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University of Alberta

Teaching shepherds:

Educational role, reflection, and research in pastoral ministry

by

Ronald Bruce Martin 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Secondary Education

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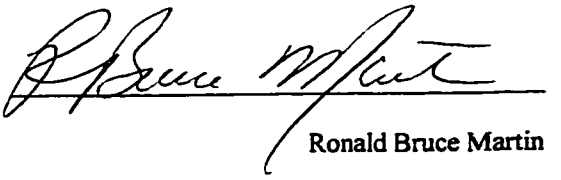

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Teaching shepherds: Educational role, reflection and research in pastoral ministry submitted by Ronald Bruce Martin in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the educational role of pastors. In particular, the author addresses two key questions: (1) "What is the educational role of pastors?" and (2) "What are the implications of a model of pastor-educators?"

The author explores the educational role of pastors by examining literary sources (from the Bible and early church sources through to contemporary writers), through interviews and surveys with pastors, lay-people, and seminary faculty, and by personal reflection on his pastoral practice. A paradigm of "pastor-educator" (or "teaching shepherd") is proposed as a model or paradigm which pastors may wish to consider.

After proposing this paradigm of "pastor-educator," the author explores how this concept might be practically enacted in pastoral practice. Specific strategies to help pastors appreciate educational issues and opportunities and to enact educational emphases into their work are discussed. The concepts of "education" and "curriculum" are examined in a congregational context. The author proposes notions of shared Christian praxis and action research as practical approaches to integrating educational and curricular concerns into pastoral practice.

The author also briefly explores implications of the paradigm for seminaries and theological colleges as they provide pre-ministry education and continuing education opportunities for pastors.

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Thank you to all those whose comments and insights provided much of the information which is included in this work:

On a more personal note, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my wife, Marianne, for her constant encouragement, unfailing love, and wonderful support over the past few years.

And I thank my boys -- Christopher, Iain, and Colin -- for their patience during Daddy's long hours in his office.

May God be glorified through this effort. Amen.

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A. My Problem

In this dissertation I focus on the educational role of pastors. In particular, I propose and begin to explore a model or paradigm of pastor-educator or teaching shepherd. I address two key questions:

1. "What is the educational role of pastors?"

The educational role of pastors is not dealt with adequately in pastoral theology literature. In my research, I explore the educational role of pastors by examining literary sources (from the Bible and early church sources through to contemporary writers), through interviews and surveys with pastors, lay-people, and seminary faculty, and by personal reflection on my pastoral practice. I propose a paradigm of "pastor-educator" (or "teaching shepherd").

2. "What are the implications of a model of pastor-educators?"

After proposing the paradigm of "pastor-educator," I explore how this concept might be practically enacted in pastoral practice. I discuss specific strategies to help pastors appreciate educational issues and opportunities and to enact educational emphases into their work. I also briefly explore implications of the paradigm for seminaries and theological colleges (the institutions in which most pastors are educated).

These are complicated, but critical, questions. As I approach them I do so recognizing that I do not have all the answers. But I hope my ideas will stimulate pastors, lay-people, and seminary faculty to talk in new ways and to discuss new ideas.

B. Research design

1. Definition of terms

Initially it will be helpful for me to define several of the key terms I have used in this study.

Pastor: refers to a clergy person who is officially recognized by a local church and works within the context of that local church. Most smaller churches have one pastor. Larger churches may employ several pastors, each with a specialized role (youth pastor, visitation pastor, music pastor). A pastor may be full or part-time. Typically, pastors have an undergraduate and a three-year Master of Divinity degree or equivalent.

Pastoral theology: refers to the theological sub-discipline which is concerned about the person and work of the pastor.

Christian education or religious education: "Christian education" is often popularly used to refer to those aspects of church life seen as explicitly educational in nature, including Sunday School, and formal teaching contexts. Within the academic discipline of Christian (or religious) education, a more nuance definition exists which recognizes the multi-faceted nature of education and spiritual formation. In Chapter Five I define "education" as "the development, by fostering to varying degrees the growth or expansion of knowledge, wisdom, desirable qualities of mind or character, physical health or general competence, especially by a course of formal study or instruction." In Chapters Five and Six, I explore this definition and its implications more fully.

Curriculum: refers to the formal and informal content and process by which learners (members of a congregation) gain knowledge and understanding, develop skills, alter attitudes, appreciations and values. This definition is further explored in Chapter Seven.

Local Church: refers to any individual church with its own staff, boards and committees.

Congregation: refers to the persons who are affiliated with a local church. This includes regular attenders and less active people whom the pastor and church leadership consider to be affiliated with their church.

