. That exposure led to the realization that he really enjoyed teaching and had a natural ability to do so.

Under achievers are generally held in low esteem by others, thus they are vulnerable to having their feelings hurt by an off-hand comment or look. Because of this there is the potential for this person to shift to the Shopping Mall Bunch, out the back door, or to some other group. This would result in a loss of productive volunteer hours in the church or the loss of a soul in the kingdom. One of us recalls a church in our past where there was an unwritten policy that before you could be elected to any boards you first had to serve a term as Sunday School Superintendent. On the bright side all the leaders had at least one thing in common!!

These "bunch" people are not lost to you forever, but it will take compassionate and loving people, or a couple, to work with them and bring them back into a full relationship with Jesus as a mature disciple.

Apathy Solutions We mentioned apathy earlier, with the idea that it is a learned condition. If you have an apathetic congregation here are a few effective ways to deal with it, but they all take time and effort and can only be successful if approached from that point of view.

1. Apathy can be countered by improved communications (posted board and council minutes, etc.) and empowered leadership, using all the means available, so be inventive and leave no stone unturned. Think about activity reports from boards and committees in the newsletter.
2. Apathy can be countered by motivational talks at meetings, and after services. Announcements should be done with enthusiasm and joy. These attributes are contagious, but it takes time for them to germinate.
3. Apathy is a symptom of poor leadership at one point in time or another. If not cured it can last for years and be a millstone around the entire ministry of your church. One church took 20 years and several pastors to finally get its "culture" problem solved.
4. Apathy is best treated by getting people involved in what your church is doing on a regular basis. An active and informed Voters' Assembly is essential to this treatment.

Apathy is one of the greatest challenges before the church today. It must be true because as a Lutheran church body in America we are not growing as we should. Yet there are many examples of individual Lutheran churches that are growing spiritually and numerically. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit that grows the church on earth as He wills it and we are the Sowers for that good result. If we are apathetic and not sowing, well, you fill in the rest. Thus, apathy is a negative impact on any sort of growth to the degree that it is present. Sometimes a church gets a good boost from population increases, but don't count on anybody automatically showing up at your door. If you are in an area where the population is increasing and your church is not reflecting that growth you should accept there is a problem or two that needs solving so you can grow in real terms. The first step in all problem solving is correctly identifying the real problem. Don't overlook the fact that part of the problem may be a shortage of mature disciples in your congregation, those who have studied God's Word and the Confessions and take those lessons, especially vocation, into their personal lives. More information on church growth is contained in the next section. Problem solving, as a process, may also need sprucing up in your congregation. As a guide we have included Attachment 1 that outlines the steps to logical problem solving, perhaps it could be useful in your church.

In summary, this section identifies several problem areas that could be holding your church back along with some solutions. It may be possible that you are afflicted with more than one problem area. Viable leadership needs to constantly review its successes and shortcomings in order to make positive improvements including communicating these facts to the congregation. Even if you are not totally successful in what you are trying to do, as they say in the "Good Book", your reward will be in heaven. Remember, a little repentance for "errors" on the part of leadership can make a big difference in the general attitude and morale of the congregation.

How a Church Grows

There are many aspects of church planting and growing. (We are not talking about the Church Growth Movement, or Ablaze! which supplants the work of the Holy Spirit with the works of man. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Growth and related sites), and again, this book is not the vehicle to present you with a total revitalization program. See the LCMS Website for reVitality. Rather, here we present some ideas and some discussion on other areas, which are interdependent. When reading

this you may get the idea that some of it is obvious, and it is. The difficulty will always be in implementation and follow up, which have to be the two greatest weaknesses of practical Christianity. If you think growth is not a serious problem in LCMS take a look at an article in the October 2005 issue of *Lutheran Witness*. In this article, '*A Golden Age of Mission*' some interesting facts are embedded therein. Fact: the membership in LCMS dropped by 25,000 members (6151 congregations) from 2003 to 2004. Fact: approximately 50% of the total congregations in Synod recorded one or no adult confirmations in the past year. Since 1993 there has been a steady decline in confirmed membership, number of congregations, and giving, while there has been an increase in the number of clergy and a growing bureaucracy. The 2005 Annual statistics continue to reflect these trends. Not exactly what one would expect. Also, from the official statistics it is now possible to see backdoor losses in our churches. These losses are accelerating and when counting those deceased it exceeds the number of new confirmed members. These numbers are serious and should indicate the need in every congregation that positive action is needed. When you consider that many congregations do not do a good job of keeping their membership lists current only makes it worse. See attachment 3 for charts reflecting these trends.

First, we would like to suggest that you take a structured approach to growing your church and include the Holy Spirit. Make a plan! A former boss once told me, "Make a plan and then work your plan." This is good common sense and it does work. A structured plan identifies all the facets of growth, plus all of the "interfaces" with other activities that impact it positively or negatively. For example, growth could become frustrating because there may seem to be no progress made in the actual number of people attending worship services. Look at everything that is influencing the life of your congregation, including "back door" losses. You could be gaining new members but at the same time be losing current members out the back door and not know it. As a Synod that is exactly what has been happening. Your "growth plan" should include everything (pro and con) that impacts growth in your church. Make a list and check it twice!!

Local Outreach is critical to real growth, especially when the general population is expanding in your area. In other words, if your growth is the result of general increases in the population that match your demographics then you are not really growing by any activity in your church. Rather, you are the recipient of a natural action. Usually, the percentage of un-churched in your community is a large number sometimes exceeding 75%. Most important is to know your community demographics, as well as the demographics of your own church. This will give some indication of how the church's outreach efforts are being received, or not reaching a segment of the community. Your church and local numbers may vary significantly from national or state numbers. Ministries should be tailored to your local demographics. For example, if you are in a retirement community this should tell you something about reaching people in certain age groups with the Gospel message. However, don't neglect any age group. If you are in a small community don't think you don't have opportunities. Your church's task is not done unless every person in the community has heard the Gospel and the only ones not attending any church have rejected Christ as their Savior. Some would say, and rightly so, "Good outreach starts with good in-reach," which basically means your congregation needs to be educated in the doctrines of the Lutheran Church and have a good understanding of Vocation, which is one of those doctrines. An analogy would be, "Don't start a long road trip on a half tank, or less, of gas."

Sometimes an obscure fact may be important. For example, there are an increasing number of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. There are several reasons for this, but largely they tie

to the inability of the parents to provide proper care for their own children. (As you may surmise, these same parents are not in church either.) Your ministries and growth plan should address this type of need. One community we know has a significantly larger percentage of “grand-parenting” than the national average. In this case ministries should address both seniors and school age children, not historically a natural coupling, but in this case, it is. Similar situations would be encountered in any area where there are serious alcohol or drug abuse problems.

Generally, “personal evangelism” is widely accepted as being the most effective form of evangelism in the U.S. The goal is to invite people (“Come and see,” John 1:44-49) into church so they can hear the pure Word of God and ultimately receive His abundant Grace through the Sacraments. However, to get your people to “bring them in” effectively calls for training and practice. There are study courses available from CPH, seminars in the form of Synod's, Each One Reach One program, for this topic, as well as other sources, that can be used to raise the sensitivity and skill level of your people so they will be motivated to practice this naturally at every opportunity. A seminar or Bible Study on the Doctrine of Vocation is most useful in achieving this goal. Your church also needs to have a vibrant adult Bible and topical study program to teach your membership so they are equipped to carryout Jesus' commands. This will take cultivation of adult teachers in addition to the pastor, to build the laity into a mature, discipleship group. Pastors can only do so much and it is unfair to burden them with tasks that the laity could and should be sharing for this very reason. This program also provides a place for new members to participate and interact with your church body. This leads us to assimilation (into our community from theirs), the ultimate partner of growth and strength for every Christian congregation.

