

## Minutes, Lutheran CORE Summit on Pastoral Formation, Phase Two

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

Comfort Inn, Des Plaines, IL

### Opening and Devotions – Dennis Nelson

- Thomas: not a cynic so much as someone deeply wanting to believe it's true – but resurrection seems too good to be true! First *disciple* to call Jesus Lord and God – not just Son of God. No mention of his twin. Possibly dead – so death, not resurrection, was a reality for him.
- Became disciple to India and Pakistan. Dennis had conversation with Pakistani Christians. They have developed schools, homes, clinics for vulnerable people, especially girls. They have astonishing courage: first, of Thomas (let us go to Jerusalem to die with him) and of Christians in Pakistan, who live as his spiritual descendants.
- How important it is to pass faith on to next generation, even in dangerous circumstances. Let us not be the generation that “drops the ball,” but instead raises up faithful pastors for the life of the Church.

### SESSION ONE

#### Scott Grorud, Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, MN: Raising up leaders for the church, especially young people

- Is “burn down the past, start over” the proper response to concerns for raising up leadership, renewing the church? Makes us seem like “useless barnacles on the nave of the church!” But a respect for the history, traditions, faith of the church shows that they have staying power compared to fads.
- Rich Mellheim: Faith Stepping Stones – respect, embrace, improve the traditions.
  - Baptism, Sunday School, Bible, First Communion, etc.: Gather in church, bless children.
  - But congregations are unique. Mellheim’s specifics may not work, but the idea of identifying significant stepping stones, lift them up, develop faith through them, can be adapted to different contexts.
- What is done at Faith, to build children up as they grow.
  - B-2-3: Support, encourage, equip for teaching faith: Parents of children to age 3.
  - Faithful Followers: 4<sup>th</sup> graders wanted weekly Bible study in addition to Sunday School. Overseen by parents, teachers, but student led!
  - Release Time: walk over from school, do Bible lesson, service projects – also involves senior citizens.
  - 56er’s: Early middle schoolers. After School, weekly Bible study, kinetic energy release. Draws many kids from outside congregation, invited by friends. Some stay! A surprising outreach.

- Confirmation: again, draws “outsiders” who have been invited by their friends. This also draws families into membership – even families being baptized together.
  - Incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders invited to leadership retreat, to be role models for incoming 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and prepare them for high school youth ministry. Goal: DO ministry, provide leadership
  - Confirmation done in Lenten service
- FLY – Faith Lutheran Youth. Meets weekly, year-round, which provides continuity. Again, many other kids participate. Study, discussion, games, service. Mission trips in summer. Always several adults assisting.
  - Some come early, make dinner, prepare for other leadership
  - FLY Band – instrumentalists who lead worship in group and church – also in community. They provide music in Lent, so confirmands see kids just a bit older in leadership roles.
  - Several outgrowth ministries: 4:12 (Timothy) and Club 218 (James): resuscitated a Compline service; and developed summer day camp for underprivileged children.
- AP Theology. HS juniors, seniors, gathering at 6 a.m. to read theology!
- Prodigal College Ministry. With Christ the King: outreach to college students. Offer worship, Bible study, help them keep in touch with home congregation, and support their faith in increasingly hostile environment.
- Summer interns: College-age children and youth ministers. Participate with above ministries, read theology, receive leadership experience and mentoring. Come for the experience, are paid a small stipend.
- FLYP... for parents. Didn’t work so well! Oddly, parents are obstacles. They like the programs but don’t really invest themselves in them.
- Home-grown leaders: 3 staff members came through programs, 2 weren’t raised in the church! Young leaders show that these ministries have borne fruit. Yes, there are disappointments, but a lot of growth in faith, leadership, understanding. Several seminarians, too.
- Vision: to be a teaching/training center for the larger church.
  - The old model of home, church, church college, seminary is faltering – some colleges are hotbeds of heresy. So: we need to really form their faith while we have them.
  - Yes, fun, enjoyment is part. But don’t be afraid to do deep, meaty study, memorization, solid theology. “Where God Meets Man” is a starting point. Used to be considered popular work, now considered so hard – but the AP Theology kids are eating it up.
  - Give youth the categories to think through issues of faith; and hands-on leadership skills so they can be the guides, mentors of younger kids.