Seminary or Theological College: refers to a college or institution which is educating people to be pastors. In practice these terms are interchangeable and reflect denominational preferences concerning nomenclature.

Baptist Union of Western Canada (B.U.W.C.): refers to a denomination of churches in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon and North West Territories. The B.U.W.C. traces its roots back to the earliest Baptist missionaries to Western Canada in the mid-nineteenth century, commissioned by Baptist churches in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces.

2. Sources of Information

To reflect on these questions, I have gathered data from a variety of sources and endeavored to identify key themes. In this thesis these sources are woven together to explore the questions identified above.

The sources of my information include:

a. Literature

My first source of information was literature, including the biblical text, early church writings, historical and contemporary theological reflections in the disciplines of pastoral theology and Christian education. In my reading and reflection for this thesis I have concentrated on two periods of literature. First, I have read extensively on the nature of the earliest Christian church, considering primary documents including the biblical text and the writings of early Christians (such as the Didache, Pastor of Hermas, Chrysostom). I have also consulted secondary sources including commentaries on the biblical text and theological and historical analyses of the early church. This literature will primarily be considered in Chapters Three and Four. I have chosen to emphasize this period because it represents the beginnings of Christian understandings of both the pastoral role and Christian education.

Second, I have considered writings in both pastoral theology and Christian education in the past twenty years (the mid-1970's to the present). I have chosen this period because this is the social and ecclesiastical context in which I (and other contemporary pastors) find ourselves working and living. These are the writers pastors have read in preparation for and during the practice of their ministry. And these are the researchers who are seeking to explore and understand the present-day experience of pastors. I have consulted major texts, articles and theses in both disciplines from this period. I have drawn together major themes and interwoven these throughout the text of the thesis. Quotes from significant writers and summaries of major themes appear in each chapter. In part, then, this thesis is a literary/historical study of the questions I have identified.

I have found my literature review to be both stimulating and frustrating. It has stimulated me by encouraging me to explore specific ideas and themes in my personal work and in my interviews with colleagues. Contemporary literature has encouraged me to see new possibilities and improve my own pastoral practice. Literature on the early church has enriched my self-understanding and helped me appreciate my role in its historic context. These personal reflections will be clearly evident in the second half of my thesis.

The literature has also frustrated me. I find much contemporary literature in both disciplines depressing reading. Writers emphasize deep problems in the contemporary church. Then, of course, they propose solutions. While the solutions are often laudable, I find the analyses of present-day ministry and churches unduly negative. I found myself saying, "Yes, but what about ..." as I thought of exceptions to the trends. The pastors I interviewed resonated with some of these concerns, but generally were much more positive about ministry than the literature. In this spirit, I endeavor to discuss concerns and problems in the contemporary church while maintaining a generally optimistic tone. From my other research, I am confident many pastors are striving to do well (even thriving) in contemporary churches.

Between the early church period and the contemporary context, a vast literature exists on the nature of pastoral ministry. I have read major texts from these eras, but I have not explored them in the same depth as I have early church and contemporary writings.

b. Personal Reflection

I have been involved in pastoral work at a part-time or full-time level since 1983. I have always felt that my work is strongly educational in nature. I have been interested in social research since my third year of my Bachelor of Arts (in social geography) program at the University of British Columbia (1985).

Since then I have worked to integrate research into my ministry and make research strategies available to other pastors.

In this thesis I reflect upon the educational role I fulfill as a pastor from my own experience, with special attention to curricular decision-making, design, and research. I have done this through written reflections on my understanding of myself as a pastor and an educator, my rationale for decision-making, and how I use my background in research to inform my work. In this thesis, I reflect on how this has been useful in the past. And I also journal about how I do this presently.

I have kept a personal/professional journal since 1984. Some of the thoughts, ideas and reflections from this journal speak to the questions I am asking this thesis. Since I began my doctoral program in education, I have been more intentional and focused in my journalling. Through reflections on courses, readings and discussions with faculty and colleagues, I have concentrated particularly on the educational aspects of my ministry. I have reread my journal three times in the course of this study. I have included excerpts, where appropriate, throughout the text.

I have approached this thesis, to a large extent, as a personal journey of self-discovery with the goal of and improved personal pastoral practice. Frequent, intentional journalling has helped me reflect on my learning and growing through my reading, conversations with colleagues, and reflections on my growing knowledge and pastoral experiences within my own congregation. This has been a very helpful exercise for me as I try to integrate the various authors, conversations, and experiences which have informed my work over the past few years. I have tried, throughout the thesis, to make my journal entries explicit (as distinct, blocked quotations). However, as inevitably happens, my personal reflections, opinions and ideas color the text. My developing impressions, understandings and ideas have crept into the text. This adds an element of personal self-study and reflection to the literary/historical analysis identified above.

c. Surveys/Interviews With Pastors

My research involved input from other pastors. I conducted surveys/interviews with two groups of pastors.