Assimilation Singularly, assimilation is perhaps the most neglected concept related to the strength of your church. Thankfully, some churches do a pretty good job of assimilation without even realizing it, which by the way is as it should be. Mature disciples know what needs to be done, and they do it. We believe the reason for this is due to these churches having good Bible study, fellowship, greeting and follow up program, and orientation of potential new members and transferees conducted by members who are themselves mature disciples. These characteristics are natural outgrowths of a church that has studied God's Word and the Confessions, thus creating a large percentage of “catechized laity” within the congregation. If you are not blessed with this situation there is something you can do about it. Our recommendation is that you implement a discipleship program and an assimilation program at the same time. Why? The short answer is they are both needed if you are going to grow spiritually and numerically, as they do reinforce each other in positive ways and totally support your outreach efforts.

The point of how this all ties into good church government is simply this: A church with these positive characteristics is a considerate and caring church and it will be prone to practicing good Scripturally based processes in the execution of its mission. Such a church will be a growing church because the Holy Spirit will bless those efforts.

What makes a good assimilation program? Assimilation consists of two main components: what happens around and during the worship services and what happens the rest of the week. Some could argue that only the latter is true assimilation, but we believe these are tied so closely together in terms of success and failure they need to be treated together. In the first component consider such issues like parking spaces for visitors, good signage indicating where people should go, greeters, hosts, informed ushers, guest registration of some type, and fellowship opportunities after the service. This is where host couples play an important part in making introductions and showing the visitors around the

facility. How friendly the general congregation is to guests and visitors also plays a large role; everybody should be involved. This is somewhat of a barometer of how the Holy Spirit is working through the people of your church. You could call this component "initial assimilation" as this is where judgments are made concerning how much your church shows genuine care for them as individuals and how their needs can be met. What you do or don't do answers their question, "Will we come back next week or look elsewhere?" Remember, it is their conclusions that decide this, not what you may think.

The second component addresses both new guests and current members of your church. In the case of new guests, assimilation should start as soon as they become attending regularly, like after the second visit or so. The first thing is Orientation Night where you introduce your church, its people, and your version of the "three P's." (Programs, practices and policies). In the practices and policies area do not forget to include Holy Communion. If they are un-churched, or come from a typical protestant denomination they will not have a clue about the meaning of the 'true presence' or communion of all the saint's past and present, or our practice of closed (close) communion. They could well arrive 'unworthy' at the rail with a genuine euphoric feeling of wanting to participate. We have seen this happen in Lutheran churches and it is not a situation you want to experience unless you can honestly say everything possible was done to preclude it. There are two sides to this issue, one concerning actual communion of the unworthy and the offense that may be given to your current members, and two, the sense of guilt and foreboding that can smother the spirit of the offender once they realize what they have done. It could create a future back door loss if not handled properly. You also need to explain the path to communicant membership and voting membership status in your church. Of course, "open communion" solves this problem, but "open communion" is not in accordance with our Lutheran Confessions, regardless of how some clergy may twist the circumstances.

Attachment 3 to this book is a sample agenda that you can use to get your Orientation Night started. Remember each orientation should be structured to some extent for those who will be participating. The chair might want to be alternated between the person directing assimilation, or fellowship. An Elder, Deacon or the pastor should handle the topics concerning communion policies and practices, as well as the path (Small Catechism) to communicant membership.

It is extremely important to get that new attendee of your church involved in some group activity, such as choir, Sunday school for their children, teaching assistant, ushering, serve on a committee, etc. What you are trying to do in your assimilation program is make the new attendee (just as you would a transferee) feel a part of the fabric of your church community. Another way of saying this is you are building the loyalty of these new people to your three P's mentioned earlier. Statisticians say that on average you have six months to assimilate someone or it may never happen. What that means is they will become one of the negative 'Bunches' mentioned earlier, or they will become a back-door statistic. The choice is clearly yours, but sometimes you will be walking a "fine line," so be careful.

We should say a word or two about the longtime member who attends, but is not assimilated into the fabric of the church. You will need to take on each individual as a personal project. Perhaps in the past there was the opportunity to take action when they became a new member, but that opportunity was missed. Also, we should caution you that the success rate will not be high, so don't be discouraged. At the same time, recognize that you may have to abandon your efforts and admit defeat, pick yourself up and try someone else. As a lay greeter I can recall people coming into church on a regular basis and

deliberately bypassing all the greeters so they would not have to be greeted. A dedicated member of the Shopping Mall Bunch would be a good guess in this instance. Whatever you do, make sure that the group you are trying to get them to join is within their gifts and talents, if it is possible to know them. **Gifts (Creation and Spiritual) and Talents class anybody?** Likewise, it should be something fairly easy for them (not you), like ushering, making coffee, and setting up or cleaning up for fellowship hour, etc. The choir would not be a bad choice either. The most unilateral way to serve is to be serving in some way, so put it to use. (Note: Be mindful to not fall into the trap of Spiritual Gift Inventories and such, which come to us from our Protestant brothers and sisters. It is much better to stay with a Scriptural approach here, and everywhere else.)

Until someone is assimilated and has become a communicant member they are not be asked to run for office or teach, especially. However, if they are a communicant member then joining a board or committee should be encouraged. With that experience they will be more competent and confident to take on a larger responsibility later. Likewise, new members coming from other denominations, or new Christians, should not be asked to run for a leadership position until they are fully assimilated and have served on a board or committee for at least one term. We would exempt the board of Elders/Deacons from this group, as this is where you want to place experienced scriptural and confessional people who have a known track record in your church. This seasoning process has many positive aspects and is a good policy to write this basic eligibility for every office of your church into your By-laws.

Back Door Losses We have talked around the topic of back door losses and some things that can contribute to them. We also wish we could say this is a topic well understood in Lutheran churches today, but it isn't. Actually, it is a topic nobody likes to talk about even though intellectually it is acknowledged to exist. We suspect the main reason for this is that the first step in doing something about anything is admitting that improvement is needed and it will take commitment of a group of people (including you) to work the problem. The worse the situation, the harder it is to come to grips with it and this one also has its fair share of emotional baggage to go with it.

The first question may need to be, "What should God's people do?" Surely, heaven is weeping a flood of tears over such losses to the kingdom. We say that because far too many people who go out the back door are either lost to the Kingdom, or lost as workers in His church here on earth. True, some people go out the back door and walk in the front door of another denomination's church in the same town and are active in their new church home. Now, what does that say about confessional loyalty, especially when you are the only Missouri Synod church in town? Maybe, and unfortunately, there may not be a lot of difference between the Lutheran Church and church "A" down the street! The truth is this problem can be addressed in a positive way simply by doing a better job of assimilation, and teaching the orthodox Lutheran faith in your congregation. The reason for this is people rarely go out the back door for purely theology reasons, unless some major issue like Seminex in the early 70's is in play.

We believe that people go out the back door because they have not been properly taught the faith, poor confession practices, nor assimilated (There must be more to church than this.) or they go because of ruptured feelings with one or more members of the congregation, or bad practices of the church in its ceremonies or administration. Too many times we have heard, "I am not going back until so and so leaves, they hurt my feelings!" How the feelings were hurt is not at issue here, the underlying root problem is the lack of forgiveness skills. We submit that peoples' inability to follow scripture in

dealing with offenses of this type is the main problem. Our observation is that people just don't know what Holy Scripture says, or how to apply it in the practical sense to real life situations. If this area is not a prime candidate for an adult Bible class and a few sermons we just don't know what is. Another outside resource would be Peacemaker Ministries, run by Ted Kober, www.hisaor.org/.