## SESSION TWO

### **Jari Rankinen, General Secretary, Theological Institute of Finland: Supplementing the theological training of orthodox seminarians enrolled in state university system, which is often hostile to traditional faith. (Presented by Skype)**

- Against female priesthood, same-sex marriage. In official church, former has been extant for 30 years; latter, for now, not done.
- Small spiritual groups – are, for many faithful, the “real” church. But there is strong desire of most Finns to remain members of the “State church.” Not easy to leave the Church into which you were baptized. But those who object to female pastors are often refused ordination.
- Institute formed in 1987. Seven societies within Lutheran Church formed it; 10 now support it.
  - Support, supplement the theological education of seminarians; also, support one another, cooperate in ministry efforts of all 10 societies.
  - Students actually graduate from the university, not Institute. Must have paper from university to be ordained as priest. Institute students must come voluntarily, and the challenge is to provide solid classes that they find valuable.
  - Weekly emails to inform students of upcoming course material.
  - About 2000 supporters of the Institute; 7 full-time staff, numerous visiting teachers. Some are already on University faculty, and “advertise” the Institute as possible.
  - Many of the students have grown up in the societies, already know about the Institute when they go to University of Helsinki. They also tell other students about it.
- We need good theology to counteract the bad theology that is rampant. The Gospel must be central; and we must support students who strive to be faithful. Original 7 societies formulated a document, signed by each. Ties the Institute to the Biblical and Lutheran faith.
- Classes in Biblical exegesis, dogmatics, pastoral care, rhetoric, church history. Lutheran dogmatics and interpretation of Scripture as the Word of God are often given short shrift at the university, although there are good professors there teaching the mechanics of exegesis, etc.
  - Outreach is grounded in solid theology – and also needs teachers and pastors who work in congregations and among ordinary people, many of whom are not participants in life of church. (All Finns are “members,” but very few participate.)
- There are some discussions with Catholics (a very small group in Finland!).

### **Brian Hughes, St. John Lutheran Church, Columbia, MD: Multi-ethnic/cultural/denominational church raising up leaders for future**

- WHY?! This gets into the what/how. But WHY comes first.
  - Ministry done in largely unchurched area, even vestiges of Christian culture have bled out. Nature of God, Christ, Church has led to reflecting on nature of humanity.
  - Hookup culture, fragility of younger generation part of this.

- Reaching unchurched, teaching them to be disciples isn't just bring them to a building, buy a dvd, do small group study in living room; like with fly fishing, it's having someone actually show you hands on.
- What happened to British church after the Romans left?
  - Christian communities were isolated; had to form small groups of people who had to learn and practice the faith without the "Structural church" headquartered in Rome.
  - Isolated, surrounded by nonbelievers.... Sounds familiar!
- 10-12 years ago, the megachurches were doing great; today even they struggle. It is the culture.
- Monks went to Iona – isolated, seemed safe (until Vikings showed up!), - place to learn, teach, propagate the faith. Mostly lay-led.
- So how do we prepare, today, to perpetuate the faith and send people out to re-evangelize?
  - Ephesians 4:7-8: To each one, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives (sin, death, and the devil) and gave gifts to his people." Ephesians 4:11-13 – given gifts to build up the Body of Christ.
  - John 14:12 – do the works of Jesus: preach, teach, heal – because Jesus is going to the Father.
- "Antifragile" – book by Nassim Nicholas Taleb. Good model for examining "Can you survive the chaos of change?"
  - Fragility: things can shatter under stress!
  - Robust: need for retrenchment, strong, deep, robust. Like Hadrian's wall... but what happened when Romans left?! If this "retrenchment" in the church were working as well as we want, why would we be here, and why would are kids turn out so fragile?
  - Antifragile: To make disciples in this environment, we need a core base (high accountability, low control) that can be reproduced in everyday world. Rather like DNA. Need more than, say, Sunday School.
  - Like the Celtic monastic, lay-driven communities, they could go into towns, "do life" among them, knowing how to speak, do, pray – and it changed people.
  - When things begin to change, does it hurt more? The situation is fragile. If situation is antifragile, then more interaction, change, growth happens. "Positive asymmetric payoff."
- Stories: people doing amazingly daring witnessing, praying, even in danger. Intergenerational education, not regular confirmation. Lay hands on and invoke Spirit over whole families. Train up, pray, release for ministry. So, for example, St John has a cadre of members who preside over nonmember funerals, memorials, etc.
- To raise resilient kids, make family a safe place where prayer, discussion, blessing happens. Melheim's "Faith Five" model.
  - If your household is doing that, you become a household worth imitating!
  - Result: People, even children, are "schooled" in a profound way to respond in a Spirit-led fashion to the deep hurts of others – and people are able to expose that terrible grief even in worship, knowing it is safe, they will be cared for in Christ.