First, I picked a sample of five pastors from a variety of traditions within north Edmonton. These pastors served congregations from the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the United Church of Canada, the Lutheran Church - Canada, and the Baptist Union of Western Canada. Four of the pastors were male, one was female. For reasons of confidentiality, their names are not used in the text.

I did not use a sophisticated methodology for choosing these participants. Rather, I chose pastors geographically proximate to my church (north Edmonton), representing a variety of denominational traditions, who expressed an interest in my research. I was impressed, as I got to know these pastors, at the wealth of experience and insight these pastors brought to their congregations. Each had over fifteen years full-time pastoral experience. Four had served on major regional or national committees. Two had part-time seminary teaching experience.

I tried to develop a personal relationship with each of these pastors over a two year period. I met with each of these individuals separately. I had hoped to bring the group together on occasion. I discovered, however, that trying to find a time when all of six us could meet was virtually impossible. One pastor, in particular, was frequently out of town on denominational business. Others were so busy with congregational and denominational commitments that a workable date could not be found.

Initially I met with each of the pastors informally, during which time I introduced my project and discussed whether they would be interested in participating. I then interviewed, each of them, in person, using both structured and unstructured questions. I attempted, during a twelve month period, to meet with each pastor on two other occasions to discuss their work and understanding of their role as pastor-educators. I was able to accomplish these objectives with each pastor except for one, whose hectic schedule limited us to one extended interview. I audio-taped our interviews and discussions. I produced a full manuscript of each interview. Appropriate excerpts from these interactions are woven into the text.

With four pastors I was able to attend church services in which they were involved to observe their work. I took notes of events in the services. In three cases I was provided with an audio-tape of the service which I transcribed. In the fifth church I was unable to work my schedule around that of the pastor so we would be present on the same Sunday We did, however, discuss that pastor's approach to worship services at length.

I was also able to attend church meetings in three churches, again to observe how the pastors were involved. In the other two churches the pastor was not involved in a meaningful way in church meetings. I made field notes about my observations during and after the services and meetings.

With all but one pastor, then, I was able to meet at least three times. I was able to observe four worship services. And I was able to be present at three meetings. These opportunities provided me with pages of notes and transcribed material which I have woven into the text. This adds a qualitative commentary on the literature and historical analysis.

I believe these pastors shared openly and honestly with me. They shared joys and blessings as well as frustrations and concerns. Significantly, overall, each of the pastors was excited about pastoral ministry and intended to say active as a pastor. As we discussed some of the literature which portrays pastors as frustrated and discouraged, the pastors resonated with the themes, but also spoke of their joys and successes in pastoral ministry.

Second, I surveyed Baptist Union of Western Canada pastors at denominational meetings. I conducted a survey which allowed participants to reflect on their educational role in their congregations. During the meeting questionnaires were distributed, persons were given a free afternoon to complete the form, and they were collected at dinner. I received sixty-eight responses. While twelve responses appeared to be rushed and displayed little critical reflection (one word answers or mostly blank forms), fifty-six included detailed, thoughtful comments. I was pleasantly surprised at the insights many pastors shared.

Pastors shared personally about their approaches to ministry and church experiences. They also reflected on how their understanding reflected broader conceptions of pastoral ministry.

Insights and comments from these surveys have been included, where appropriate, throughout the text. These surveys The information from these surveys provided further commentary on the themes and issues which emerged from the literature.

d. Surveys/Interviews With Lay Persons

My research also endeavored to gain input from lay-people. I conducted surveys/interviews with two groups of lay-people.

First, in conjunction with the survey for pastors at B.U.W.C. denominational meetings, I also conducted a survey of lay delegates. Questionnaires were distributed, an afternoon given for respondents to complete the form, and surveys were returned at dinner. One hundred and eight persons responded. All except six demonstrated considerable thought and reflection (most questions were completed; answers were more than one word).

These surveys tended to reveal more personal convictions and less generalized ideas than did the pastors' surveys. While pastors typically related their role to generally accepted metaphors of pastoral ministry, lay-people were more likely to identify personal preferences. Lay-people focused on specific aspects of the pastoral role: preaching, visiting, friendliness, and care. Several respondents reflected in very personal terms on their present pastors' strengths.