How do you detect that your church has a 'back door' problem? **First**, do not get trapped by looking solely at the number of people on the rolls. The number of people attending church is more accurate, because many churches do not do a good job of keeping their membership rolls up to date. Do a little math, what happens when you take the yearly average and then subtract the deaths and transfers out to sister LCMS congregations, compared to prior year averages? The **second** key area to look at is average giving compared to average attendance over a number of years. The reason for this is that reduced giving is usually the first indicator of someone in the Shopping Mall or Disenfranchised Bunch who is unhappy with the leadership, or what is happening in their church. Your Board of Elders/Deacons should be on top of this situation and know;

- Why people have left or gone to other churches, especially when it is in the same locality, and,
- Who were attending, still living in the area and not attending any church?

These two lists are of your church's people and in the perfect world should have no names on them. In real life they do have many names on them and there should be a commitment by the Board of Elders/Deacons and the pastor to get these people back in church. This is where spiritual ministry "rubber" really meets the road! The two lists of people are essentially your backdoor losses. No improvement could be expected without an open and honest effort to address the issues of each individual situation.

Looking at this issue from a Synod level you can start to understand why the Synod is losing baptized members faster than we are gaining them. Attachment 4 is a set of graphs showing membership and related numbers over several years. Backdoor losses have started to appear in the annual statistics just a few years back. See the Lutheran Annual from CPH for current information.

Having said this, we need to say a few words about people who go out the back door to a non-LCMS congregation in the same local area. Most people's first reaction is, "Praise God, they had some problems here, but they are still in Christ's church." and that is generally the end of the discussion. Let's take a closer look at what is really happening. We say that because the ones who leave are giving up Lutheran teaching based on Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and taking on a really different theology. True, they are still Christians, but the issue is who is receiving the full blessing of God's Word and Sacraments? We happen to believe that the Lutheran Confessions and the ensuing worship practices from it are faithful to the teachings in the Bible in the fullest sense. Some of the related things given up are the true presence in Holy Communion, communion with all the saints past and present, infant baptism, free grace without a component of works righteousness, justification, predestination, the Creeds, etc. The list could go on depending on the other church. These differences define us as Lutherans and thank God for it. On the other hand, if we don't teach and practice what makes us different how would anybody understand why they are Lutheran, and why it is important to remain Lutheran! Additionally, they most likely will be in a fluid theological situation primarily based on who the current pastor might be at their new church. This latter point is especially pertinent in today's non-denominational and post-modern evangelical churches where seminary training is of a lessor standard.

Looking at it from another way, your church isn't doing a good job instilling 'brand' loyalty in its members. In other words, people should know exactly why they are Lutheran and what that means in the practical worshiping and doctrinal sense. This is not something that happens by osmosis, they have to be taught and taught; consider discipleship and Doctrine of Vocation classes following adult confirmation classes. In the former you teach basic Biblical beliefs to be a follower of Christ. In the following classes you are taught how to be a servant worker for Christ in His church and to your neighbor! Sound important? You also learn about Love and Mercy, spiritual and creation gifts, the history of the church, and the Reformation and its impact on our belief system. It is with this knowledge one can really develop a true sense of Christian community within your church. Basically, and importantly, a common faith and practice that binds you together in unity. Coming together as brothers and sisters in Christ, is a wonderful and spiritual exercise of faith, i.e., affirmation. (See Hebrews 10.25)

Sorry to say a growing number of Lutherans have lost their historical roots and don't understand or appreciate the confessional treasure that they have in hand. Surely, if they are not taught these things how will they know them? Our individual knowledge of Church history, the Reformation and Confessions and our form of church government speaks volumes about who we are as Lutherans. There is help available on the Additional Resources, found at the end of the book.

In summary, people go out the back door when they are moved to take action because a situation or two that affects them personally has not been resolved or resolved inappropriately. Often the person leaving must share in the blame for the situation, but either is not aware of their part, or did not know how to deal with it when the problem occurred. Again, the easy way out was used, to the loss of the church. The two major reasons for leaving are: personal affronts caused by uncaring, unloving comments and non-Christocracy practices by the lay leadership and/or the pastor.

Managing the Call Process

One of the fundamental tenets in LCMS is that Christ, through the congregation, not a pastor or a principal, creates the Office of Public Ministry or the office of teacher. This is part of the basic autonomy each congregation has. This also takes us back to the corporate issues discussed earlier. Based on historical LCMS doctrinal theses, the body that exclusively manages a calling into a ministry office is the Voters' Assembly, and is based solely on Scripture. The Voters decide when it will be filled and when, in extreme cases, it will be vacated. No other group within a church has any authority in this process unless the Voters have delegated it. The District has an advisory role, nothing more, nothing less. They do not have any part in the voting process. The Voters *authorize* the Call Committee, and the chairperson is selected by and reports to the Voters. The members appointed to the committee should broadly represent the congregation, thus elected leadership should be no more than 50% of the total committee. Five to fifteen people (church membership size related) should be appointed to the committee, either directly by the voters or by a delegation of responsibility by the voters. The main role of the Call Committee is to assist in the evaluation of candidates and generate a "short list" that most nearly meets the church's needs. It is not a negotiating committee unless specifically delegated to do so.

Comments on managing the process have been included primarily because of two reasons;

- The call process outside your church is not what it was 40 years ago and
- The call process itself seems to be such a mystery to the average layperson.

If your church does not have a school then the exposure to the call process is usually determined by the length of time between pastors. In some cases that could be a 5-to-10-year cycle, while in other cases it can be 30 or 40 years in the extreme. We are not attempting here to duplicate the needed vetting and advice provided by the District Office, but rather supplementing it. In other words, we are talking about some of the important issues that are internal to your church's responsibilities when it initiates the calling process which may have been forgotten or never properly learned.

Concerns The area of concern outside your church has seen, unfortunately, dramatic change. In times past it was sufficient to seek names within the congregation and to top the list off, with any from the District Office call list. Once these names were returned, along with the appropriate evaluation forms, the calling could proceed. First, the old evaluation forms corrupted the process; they were not always truthful concerning the capabilities and skills of the candidates. Essentially, they were used to promote the move of "bad wood" by over generous evaluations. What was received was not what you expected and merely moved the problem from one location to another. Later, the Self Evaluation Tool (SET) forms were used which were an improvement but not the complete answer. Secondly, District Offices started "managing the process" by blocking or mislabeling the names (think conservative or confessional, etc. in the current climate) of some and promoting others for your call list that are in line with their thinking. The author knows of one case where the DP tried to block the call after it had been extended and accepted by a pastor in another district. When that is done, it is a clear abuse of power concerning the efficacy and sanctity of the call process and the ability of a congregation to efficiently carryout its internal responsibilities. It has been observed as a worsening problem.