- And even CEO's, directors in business, etc., have used the "Faith Five" model in business, found ways to share it – and have prayed with people.
- This is the Celtic model: people scattered to their everyday lives, finding ways to live and share their faith in meaningful ways. It can have astonishing impact on nonbelievers who witness it!
- Lutherans have deep, meaty things in our identity to nourish and sustain people in pain, grief. And when we teach people to "do" their faith, others will respond.
  - Do we have pastors who will train and release laity, and people that actually believe even they will "do greater things than Jesus?"

### SESSION THREE

#### **Gary Pecuch, Director of youth ministries, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Grove City, OH: A vision of "future church," and the seminary training, faith development and youth ministry needed**

- Originally the church had YoungLife – but kids went there, not to church. Then, hired youth director (aka Gary) to re-engage high school youth who were in YoungLife. But after a very few years, the discovery was that kids were not hanging around. Again, the program was isolated from life of church. So: immerse children in the life and mission of the church.
- Moved from age-based to interest-based programming, and filling relationship voids.
  - Examine the voids regularly throughout the year, then try to connect kids to the right person to that young person.
  - Mission: equip and train God's people to obtain and use the skills they need to accomplish God's purpose for their lives.
- There's a need to "major in little people ministry." By 12, their interests and identity are solidified. So, you need to immerse them in the church well before 12.
  - "Early and often." Put time, money into the little people ministry – you will see dividends by the time they are in high school. If you start with high school ministry, it's often because you're in panic mode as you see that age group fade away.
  - Beginning with little people – they remember it, and you, eagerly and lovingly.
  - Confirmation ministry has to be the sharpest, best ministry in the church. If you do it well, chances are, they'll stick with the church, or return to it later.
- Faith Skills inventory. "Personal ministry plans" for kids to help them develop the disciplines, knowledge, etc. See handout.
- Visionary Notebook: Every handout they're EVER given from first day of confirmation, through high school, goes into their notebook! It's tabbed into different areas, but it grows as they do. It's also a way to compile documentation for service projects and trips.

#### A Vision: What MIGHT the Church look like?

- All about faith communities. CONNECTIONS are critical. Maybe we need "Faith Community Directors" in churches to keep on top of this. It's not just the pastor's job.
- The digital church. Make that intrinsic to instruction. Text during week, say goodnight, etc., to stay connected to youth. Chat boxes as popup if you go on website. Webinars, podcasts. Etc.

- Personal observation: Dead, dying churches don't embrace technology. They also lack vision toward Gospel, or where church is heading. Lack of visionary leadership. No active prayer ministry. Too inwardly focused. Cash reserves primarily for maintenance. Married to buildings, which is more important than ministry. Only want members just like them, even when community has changed. Resistant to change. Power groups staunchly hold onto power. Us vs. them. Gate keepers, not permission granters. No sense of urgency about important things. Unwilling to embrace youth.
- Non-geographical church. Your congregation may be nationwide, even international. Largely, I think, as a natural outcast of digital revolution. Facebook services! There are more people tuning in to these than just their members. Your church is the world!
  - Maybe one way of reconnecting is to gather, say, former confirmands electronically.
- Church a la carte: people are picking and choosing what they will be involved in. Give them many options to be connected to the church.
- New structures. Youth not doing constitutions, Robert's Rules – how do we address this?
- Raising money: they want QR codes to scan, text donations, etc. Millennials don't write checks!
- New ways of addressing clergy shortage.... Much needed. Congregations, synods, districts need to function as equippers and trainers of church leaders. Coaches of laity to do ministry!
- Pipelines and feeder programs are vital – in church ministry, and in seminaries.
  - Need seminaries to focus on developing sharp, well-done catechesis online.
  - If you have high schooler interested in seminary, find a way to enroll them now. That's how colleges are capturing kids. Take courses online, while they're excited about their faith, that will count toward seminary. And then: whether for a faith-based college or seminary: get them on campus often! Service trips, theology, fun: they want to do this, they've been on your campus, they are predisposed to consider it.
  - Overseas trips that give college credit for high schoolers. What about going to Biblical cities and studying the related trips – Galatia, Ephesus, etc.? And getting college credit?
- God is changing the church. Are you willing to change along with what God is doing?

**Julie Smith, Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church, Springfield, MN, Dean of Students, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary: Why the seminary was founded and how it makes seminary affordable, accessible, and available**

- Seminary founded in 2011. In LCMC, beginning of NALC, there was a gap in theological education available to confessional Lutherans. Committed to training preachers of Gospel.
- M.Div., Parish service certificates (English and Spanish), "Lutheran Year" for people coming in from other denominations, and D.Min. (Law/Gospel)
- Not independently accredited because they are *fully* online.
  - Partnership with Sioux Falls Seminary (Northern Baptist) allows students to obtain an accredited M.Div. or D.Min.
  - The curriculum is in line with accreditation, but the peripherals are not.
- Everyone is part time! This began as a necessity but has become a gift.