Reflecting on the different type of response between pastors and lay-people in the two surveys, I suspect the responses reflected the different educational and experiential backgrounds which many pastors and lay-people bring. Pastoral conceptions of ministry are informed by reading and instruction in pastoral theology and shaped by experience in several congregations. Few lay-people in our denomination have formal theological education. Lay understandings of ministry may be more the product of observing what they have observed their pastors actually do. In many cases a lay person's experience may be limited to one congregation and possibly to only one or two pastors. Within the life of a congregation, a lay-person my not be aware of the various tasks a pastor performs apart from worship services.

I find the generally optimistic and positive tone of the surveys encouraging. This need not have been the case. The surveys were anonymous. People were encouraged to be constructively critical and honest in their responses. In general, however, most of these respondents spoke well of their pastors. A cynic might suggest that only those who appreciated their pastors chose to respond. I wonder, however, if these surveys do not challenge the unduly negative discussions found in the literature.

The information from these surveys provided a fascinating insight into lay-people's perspectives on pastors. Individual surveys were often so personal that specific quotes were not helpful. However clear themes emerged as I reflected on the surveys as a group. Lay-people were very concerned that pastors were people of integrity and respect, were able to teach and preach, and expressed genuine love and concern for people in their congregations.

Second, I probed the understandings of lay-people within my own congregation, Zion Baptist Church. I adopted two approaches.

One approach involved a structured interview I conducted with twenty-five lay-people within my own congregation, Zion Baptist Church. I deliberately chose a variety of persons. I tried to explore their understandings of the pastoral role. I hoped to discover differences based on age, church background, and gender.

As pastor of Zion Baptist Church, I found the interviews very interesting. People reflected on very specific aspects of the church and its ministry. I discovered surprising aspects of the church's ministry with which people were pleased and also some surprising weaknesses.

As a researcher considering the educational role and responsibility of pastors, however, I was disappointed. People inevitably focused their responses on their experiences in this particular church. Even those who had considerable background in other churches, tended to limit their comments to this congregation. As with the lay surveys, most of these lay people did not have a broader conceptual framework to respond to questions about the person and work of the pastor. They simply responded from what they saw pastors actually doing. Significantly, this congregation has only had two pastors in the past twenty-five years. Thus people who had been in this congregation for any length of time had limited experience from which to respond.

People were also clearly conscious of my role as their pastor. Thus they would often respond, "I like the way you do ..." or "You do this well ..." I found people reluctant to give constructively critical comments. Although I urged people to do this, I believe they were uncomfortable to do so because of my dual role as pastor and researcher.

It would be interesting to conduct such a survey in a congregation other than my own. My experiences with the surveys and within my own church, however, question how fruitful this might be. Without education in broader theological conceptions of pastoral ministry, most lay-people could only respond in terms of what they like/do not like in the pastors they have actually experienced. Most lay-people seem reluctant to constructively criticize their current pastor. Perhaps this suggests that pastors are doing excellent work. Perhaps it suggests that most lay-people still have respect for the office of pastor that they are reluctant to offer critique. Or perhaps it suggests that most lay-people do not feel informed enough about what pastors ought to do to comment meaningfully.

These interviews provided me with much personal insight which has helped my shape my work in this particular church. They provided inspiration for me in my journalling. Specific comments from these interviews have proved to be of limited value in terms of the broader concerns of this thesis. However as promptings for reflection, they have encouraged me to reflect on the concrete ministry possibilities of the philosophical ideas I have been considering from the literature.

A second approach encouraged journalling and discussion among four lay-people and myself over the course of one year. I encouraged these people to reflect on the church, in general, and my ministry, in particular, paying particular attention to educational concerns. Two of these people were educators. We met every other month to reflect and discuss. On alternate months I contacted each person individually and talked with them.

While the concept of journalling was a challenge to all the participants, they gave it a good effort. Most ended up jotting down notes or thoughts. One became so personal in her journalling that her journal became almost more of a spiritual autobiography than a helpful research journal for my purposes.

However both the journals and our discussions provided much helpful insight into my questions. We had spirited, lively talks in which everyone participated and was stimulated. I audio-taped our talks and I have included excerpts, where appropriate throughout the text.

This approach to gleaning information from my congregation was more fruitful than the interviews. Perhaps, in part, this was because we had the opportunity, over time, to develop a relationship of trust and openness. Perhaps, in part, this was because we had the opportunity to learn about and explore together the pastoral role in more detail; the people began to appreciate and reflect upon the role of pastor. Perhaps, in part, the sense of "group," where I was just one of five participants, helped people feel more comfortable contributing.

e. Seminary Calendars/Interviews With Seminary Faculty

In Chapter Ten I consider the implications of my research for pastoral education. I consulted academic calendars for the academic year 1997-1998 from twelve seminaries and theological colleges in western Canada. Four were interdenominational. Eight were affiliated with one particular denomination. I explored the programs of study for their professional degrees (typically a Master of Divinity). I was interested to appreciate the educational focus of programs in the colleges.