We must also indicate a personal disappointment concerning the general process, which should be a deliberate and prayerful one. Too often it has been observed that personal preferences of the candidate get mixed in with trying to determine God's will for the candidate. Considerations of climate, housing, moving closer or further away from family, etc., are but examples. If such concerns are centered on health or educational needs of the candidate or health issues for one's wife and children, or some other factor, then there is merit for the consideration because it becomes related to the vocations of the pastor. Those could be considerations of the pastor to accept the call as a function of his vocations. If one was a soldier in the government's army rather than God's army there just might be a different outcome. To be honest, we are of the opinion that too much emphasis has been placed on non-spiritual areas, by both pastors and congregations and the will of God has been partially obscured by these "other" issues. Not having a parsonage in a high cost of living area may also be a silent factor. We are not trying to deny these issues exist, but rather to keep them in their proper perspective.

Over our lifetimes the call process has also changed considerably seemingly to offset noted issues above. Telephone interviews, site visits and interviews, and various other techniques are useful to evaluate the 'match' between pastor or teacher and congregation. You might also consider going outside the congregation on your own to seek names from other congregations through friends using email. This is recommended.

Calling Some related issues appear when the congregation is in missionary status or there is a vacancy. A congregation in missionary status would have assigned to it (not called) a full or part time pastor. The district in consultation with the congregation would make the assignment. Once the congregation is stable enough to vote on filling the Office of Public Ministry it can then commence

with the call process at the appropriate time. Usually, the missionary pastor is not considered for the call, for a couple of very good reasons. One, he is a person specially trained and gifted to be a missionary in addition to a trained pastor. This is a different 'breed of cat' than your regular clergy trained by the seminary. Second, the congregation has now advanced from the 'spoon feeding' stage to a point where the laity takes a larger hand, i.e., its correct role, in the running of the church. This transition is difficult to make if "all the players are still the same (same pastor and leaders)," and based on personalities, may never happen effectively. The same comment could be said of interim pastors who are placed in established congregations because specific negative situations exist that need to be resolved before a call is made. To my limited knowledge these are situations where the former pastor has been authoritarian or otherwise deficient in his duties. If you have none of these negative characteristics you don't need an interim pastor, proceed directly to your call process regardless of what advice you may receive from outside your congregation.

Short List The first efforts of the call committee will be concerned with starting the initial list from within the congregation and then forwarding that to the District Office for vetting and addition of names they know who are seeking a call. These names are then "winnowed down" by looking at the evaluations, checking church websites for sermons, etc. The short list should comprise 3 to 5 names that are considered to be the most qualified. This list is then reported back to the Voters' Assembly for the calling process. This process should be defined in your bylaws. The selected candidate should be the only one interviewed. The phone interview process, properly done, can be a very important step. By proper we mean the questions need to be prepared in advance, be specific and short. The process should also include your telling the candidate what important policies (You did write them down, right?) this congregation has adopted, what the church's expectations are on visiting church members, evangelism, leadership training, Communion, etc. Don't leave anything undisclosed, as this is critical to the pastor deciding if his gifts and talents mesh with what you are doing. It is also critical in determining if such a pastor is one that your congregation wants to call. Will he meet your needs and expectations? If you have, or expect to have, an office manager, let him know. If the pastor has received some type of post-graduate leadership training you may find he is a pastor looking to implement a new form of centralized government, with him as the head. If there is no match with a given pastor, that is okay, you have taken an important step in precluding a future set of problems caused by the mismatch.

Job Descriptions and Evaluations Using a job description for your called workers may sound presumptuous and unnecessary, and in some cases it is. However, on the other hand we are really talking 'full disclosure' here and that can have positive results. Unmet expectations for a called worker, in any area, can turn into an ineffective ministry for that worker and result in unhappy Voters as well. The idea here is to spend a little time and get it right so a 'win-win' situation is created. If there is a mismatch between performance and expectations, discord will result. You can count on that as sure as the sun will come up tomorrow. Be proactive in all aspects of administration so you don't wind up with accepting the default condition. You probably won't like it.

A job description is just what the title implies, a listing of the main areas of day-to-day performance. Be specific and descriptive in each area so there is no misunderstanding of the expectations. Try to incorporate crisp language that also allows the performance to be measured, like, "Visits to new members should be completed in the first three months of their acceptance into membership." Avoid

general statements and statements like, "Other duties as assigned." The primary and secondary duties listed on Call Documents are the basis for evaluating those positions. These are not negotiable.

You may rightly ask; who is responsible for creating these job descriptions? Anything to do with full and part time teaching in a school would normally be the responsibility of the Board of Education. The Board of Elders/Deacons would do the Pastor's job description. The council would do the paid administrative staff. The Board of Trustees would take care of any part or full time janitorial and maintenance positions. Get the picture? Check your By-laws to see who has the responsibility for every staff member. This is a cross check of actual positions against your organizational chart and By-laws. Is everybody really covered?

Do call documents ever change? The simple answer is yes, but what constitutes a need to change the document? Some good examples are when the Voters need to make modifications to the call documents such as a teacher going from a 10 month to a 12 month pay schedule, or vice versa, or perhaps half-time administrator and teacher to full time administrator. Any and all changes to the **basic** compensation or **ministry** of the called worker need to be individually approved by the Voters and accepted by the called worker. Changes of this type are not handled as simple budget adjustments for two reasons, 1. A budget number change does not automatically modify the call document; thus, some disconnect is created between expectations and the call document, and 2. It bypasses the Voter's responsibility for the complete calling process. Adding and subtracting, (not adjustments) of employee benefits are also examples for a call document change to be authorized by the Voters.

Annual evaluation of staff, including called workers, is something that is growing in need and application. True, it does in and of itself create an administrative workload. On the positive side it fosters good communication and the identification of problem areas that need improvement. These two items go a long way in creating an effective staff with good morale that works together, which in turn feeds healthy growth. This comes from everybody understanding his or her role in the organization and producing positive synergism. We would be remiss if we did not also advise you that to make annual evaluations work, time and effort are primarily required of the laity, not the called workers. To use a crude analogy an organization never puts the "inmates in charge of the jail." Those in leadership need to wield effective leadership skills in making the organization better, so it can do Christ's work here on earth while there is still time. The evaluation workload (other than the pastor) could fall to an ad hoc committee established by the President of the Congregation.

Compensation of Church Staff

Compensation is an area that comes complete with its own set of "land mines." To work in this area requires those involved to be up to speed in several subjects. Unfortunately, most churches fall in the category of being too small to be able to afford a human resources department, so we do the best we can with what we have. Basically, this means someone has to pick up the slack; usually a committee of lay people that have some business and human resource experience, including Concordia benefit plans. The church Treasurer or the bookkeeper that does payroll is an important participant in this committee. Called or paid workers should never serve on the compensation committee as full voting members, however, there may be the occasion when their input is required and an invitation may be in order to accomplish a specific task. You may ask what is wrong with a called worker serving and the simple answer is no person should be involved in the decision-making process where the end product will financially benefit them. This is simply called "conflict of interest" and that is what it is!

For called workers it is a given that they are salaried, thus it is simply a matter of determining a fair wage for the expected hours of work and in some cases the number of months in the year they will be working. The “fair” wage part can, at times, be a difficult process as there is always the balancing act between the need for the position and the ability of the church to pay for it. Once the Voters establish the position and the initial compensation then the Compensation Committee takes over in the next budget cycle. In the next budget cycle salary adjustment recommendations are made by the appropriate boards, based on established criteria (policy). Other staff positions may be salaried or hourly, depending on the type of job being covered. It would not be unusual to find the church secretary position being either salaried or hourly, depending on the needs of the congregation. However, because it is a lead position it would most often be salaried, with an expected minimum number of hours to be worked. The same would be true of daycare and pre-school staff. There you might find the senior person on salary and the others on hourly wages, due to the differences in job descriptions. Any part-time position would, of course, be hourly, except in rare cases. The trick is not to make this more complicated than it has to be. Importantly, every staff position needs to have oversight from a responsible board that makes recommendations to the Compensation Committee for each budget cycle.