- Is seminary more of a trade school or professional institution? Does it produce theologians or pastors? Yes. In best sense of word, it is a vocational school. Goal is to produce pastors deeply grounded in Lutheran theology to serve God in the world and the church.
- Contextually-based education: learning in place. The concepts they learn are being lived out in some fashion in their situation.
  - One criticism of residential education: removes people from real church, replaces it with an idealized church that does not exist and which pastors can end up hating because it is not their ideal.
  - Technology allows for a “four-year internship” in which they get theological training concurrently. Actually, it allows them to take more than 4 years to finish their degree, which eases the financial burden.
  - Faculty, staff are all embedded in congregations, too, which shapes what and how they teach. This “keeps it real!”
  - How lack of residential seminary tenure track positions will impact church in future is unclear.
- Mentoring is central to this kind of education. Not only are you learning and doing simultaneously, but you are constantly being fed by mentoring pastors who have the experience they lack. And the mentors themselves are constantly encouraged to learn, refresh, deepen what they know. This reinvigorates their own ministry.
- Congregations invest in theological education in ways other than sending a check. They see the development of a person right in their midst, from student to pastor.
  - Also creates transparency in what professor is teaching, because it is so immediately “there” for congregations.
- There are significant challenges:
  - Loss of community, collegiality. They need to find other ways to connect with one another. There’s a yearly theological conference; encourage all students and faculty to attend.
  - Loss of itinerancy: “I don’t want to leave where I am in order to be educated” can turn into “I don’t want to serve broader church, period.”
  - Challenge to find good mentors, technical challenges, scheduling for classes and availability of professors.
  - Worship: challenge is finding instructor to teach such a liturgically diverse group!
- Requirements for M.Div. pretty traditional, with a twist. 30 courses in traditional disciplines, plus mission, evangelism. Assignments not just written papers. May have to develop confirmation lesson on a topic, verbatims on pastoral care visits, funeral planning, etc.
- Parish service certificate: designed for congregations which can’t afford or attract a pastor, but someone in the parish is willing to serve.
  - 10 courses, transferable to M.Div. program, which is actually possible due to lack of accreditation.
  - Mexican and Nicaraguan programs: 6 courses, semiannual trips there. The need came out of Lutheran Charismatic movement there. They want the Lutheran theology, lest the churches simply become Pentecostalist.
- Goal is to train good, effective, and faithful pastors.

## SESSION FOUR

### Jeff Christopherson, Vice President, Send Network (North American Mission Board, SBC): Identifying, training, supporting, equipping, sending out church planters

- Began as church planting in Canada. In 2010, took on SEND responsibilities. Last year planted over 700 mission churches – but lost at least the same number. So are not keeping up with what’s needed for multiplication in post-Christian world.
- Five crucial shifts:
  - Moving from starting with worship to starting with disciple-making communities.
    - From Great Awakening-WWI, was “co-vocational movement.” “Two vocations, together.” Planting out of their “day job,” from evangelism.
    - WWII-1985, “professional congregationalizing.” Planted for, not from, evangelism. Congregations did own responsibility to own their faith and share it.
    - 1985-now-ish: Launch phase. Entrepreneurial mode, using worship service as evangelistic methodology. Church growth ideology. Corporate idea of working people from boundaries to core, not personal encounter. Disciple-making not central. Currently is losing its effectiveness, especially if there is no real Christian memory in a community.
    - Now: form small, in-house groups that in time may coalesce into a larger worshipping community. Traditional ways of inviting people to church aren’t working.
  - Moves from pushing gatherers to empowering multipliers.
    - Need to plant *more* churches, but also *more effective* starts.
    - We have been celebrating *addition*. If, after 4 years, the majority of your members are simply from other churches, this is not the most effective building of the Kingdom.
    - Implicit in Kingdom- sending is the metaphor of multiplication, not addition. We must assess by Kingdom scorecard, not church growth metaphor. This makes heads explode.
  - Shift from recruiting external leaders to developing in-house pipelines.
    - Former emphasizes addition, latter, multiplication. Former is good but won’t turn tide.
    - The congregation isn’t the dead-end link in the Great Commission chain, but a vital pipeline for sending out church building teams.
    - Church planters were everywhere. We’ve fished out the pond without restocking it. So we need to turn from looking elsewhere to indigenous pipeline
  - Inadequately fueling all church planters is being replaced by jet-fueling some.
    - 4-tier funding system therefore developed. Assess their skills, location, situation; reserve most resources for the “five-talent people” without ignoring the “one talent people.”
  - Shift from institutional centrism to church multiplication.
    - Seminaries better at producing seminary profs than mission developers.