I also conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with faculty in pastoral theology from eight of the colleges. I was unable to contact faculty willing to be involved in the other colleges despite attempts to make contact. I wrote notes of our conversations as we talked.

These interviews were helpful to confirm my understandings of the programs and their foci gleaned from the calendars. Significantly, my impressions from the academic calendars complemented the verbal descriptions given by faculty. My interviews were intended to further my understanding and clarify my impressions of the educational aims and objectives of the programs rather than being evaluative or critical.

I found five faculty members very congenial, responsive, and eager to be involved in the project. Three appeared suspicious of my motives and were concerned about why I was doing this research and where the results were going to end up.

The majority of this information is summarized in Chapter Ten. However specific insights or ideas have been included, where appropriate, throughout the text. Two faculty suggested specific writers I might wish to consult. These were very helpful leads that contributed to my overall personal and professional development.

3. Delimitations

The research has been done only among pastors, seminaries and lay persons within Western Canada (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon and North West Territories).

Specifically, interviews and discussions were conducted with, and observations made of pastors in north Edmonton. Although the pastors surveyed all served churches in one location they came from a variety of geographical, educational and professional experiences. These interviews occurred from 1996 - 1997.

Surveys were also conducted of pastors and lay persons from across Western Canada who were involved in Baptist Union of Western Canada (B.U.W.C.) churches. This occurred at annual denominational meetings in 1996.

Academic calendars from seminaries in western Canada were consulted for the academic year 1997-1998. Interviews were conducted with faculty of seminaries during 1997. Because of travel limitations these interviews were conducted by telephone, except in the case of Edmonton-based institutions.

4. Limitations

My research was only done with pastors working in churches. Thus my research findings will only be related to this context. The findings may not be generalizable to other situations where pastors may be employed (for example as chaplains, counselors, or faculty). The findings may not be generalizable to pastors serving churches of faith traditions other than those interviewed or surveyed, both Christian (for example, Eastern Orthodox) and non-Christian (for example Jewish, Moslem, etc.). My research, delimited to Western Canada, may contain some regional uniquenesses.

Nevertheless this research may raise issues which are important in other contexts. The pastors surveyed were a varied group. Participants in the north Edmonton sample were from diverse geographical, educational and professional backgrounds. Among the Baptist Union of Western Canada pastors surveyed, substantial variations existed. The 261 pastors in the denomination have college or university education (diplomas, undergraduate or graduate degrees) from 168 institutions from all regions of Canada, The United States, the United Kingdom and Europe, Asia, and Oceania. Theologically, although Baptist seminaries predominate, many other religious traditions are represented including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church of Canada institutions.

I surveyed lay persons at denominational meetings. Although every church congregation and denomination is unique, and care must be taken not to extrapolate rashly, this data may identify some directions for further research.

The seminaries I investigated were all located in Western Canada. Thus my curricular analyses of their programs may not represent the situation at other seminaries in other contexts. However many of the curricular recommendations of this research should be generalizable. The research techniques which will be discussed may be used in a variety of contexts.

5. Assumptions

My first assumption was that this research is important and necessary. As I have discussed my work with colleagues and seminary faculty, all agree that research on the pastoral role is necessary. Several church-related academic institutions in Western Canada suggest that they are interested in helping pastors better work with their churches to develop curriculum but need the foundational research to inform the curriculum design. Much information is available in education and other social sciences on social research but may require contextualization for use by pastors in churches. This dissertation begins that process.

My second assumption was that curriculum designed to help pastors better understand and appreciate their educational role would improve pastors' work and, hence, congregational vitality.

My third assumption was that respondents to surveys and interviews provided honest and helpful information.

C. Overview of the thesis

This thesis is organized in two major sections, each consisting of several chapters. A brief concluding postscript, Section III, ends the dissertation.

Section I, Paradigm Lost, explores paradigms of and experiences of pastoral and ministry and Christian education. Chapter One sets the stage as I reflect personally on my experiences as a pastor and Christian educator. In many ways, this thesis is a personal pilgrimage as I seek to explore my own ministry and calling. I suggest that many pastors are struggling to make sense of their role in contemporary society.

Chapter Two explores this discussion further. Through an examination of contemporary literature in pastoral theology and Christian education, I discuss the need to bring these two literatures into creative dialogue so pastors sense the importance of educational vision in ministry.