District salary guidelines can be of help in comparing average salaries within the district for certain positions that it covers. The key word here is “guidelines” as they cannot be mandated. Remember the autonomy issue mentioned earlier? The easy path, of course, is just pay whatever the guideline recommends and get on with life. One needs to stop and think about that for a moment. Is this the best use of the resources God has given your local church, based on local salary considerations? Think stewardship here, as what is fair may be more, or less, than the guideline amount. What a particular church pays its staff is the responsibility and decision of that church. This is one of the tenants of our form of church government and is ultimately made by the Voters' Assembly when it adopts the annual budget. Staff compensation should be clearly visible in the annual budget proposal to the Voters. Any proposed pay changes after the budget is approved would need to go back to the Voters for budget modification unless the changes are less than the approval limit authorized by the Voters to the Council. See the section on Fiscal Management for more details.

It should be a normal course of action for the Compensation Committee to routinely do compensation surveys in the local community. We recommend that a staggered schedule be developed so that every three years every type of position gets a local review to see if what is being paid is typical of prevailing compensation in the local community. Usually, the local Chamber of Commerce will have pay and benefit information for your area. Benefits and pay are added together when comparisons with local compensation are made. Benefit packages can be very expensive, particularly health insurance, amount of annual vacation, etc. There can be wide disparities these days in health benefits and health costs between local business packages and that of the Concordia Plan. It is now allowed that the church can have a percentage of the cost for health benefits deducted from the staff's basic pay, a practice long established in the business world. Just remember, it is required that you treat all workers the same when it comes to benefits under the Concordia Plan. Determining the pastor's salary can sometimes be the hardest, as just comparing the pay to the average of what other pastors in the community are earning would be completely unfair due to vast differences in higher level education.

Adjusting Pay Base salaries need just that, a base. For example; if you have a pre-school and operate on a money making or break-even basis, then you need to balance what is charged in student

fees and tuition against the expenses of providing the service. If you want to pay your teachers more it may mean that you will have to also raise fees (time to talk to the pre-school administrator) and this may make your fees more than all the other pre-schools in your area. The result could be a drop in enrollment, which winds up with the pre-school now losing money. Stated simply, this is a marketing job very similar to what a business would do in marketing its product or services. It takes a comprehensive decision-making process to get it right! The same could be said for Day Care.

Minimum wage has evolved into a world all of its own as some states have minimum wages higher than the Federal mandated rate. Some states have the wage keyed to inflation so there is an adjustment every year in January. This can be a bit tricky when your budget year runs from July 1 to June 30. First, you have to guess what the increase will be about six months before it is announced and use that increase for the last six months of your budget. Second, you have to be careful when the mandated increases exceed what some of your lower paying hourly workers (non-minimum wage) are making during the last six-month period. You may have to budget more money in the last six months of the budget year for these workers too. Gets complicated, doesn't it? Read on.

Church staff has two components, paid staff and unpaid staff. A healthy church has a good mix of the two. There is no magic formula here as what is good for one church may not be a good mix for another. The main point is that unpaid staff (often called volunteer staff) provides meaningful service opportunities for your laity, as well as reducing the cost of administration for your church. If you have unpaid staff opportunities and can't find anybody to take them you might consider that this is symptomatic of another problem. Perhaps apathy or a poor understanding of discipleship is the real problem, or there are hurt feelings between particular individuals, etc. (Here we go again!)

We have used the term unpaid staff on purpose here to make a point taught in an assimilation seminar many years ago. In that course a volunteer was defined as what someone is when they first agree to take on an unpaid task for the church. They have this status until the first day they show up for work, and then they become unpaid staff, no longer a volunteer. The point is that just because there is no pay does not mean you do a substandard job, act unreliably in terms of when you show up for work, etc. For example, suppose a person volunteered to staff the office while the secretary is at lunch or vacation. You would expect that person to be able to fulfill the basic functions needed. If someone calls for the pastor it is imperative the call is transferred properly. An answer to the caller of, "I'm sorry, I can't seem to get the call transferred, can I have him call you back?" is not acceptable. A job is a job, whether paid in dollars or not. You are doing God's work, in His church, for the betterment of the Kingdom. Go for it and congratulations on your commitment!

Financial Management

A few thoughts are in order on this very important subject. We say important for several reasons. The obvious one is that income and expenses have to be kept in order, the bills have to be paid, payroll paid, etc. The second important reason is that dissension in the church centers around power, money and theology. That makes it important to get the money part right and keep it right, forever. In a church it is usually the case that there is never enough money to do all the things that need to be done. Compromises are often made when there is a shortage of funds to make budget or, there is not enough projected money in the next budget to include important new work. If you have a good mix of unpaid staff working in the church it generally means you will have more money to spend on ministry. Makes good sense, right? Conversely, if there is work to be done that is critical to making progress and it

takes paid staff to do it (no volunteers), ministry could suffer. This paradox must be managed in some meaningful way and as you can see there are several interlocking forces pulling in different directions. This is a breeding ground for misunderstanding and hurt feelings if not handled properly. All congregations should implement the position of Asst. Treasurer, which not only helps with day to day tasks but is the Treasurer "in waiting" so a smooth transition can be made based on term limits.

We would like at this point to make a distinction. Fiscal management (sometimes called Financial Management) is not bookkeeping. The latter is a different skill set (vocation) primarily concerned with posting, generating reports, printing checks for signature, etc. Fiscal management is determining what reports are needed to forecast future trends, making recommendations for budget adjustments, managing the generation of next year's budget and similar types of tasks. Now just who is this fiscal manager? Generally, it is the Treasurer. In smaller churches the Treasurer is also the bookkeeper so that becomes a dual role. Working with the Treasurer you will need a minimum of two other people with a business or money background to form a Finance Committee. In larger churches, especially those running day schools, pre-schools, and daycare, fiscal management becomes a much bigger issue. It is not something that the same person should be handling (think check and balance here), but it needs to be "handled". Remember the old cliché, "Everybody's job is nobody's job"? It applies here too. Quarterly finance and budget reviews and adjustments are necessary events. It is likely that one or two more individuals with business/money backgrounds and the Financial Secretary (if not already on the board) should be added to the Finance Committee.

In larger churches the Treasurer is not the bookkeeper, as it becomes an additional half to full time, paid position. In this instance the Treasurer should be selected and elected for their fiscal management skills and they would take on a role similar to the Chief Financial Officer in a business. As noted, this is not a singular job, there is a need to involve other lay people in the financial decision-making process. It would not be unusual for the Treasurer or the Financial Secretary, or whoever had the best financial management skills, to chair the Finance Committee. This committee would make the primary financial recommendations to the church council and the Voters' Assembly throughout the year. An alternate is to have the Finance Committee report to the Board of Stewardship and have that board report directly to the Voters on the proposed yearly budget. It is important that committee members understand financial matters, understand the budget and your church's financial reporting system. Don't expect your average clergy, officer or board chair to understand the financial systems of your church, regardless of its size. They are trainable, however, so do make them an active part of financial management to the extent possible.

We recommend that when the budget is presented to the Voters it be accompanied by a graph showing a 5, or 10-year history of the dollar amount in the Retained Earnings account. This will quickly show the net/loss gain of your church over that period.