- Vision of church organization as scaffolding that helps support the congregations as they begin multiplying. Most of the heavy lifting for church multiplying must be done at congregational level.
  - Goal is for about 4% to be true multiplying churches, supported by denomination and at least 10% of congregations that are more classic “reproducing/additive” churches. This produces a “tipping point” where there is sufficient energy (and resources) to succeed.
- Three-year process for developing church planters
  - Theology and spiritual formation. These may be people who don’t see self as planters, but want to grow, serve God.
  - Missiology and disciple-making. How to read context, make disciples in it.
  - Church planting IQ. The feet on the ground, amass the toolbox of skills part.
- Also have church planter assessment for those who already sense their call to this ministry.
  - Competency, character, health of marriage. Less than 50% make it through online assessment.
  - The “Survivors” come to an intensive retreat, complete with social and marriage counselors, ability for preaching, evangelization, vision-casting.
  - About 60% of Phase 2 candidates are able to continue. There’s a lot of pain involved in this ministry; if they can’t hack it in everyday life, they can’t succeed at this.
  - These candidates are selected for training to go into the least church urban communities in America.
- Character of church planter: has a clear call to this work. He has a high value for personal evangelism. And he figures out how to not only win people for Christ, but to turn them into disciples who win more souls for the Lord. And is tenacious, persistent, patient in this work.
- Remember: God’s Kingdom is eternal; congregations are temporal and have a limited life expectancy! Focus on how they serve the eternal Kingdom, not their own survival or agenda.
- Order should be Christology – missiology – ecclesiology, to do mission and church planting faithfully and well.

## SESSION FIVE

**Wrap-up Discussion:** What are key insights, take-aways? What should we do next? Suggestions for planning workshops, as well as for Phase Three

- The need for persistence in doing all of this!
- Training leaders: what about specifically training evangelists, prophets, as per the Biblical categories?
- Are we training professors, or theologically-faithful pastors?
- No single way forward. It will be deeply contextual.
- Things don’t work “the way they used to.” And can’t assume that somebody else is going to do it. This is the work of all of us, not “somebody else.”
- High schoolers can thrive on meaty theology.

- Importance of the home as the place in which faith development happens, and faithful local congregations where it blossoms.
- Indigenous pipelines. Bible camps can be part of this, but in electronic age, is this feasible?
- Second career seminarians: sadly, this is not cost effective for life of church. We need younger people who will be in ministry longer.
- Ministry to little people is vital: they learn to love the good even before they intellectually know what it is. Key to their formation as pastors, too.
- What is the relational capital of CORE to help influence all of this?
  - How can we be resources to move things along?
  - We need to pour most of our resources where it has the potential to have the biggest influence. “Jet fuel model.”
- Exactly what should Phase Three be? Regional gatherings, workshops, or one singular event? Probably former...

#### Presenters advice to CORE

- Be mindful: impression is that this is solely ELCA focused. Some PR may need to be done.
  - In LCMC, workshops given to those who can demonstrate they have something of value, some concrete area of expertise, to the congregations.
  - Similarly, in NALC: hard to break into workshops
  - But oddly, ELCA sees CORE as more allied with NALC, LCMC
  - Would a hospitality gathering be helpful, to establish relationships?
- There is a broad-based fear of what will happen when current pastor leaves. Southern Baptist “critical mass” involves hundreds and hundreds of congregations, which we may not be able to achieve. There aren’t a lot of “Somebodies” out there – so how do we do this? How can this be translated to local congregations, in their own communities? How do we help people think of ministry as a vocation? How many pastors even encourage youth to go into ministry – especially because far too many of them hate their job? And how many parents encourage it?
- Language of “Calling,” vocation is there for things like environment, social justice; have we lost the ability to articulate “calling” with respect to love of Jesus and pastoral ministry? And – is the church making enough difference in the world for parents to encourage idealistic youth to pursue it?
- Bi-vocational, multi-point parishes: how do this intentionally, not just out of desperation?
- Home and personal devotion has been ignored as a discipline in church, seminary. It’s just been assumed; but far too many families have no “muscle memory” of this, so kids aren’t learning it in their households.
  - Maybe a part of Phase 3 needs to address this!

#### **Closing prayer: Keith Forni**

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Ammlung, Recording Secretary