Chapter Three explores several possible metaphors that might help define the nature of pastoral ministry. I conclude by proposing that a metaphor of pastor-educator, or teaching shepherd, is a rich biblical paradigm that may help give pastors focus and direction. Shepherding and teaching -- pastoring and educating -- are inextricably bound together in the pastor's experience.

Chapter Four considers the rich historical legacy of this metaphor in the Christian tradition. This chapter suggests that writers -- from the early church to the present day -- have appreciated the pastor-educator metaphor.

Section II, Paradigm Regained, considers how this metaphor might creatively be enacted in pastoral ministry. I explore how education already is a strong theme in congregational life and pastoral ministry. And I explore ways in which pastors may creatively work with their congregations to enhance their educational ministries in a cooperative manner.

Initially, in Chapter Five, I explore a definition of education, in order to help pastors appreciate what education is and what being an educator involves.

Chapter Six focuses on four key components of pastoral work -- leading worship, preaching and teaching, pastoral care, and administration. I highlights the educational potential and possibilities latent within each of these activities.

The next chapter, Chapter Seven, explores the concept of "curriculum" as a tool to help pastors appreciate these educational opportunities more deeply. This concept may also sensitize pastors to formal and informal educational cues that shape peoples' theological understandings and spiritual experiences. I suggest that pastors need to "think educationally," to appreciate the rich educational potential latent in the rhythms of congregational life and pastoral ministry.

Chapter Eight introduces the concept of shared Christian praxis as an approach to providing educational leadership in an empowering way. I explore the possibilities of Thomas Groome's notion of shared Christian praxis as an approach to help pastors improve their educational practice. Chapter Nine takes this further, proposing action research as an approach through with pastors and congregations can work together to improve their educational ministries through systematic observation, reflection, and action.

Chapter Ten concludes this section by investigating how seminaries might better educate pastors to see themselves as and function as pastor-educators. I focus on the ideas presented by the pastors I interviewed about how they perceived they might have been better prepared as pastor-educators.

In the Postscript, Section III, I propose some possible conclusions and some directions for further research.

I. PARADIGM LOST

And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou knowest ... What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

- John Milton, Paradise Lost I

CHAPTER ONE

Pastoral Pilgrimage

This chapter suggests ministry is changing. Through my own personal story I examine how I see fundamental changes in society affecting my role as a pastor. I also note how these changes are encouraging me, as a pastor, to have a strong educational focus. I see myself as a pastor-educator.

This will "set the stage" for broader reflections on the changing role of pastors in contemporary society in Chapter Two.

A Day in the Life of a Pastor

Yesterday I got my hair cut. In the course of my conversation with the hairdresser, I told her I was a pastor. "Where do you work?" she asked. "Zion Baptist Church," I responded. "Is that, like, 'Christian'?" I assured her it was. "My sister-in-law is secretary for five ministers at a (Christian and Missionary) Alliance church. Is that Christian, too?" My hairdresser would be in her late thirties; she has lived all her life (since she was two) in Edmonton. As we talked it became apparent she knew a little about "church" (from a couple of experiences with her sister-in-law) but nothing about Jesus Christ or Christianity.

I am aware as a pastor that I live and work in a non-churched, non-Christian culture. Canada, much more than the United States, is a country where knowledge of Christian faith is declining. Fewer and fewer people nominally affiliate with Christian denominations, and even fewer regularly attend[1]

This morning, as I drive my four year old son to preschool, I pass a $3,800,000 edifice being constructed six blocks from my home. It is a mosque. There is another mosque, with an Islamic school, five blocks from our small Baptist church. A Buddhist temple is ten blocks from the church in another direction. My community is not only less explicitly Christian, it is conspicuously not Christian. This is a community which is multi-cultural and multi-religious; my church represents only one of many faith traditions present in our neighborhood. As pastor of a Christian church, I find myself increasingly involved in cross-cultural communication on a scale once familiar only to overseas missionaries.

This is a typical neighborhood in a typical Canadian city: a community of peoples, religions and cultures from around the world. A recent report on the changing face of Canadian faith notes that within ten years Islam will be the second largest religion in Canada (already Muslims outnumber Baptists and Presbyterians). Currently Buddhism is the fastest growing religion in Canada. Canada's Jewish population is the fastest growing Jewish community outside Israel (McKenna, 1996, pp. 10-11).