Recommendations A few words and recommendations are in order concerning the accounting system used in your church. Again, most churches have this function computerized using one of the inexpensive small business software packages. The Synod, via your District, also provides written procedures and recommendations to your Treasurer for managing your finances, read them and take them to heart. One item that does need to be addressed is the financial reporting system's use of standardized chart of accounts numbering. As your church grows and adds ministries it becomes harder and harder for the Voters and Council members to understand the big picture and really

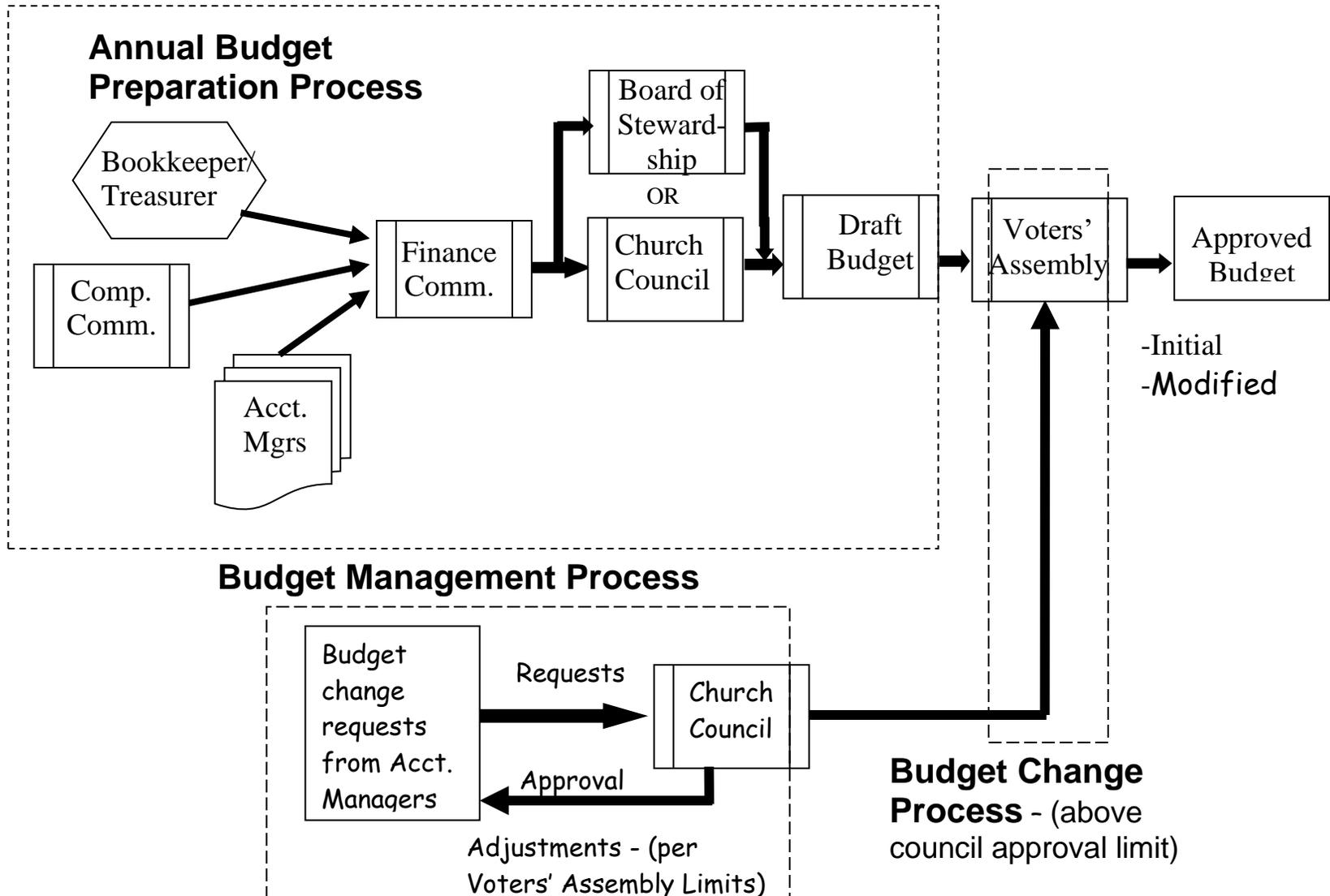
comprehend where the money is actually being spent, other than the big-ticket items like salary. Fundamental questions like, "Is Day Care making or losing money?" are difficult to determine unless a special report is prepared. A practical way to address this problem is to group your account numbers by ministry or program area. If you have an existing computerized system, you may be able to add this capability simply by assigning each account number a "class" or "project number" where the title would be one of your groupings. To start the process, you will have to put a team of people together to decide what ministry groups are needed and what account numbers belong to each group. Sometimes an account number has to be split by a percentage between two or more groups.

In a small church or one not having a weekday school or day care activities I would recommend you use the following groups: Word and Sacrament, Administration and Materials; Education and Internal Evangelism; Missions and Outreach. For larger congregations and those with schools, etc. you will find it necessary to add one or more groups. If you are just converting to a computerized program, I would recommend that you arrange your chart of accounts this way then you don't have to worry about special coding for the groupings, it will just print out the way you want it.

The church's budget needs to be as accurate as possible when submitted for Voter's approval. Even the best estimates can be off and therefore accounts will need adjustment during the year. The reason is some degree of accuracy is necessary so budget projections for the remainder of the year have meaning, as well as the next year. If you are not going to "make budget" for the year the council and Voters need to hear it from the Finance Committee, quickly. Additionally, if a ministry expense was deferred at the beginning of the year due to lack of funds and at mid-point through the year you find that the money is available then approval could be recommended. Only if the numbers were accurate would there be **confidence** that this projection will not create a future problem, but conversely, be an uplifting event.

Budgets Something also needs to be said about your budget. Actually, several things need to be said! Your budget will have three components: the generation of a budget, approval of a budget, and management of the budget during the year. A model of this approach is shown in Figure 2. You will need to develop policy and procedures to implement good budget practices. The following items, at a minimum need to be addressed: How much can "account managers" request in increases for single accounts without going back to the Voters (account transfers), and how big an increase in the overall budget can the council approve without going back to the Voters? An account manager is anyone who has spending authority over one or more budget accounts, such as the Sunday School Superintendent, Chairman of the Board of Elders/Deacons, etc. No account manager is allowed to overspend their account budget limits without first seeking and receiving approval for an adjustment from the council. These adjustments are primarily moving unneeded funds from one or more accounts to meet the needs of the request, not increases to the budget, unless within the Voters' pre-approved amount for the year. Whatever adjustments are made they should be reported to the Voters at the next meeting. Remember these adjustments are activities the council is doing based on a delegation of authority from the Voters and likewise the voters are entitled to know what actions were taken on their behalf. In Figure 2 I have used standard font for the annual budgeting process (initial budget) and italicized font for the adjustment process.