At the church, I leaf through my mail. Among the flyers, solicitations for funds and a package from the denominational office is a "Thank you" note from the Mustard Seed Street Church. Last Sunday, the Rev. Laurie Lafleur and Beverly MacKenzie, pastors at the Mustard Seed in inner-city Edmonton, shared with our congregation about their work. With recent government policies emphasizing deficit reduction, demand on their ministry has increased 200% in five years.[2] The social problems of the inner-city are our problems in an older suburban community. At our local junior high school, over 50% of the students have open files with social service agencies. Of the eleven teens who attend our youth group regularly, three would be described as "high need and high risk." As a pastor and a church we struggle to

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[1]Recent statistics show that 19% of Albertans claim to attend church weekly, sharply below the over 30% of Americans in the western states, and over 43% of Americans in the midwestern and southern states who claim to attend church weekly. When asked, "How much does your religion influence your everyday life?" 43% of Canadians and 21% of Americans responded "none." 19% of Canadians and 40% of Americans answered "a great deal." (World Vision Canada, 1996, pp. 6-7)

[2]See also Lafleur and Zylla (1997).

cope with a mission field in our community. And we wrestle with balancing our mission focus between social action and a traditional Baptist emphasis on "decisions for Christ."

There is another challenge latent in this growing need for social ministry. Governments are pleased to see churches respond to human needs, yet when church leaders try to speak publicly on social issues, few in government listen. As an institution we see demand for our help growing. But our influence in society is diminishing. Our voice has been marginalized. We struggle to provide ministry in a context which encourages us to be involved in social ministry but devalues our contribution to social dialogue.

As I walk to my office I pass a board on which we have photos of those who attend our church. Ours is an average-sized church in North America; we have between eighty and one hundred on a Sunday morning. About half of our congregation is Caucasian. The other half includes Asians, Hispanics, African-Americans and Aboriginals. We have singles, single parents, blended families and traditional families. Religiously, many grew up Baptist, but others are from Presbyterian, Anglican, United Church of Canada, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian traditions. Several of us (including myself) grew up with no religious heritage. Many have been Christians for decades. Others are just beginning their faith journey. Still others I would call "not-yet Christians." We have those who prefer a "traditional" service, with hymns (accompanied by organ and piano) and an expository sermon. We have others who would rather sing contemporary choruses (accompanied by acoustic guitar, electric bass, and drums) and prefer drama and creative presentations of Scripture. As I prepare ideas for the Sunday service I struggle to reflect on the experiences these diverse people bring and shape a worship experience that helps this congregation praise God and hear his voice.

I look at my daytimer. Beside preparing for Sunday I need to call our treasurer to discuss how we can manage a lease for a new photocopier without going over budget (I need to order more toner, too). I need to call (better yet visit) a 95 year old lady whose sister recently died and a 78 year old man, suffering from leukemia, recently released from hospital three days after a bone marrow transplant. I have to discuss our stewardship campaign with three different people. I have to photocopy a newsletter, fold it and stuff envelopes. I should call three individuals who have not attended recently. I need to decide how to handle a denominational request for a special offering. I have a staff meeting at 1:00 pm. We are invited to a church family's home for dinner tonight. There are at least two thank-you letters I need to write. I should start planning for Christmas. I would like to involve a couple of youth in the service Sunday; I should figure out how and call them. The Christmas Bureau of Edmonton needs referrals for Christmas hampers and wants to know if I personally, and our church, corporately, can be involved in the program. It goes on.

In the back of my mind I am aware that at least one member of the congregation thinks I do not do enough visiting. Another member badly wants us to reintroduce Sunday evening services. Two others would like to experiment with a mid-week service. Another would like me to lead an afternoon Bible study for seniors. I know of at least three community organizations with whom I would love to be involved. My son is frustrated that I am out so many evenings. When I do have time off, he badly wants us to work together on our model railroad, but I am almost always too tired. I find it difficult to maintain a vital, enjoyable personal devotional life. At times I find the expectations of me as a pastor (even in a smaller church) overwhelming. I struggle to identify what is essential and what is trivial. I try to balance my work with my family with my personal time with God.

I do not imagine my life is unique. Pastors do a challenging job in challenging times. We struggle to identify our priorities and purposes in a confusing context. We recognize our culture is changing. We recognize our role is changing. But, caught up in the day-to-day busy-ness of life we often feel overwhelmed. William Willimon, Professor of Christian Ministry and Dean of the Chapel at Duke University, writes:

> The present age and its challenges provide pastors with a marvelous opportunity to rediscover the risky, adventurous, countercultural excitement of being Christian, to join with Christ in creating a new people, by water and the Word, who are forerunners of a new world. If we cannot be bold enough to allow Christ to use us in the creating of his new world, then about all we can do is to service the old world. Relegated to

> the status of "members of the helping professions," breathlessly running to and fro meeting a selfish people's omnivorous need, drowning in a sea of triviality and banality, pastors will die from the inside out and empty people will go home hungry. (Willimon, 1993, p. 56)

How can pastors be involved in rediscovering the risky, adventurous, countercultural excitement of being Christian pastors at the dawn of the twenty-first century? That is not an easy question to answer.