Figure 2
Model Lutheran Church and School Budgeting Flow Chart



Church Discipline

One might wonder why there is a section titled Church Discipline in a book on church government. Isn't that something for an Elders or Deacon Training effort? The answer is yes, but not exclusively. True, Elders/Deacons should know two things: exactly how Matt. 18 is to be applied and that they do not mete out church discipline, the Voters do. Thus, the Voters need to know the basics, as this area is their responsibility for administration of the Office of the Keys. The Matt. 18 process is reserved for the church to deal with unresolved or persistent sins of the mortal, or soul threatening type. The three-step process, should lead to repentance for the sin. If there is no repentance the process ends with excommunication. In other words, there is a real danger of losing a brother or sister from the Kingdom without this real repentance. *Note: For information on Elder/Deacon training please refer to page 44.*

When there is a strong disagreement or strained relationship with someone and it is bothering you, there is an obligation, first and foremost, to speak to that person privately and heal the problem. You have no right, ethically or scriptural, to complain about that person to anyone else until you speak to them first. Lesser issues should be individually forgiven and forgotten in love, as Christians, (turn the other cheek, etc.) and never mentioned it to anyone again. Otherwise, you did not really forgive and forget. Checking into the service provided by Ambassadors for Reconciliation is an option you may also want to explore. <http://www.hisaor.org/>

Public or Private Sin Any committed sin that is actually considered for discipline is processed either as a "private" or public" sin. So called "common sins," minor personal disagreements, or slights, are not to be considered for church discipline. A set of doctrinal theses on this topic is contained in *The Abiding Word*, Volume 2, Chapter XXII. We have paraphrased this section from that chapter and used it to develop Figure 3, on the following page. We would highly recommend it for reading. We would be naïve to think none of the large percentage of couples (young and old) living together before marriage, or have no plans for marriage, are Lutherans. Church discipline would apply in these cases too because the persistent sin must be addressed.

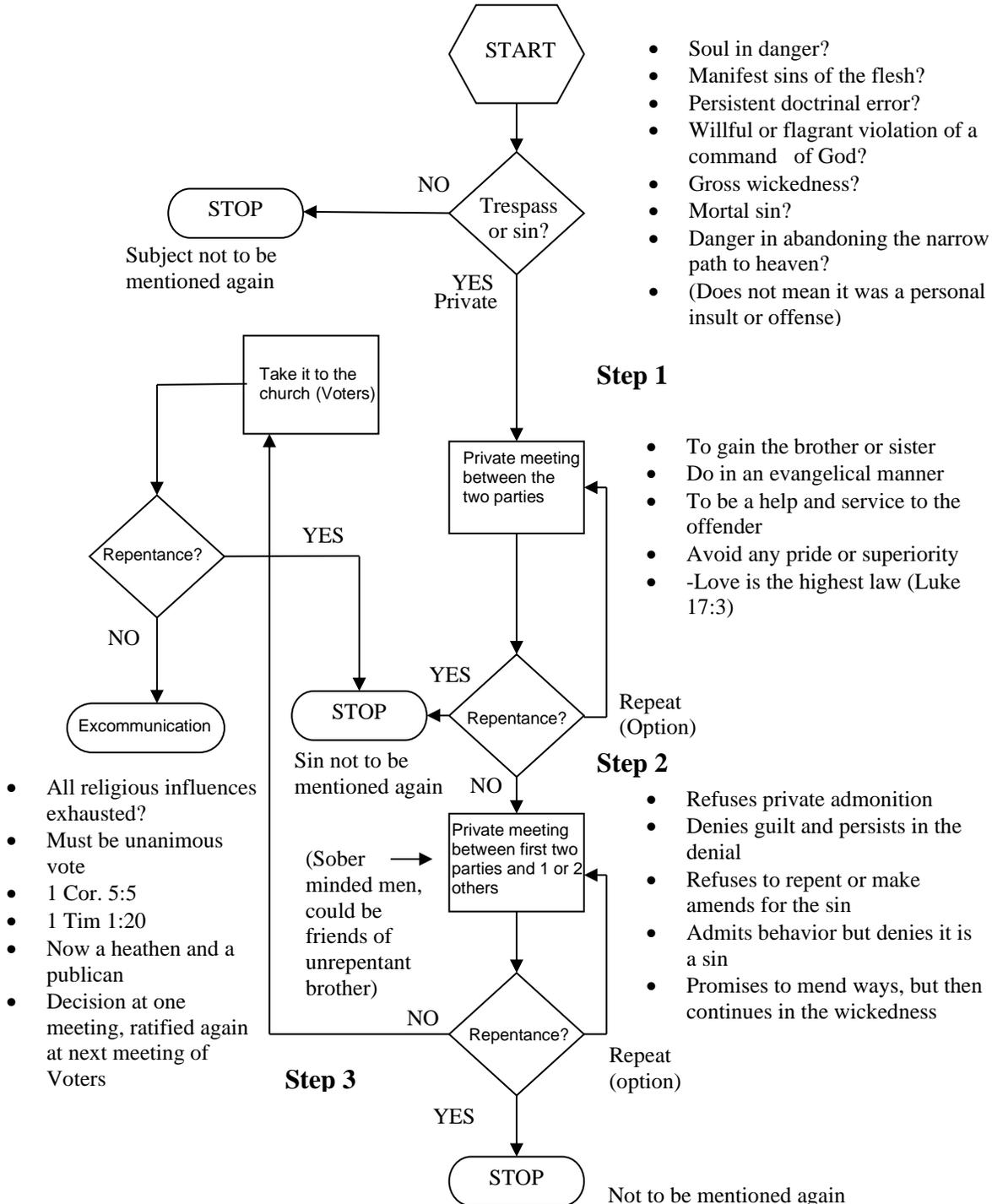
Now before you start thinking this is pretty abstract, "Nobody does this anymore," or "When was the last excommunication in this church?," consider this. The purpose of any discipline process is to gain the brother or sister back into the fold (true Christian member of the universal church) through repentance, with prayer, dialogue, and love by those involved with the process. Only if all of this fails and it has gone before the Voters can separation from your fellowship by the process of excommunication happen. Excommunication must meet certain criteria and the vote must be unanimous at two successive Voters' Assembly meetings. Failing repentance, the public church body must separate itself from the unrepentant sin so as not to be in league with it and bring disgrace upon Christ's church. Excommunication is an example of the congregation (Voters) exercising the Office of the Keys. In this the Bible speaks clearly (Matt. 18:17) and the status of the person excommunicated is that of being delivered unto Satan, if done properly. See 1 Cor. 5:5 and 1 Tim. 1:20.

From *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 2, page 544 we have, "From these passages it becomes plain and evident that both adherence to false doctrine and manifest sins of the flesh require prompt and ready recourse to church discipline in proper attitude and in the best interests of the offending brother, as well all the common sins of human weakness, do not fall into the category of offenses requiring disciplinary procedure." Also, on page 544 we find, "Manifest sins of the flesh committed in a flagrant and willful manner against better knowledge and therefore in conscious disregard of God's Holy Law are known

in theology as mortal sins." These sins are also listed in 1Timothy 5:8, Galatians 5:19-21, and 1Corinthians 6:9 and have the capability to create major problems at home and in the church.

Figure 3 Matt. 18 Flow Chart

(For Communicate Members of the same church when the sin or trespass is known only privately)



What is happening is a lack of training on just how Matt. 18 is to be applied. I myself must admit to having an improper understanding of this basic doctrine in thinking that it also applied to trespasses committed against someone by personal slights or offense. It doesn't. To what it applies are sins that are a danger to someone's salvation, unrepentant insults, persistent doctrinal error, etc. Interestingly, the proper application of Matt. 18 has also been misunderstood by a few pastors I have known over the past several years, which is how I came to my incorrect way of thinking. Just read *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 2, Chapter XXII and it will all become clear.

Private sin is where the "three steps" process is applicable. Figure 3 has been annotated to show the three discreet steps and how each function in logical relation to the other steps. Steps 1 and 2, which are proper forms of admonition, can be repeated if, in the opinion of those involved, it would be beneficial and lead to repentance. Note that the flow chart show in Figure 3 is annotated for resolution of specific qualifying types of private sins. It would not be uncommon for this knowledge to be held by a member of the sinner's family. This chart is not appropriate for public sins of the same types. In the case of public sin the instructions are to take the issue directly to the Voters' Assembly. Also note that a direct role is not given to the Board of Elders/Deacons. However, it would not be inappropriate, if provided in your By-laws, for the board to review the case with all parties before taking it to the Voters (Step 3) to ensure that the sin is the qualifying type, and Steps 1 and 2 of Matt. 18 were done properly, and in love and prayer. The board has no role in meting out their own discipline because they do not exercise the Office of the Keys, the Voters do. One must remember the prime purpose of the discipline process is full repentance and to win the brother or sister back to the way of Christ. Allowance must also be made for future repentance and welcoming back into the fold (full rights and privileges) for the errant brother or sister. What would you say to them on that happy occasion?

Unfortunately, personal bias and other negative characteristics can creep into any process undertaken by mankind. Church discipline is no exception. Thus, a church body must always be prepared to admit that it erred in the process and accept a "review of the proceedings from another congregation, or some qualified board or committee," which is covered in Thesis XII, page 557 of *The Abiding Word*.

Summary

Now that you have made it to the end of this book you can take it and apply it to your situation. Hopefully, this has increased your head and heart knowledge, and how that works together to bring about a more effective church. You are one part of the body of Christ and each of us has a role in Christ's church. Be active in it and help ensure that all things are done properly and lovingly, based on Scripture and sound orderly practices. I would encourage you to serve on a board or committee, attend Voters' Assembly meetings and ask pertinent questions and be prepared to share what you have learned from this book.

References:

1. *Management: A Biblical Approach*, by Myron Rush
2. *God's Plan for Church Leadership*, by Knofel Staton
3. *The Master's Plan, For Making Disciples*, by Win Arn and Charles Arn
4. *The Abiding Word*, Vol. 1, 2 and 3 (CPH)
5. *Government in the Missouri Synod*, by Carl S. Munding (CPH)
6. *Zion on the Mississippi*, by W. O. Forster (CPH)
7. *The Form of a Christian Congregation*, by C. F. W. Walther (CPH)

Additional Resources

The following resources are available is a small part of what is available on the Sound Witness Website.

1. ***Your Reformation Walk***. An eight-lesson study, with graphics, covering the early church, events leading up to the Reformation, the Reformation, The *Book of Concord*, and events leading up to Saxon immigration to the U.S. and the history and development of LCMS. Available on the SoundWitness.org Website for download, no charge. A copy of the printed and bound book is available directly from Gene White at churchmatters@frontier.com . Cost is \$19.00 for the color version, \$13.00 for the black and white version.
2. Contact Gene White at churchmatters@frontier.com for additional educational and music resources not mentioned on this page. Most are available for free download on the Sound Witness Website.
3. ***Evangelism and Outreach***. Materials for local hosting of a one-day conference on this topic are available from Church Matters at no cost. *The Serving our Neighbors in Love and Mercy Conference* includes lessons on Vocation and outreach, plus two workshops. available for free download on the Sound Witness Website.
4. ***Lay Leadership Series*** includes this book and four additional lessons that expand on the areas of this book as follows; ***Part I, Church Government – History, Part II, Church Government – Constitution and Bylaws, Part III, The Call Process, Part IV, Financial Management, Part V, Use of Policy***. All available on the Sound Witness Website.
5. Consulting available on reworking your Constitution and By-laws.
6. Elder training package, contact Rev. Dan Domke via email: revdomke@quest.net.
7. A two-part Bible study titled ***Our Creator God, Genesis Revisited, Genesis Defended, Scientific Atheism Rebuked***, is available for free download on the Sound Witness Website. Give your youth the armor they need to withstand the god-less educational systems they will encounter sooner than later in their life.

Attachment 1

PROBLEM SOLVING 101

The basic elements that can be used are:

Title: The problem is stated in broad terms to reference and identify all elements of the problem; hence the title may need to be reformulated once the final solution is agreed.

Identification of the Problem: The problem must be stated in its entirety, which may take a couple of iterations while dealing with "Facts Bearing on the Problem." It should clearly state the goal to be achieved, otherwise, how would you know if the problem would be solved by the proposed solution?

Assumptions: Here you include all of the assumptions that need to be taken into account. The less assumptions the better and if the need for one is not clear, leave it out. You know what they say about assumptions! Facts are always better.

Facts Bearing on the Problem: Here you describe in summary form all of the facts to be considered in discussion of the problem. Sometimes this is done in a group discussion, such as a "brainstorming" session. No opinions, emotional feelings, unsupported facts are allowed. Also, do not include reasoning or analysis of the facts, as that comes later. Facts should be arranged in logical sequence. You may also want to include symptoms of the problem as a check to see if the proposed solution will also "cure" the symptoms.

Discussion of the Problem: In this section the discussion lists all the possible solutions to the problem, based solely on the assumptions and facts stated above. Nothing else, not any new facts or assumptions, can to be introduced here. The discussion of the problem should lead logically to the solution.

Conclusions: The conclusions, and there can be more than one, are to be brief and specific. Do not summarize the main points of the Discussion and call it a conclusion.

Recommendations: This is the final section and can contain multiple recommendations, each clearly stated. Taken as a group the recommendations must completely solve the stated problem. Because of the unique situation associated with a Fellowship of Believers the recommendations cannot ignore the human element and the need to be considerate of people's feelings. Perhaps this is the most difficult part of the equation when attempting to solve a problem. However, that is not to say that feelings, per se, should rule the solution when one is dealing with the betterment of the fellowship. Some feelings are just that, feelings, and have no basis to support them. On other occasions feelings can be based on incorrect information, or misunderstood information. This is why it is so important to develop all the facts that deal with the solution to the problem, i.e., so there is a sound basis for proceeding with implementation of the recommendations and good communications can be provided concerning the decision.

Attachment 2

Model Policy Statement

Title: _____

Scope/Topic: _____

Policy Statement: _____

Enacted On: _____ By: _____

Joint Policy with: _____

Exceptions to this policy are: _____

This policy may only be cancelled by a subsequent replacement policy, or the following event: _____

List of policy topics, complements of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Chico, A

Acolyte	Constitution/Bylaws	Pastor
Alcohol	Equipment	Parish Hall/Fireside Room Use
Altar Flowers	Funeral	Scholarship
Altar Guild	Fundraiser	School Rent Distribution
Baptism	Grounds	School Reserve Fund
Charity Fund	Hand Bells	Sexual Offender Covenant
Church Operating Emergency Reserve Fund	Janitorial	Sponsor
Church Facilities Reserve Fund	Job Guidelines	Wedding
Confirmation	New Member	User/Greeter
	Office Manager	
	Organist	

Attachment 3

Orientation Night

Model Agenda

1. Welcome by host board
2. Introductions of those present
3. How we are organized
4. Our Mission and Vision
5. How we conduct our worship services
 - Liturgy and confessional statements
 - Music
 - Public Confession and Absolution
 - Communion policy and practices
6. Our public ministries
 - Small Organizations with Ministry Opportunities
 - Day School, etc.
7. Our services available to worshipers, school and community
 - Annual and special events
 - Sports program
 - Youth program
 - Outreach to our community
8. The path to full participation and membership
 - Transfers
 - Profession of faith
 - Adult and Junior Confirmation classes
 - Confirmed member
 - Voters' Assembly
 - Our discipleship programs
9. Educational Offerings
10. Final Questions and Signups

Attachment 4