But, as Willimon suggests, it is an essential question for pastors to begin asking. In a changing world, we can allow our culture to redefine our role for us; or we can wrestle with who we are and what we do and redefine (or define more precisely) who we are pastors. We can choose to be passive observers, Willimon suggests, and risk becoming marginalized as artifacts of an old world slowly passing away. Or we can choose to become proactive participants in rethinking and reshaping what it means to be "pastor."

"The Old Order Changeth ..."

I love literature. One of my favorite passages comes from Alfred Lord Tennyson's Idylls of the king, about the legendary King Arthur. In The passing of Arthur, the king reflects on the fading of Camelot: "The old order changeth, yielding place to new, And God fulfills Himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world" (1833/1958, p. 469). Arthur's words are very appropriate for this period in the history of the Christian church. The old order (Camelot?), of a North American Christian culture in which pastors functioned as well-respected community and ecclesiastical leaders, is passing.[3] A new order, what Willimon calls a "new age," is dawning, in which North America is a tapestry of cultures and religious faiths (including secularism).

As the magisterial, monolithic Christian faith that has dominated western culture since Constantine passes away, the challenge and dynamism of earliest Christianity (as a minority religion in a non-Christian context) is reemerging. This may be one of God's ways of "fulfilling Himself," of accomplishing his purpose of building a stronger, more vibrant church in the twenty-first century. It is an exciting time to be a Christian pastor. It also a time when what it means to be a pastor is inevitably and inexorably changing.

Loren Mead (1991, 1994), Episcopal priest and founder and president of the Alban Institute (specializing in resourcing pastors and congregations) and Jeff Woods (1996), American Baptist Area Minister and author of Congregational megatrends, suggest that churches and pastors urgently need to understand social changes and the "congregational megatrends" or "paradigm shifts" occurring within churches. In a cultural context where traditional authority structures are being challenged and redefined, Woods contends that one key issue facing churches is our understanding of the person and role of pastor:

> What office a person holds in the church does not matter nearly as much as it once did. The days of churches turning all of the leadership tasks over to people who hold offices in the church are fading away. What is replacing this outdated model of 'official' leadership? Gifts. Churches are looking to people who are gifted in particular areas to lead those ministries in the church (Woods, 1996, p. 103).

This shift from official leadership to gifted leadership undermines a centuries-old understanding of pastors who, by nature of their office, were among the most respected and educated people in a community, particularly in a church community. The old-order understanding of the office of pastor as inherently giving a person respect and authority is changing. Gifted lay leaders are assuming tasks pastors once performed. Pastoral roles are being redefined. Pastors are at a crossroads, Woods and Mead argue. Their role is changing. We must find new paradigms for our role.

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[3]See Mead (1991, 1994); Bibby (1987, 1995); World Vision (1996).

My experience concurs. In a non-Christian, multi-religious community where Christianity is largely unknown, in a social context where my official role earns me little respect and my voice is unheard, in a church where demands continue to mount and more gifted people seek opportunities for ministry, I find myself challenged to reflect on who I am and what I do as "pastor." The old order has changed. The old paradigm -- the paradigm in which I was educated only ten years ago -- is lost.

Another shift Woods identifies is a move from what he calls "tribal education" (nurturing children within the Christian community) to "immigrant education" (working with newcomers to the church, of all ages, who have little or no church background).

> In previous years Christian education was similar to American public education in its early years. Educating people in a church was like educating children in a one-room schoolhouse. Everybody knew everybody else. Most new members to the one-room schoolhouse were first graders. They were new because they had not been old enough to go to school the previous year. A new member coming onto the scene in some other manner was big news. If the new member was from a different culture, it was really big news ...
>
> We are no longer educating tribal members who have arrived for their token rite of passage. Church members must now be educated as if they were immigrants, receiving a comprehensive curriculum from the church. Many pieces of information once assumed to be part of every new member's vocabulary are no longer already present in the minds of learners; they must be taught (Woods, 1996, pp. 58-60).

Churches, Woods warns, face significant educational challenges if they are to survive and thrive.

Again, my experience and research among my colleagues supports Woods' thesis. While some churches are growing because Christians are transferring from other churches,[4] others are growing as people, searching for religious meaning, begin attending. Twenty-two percent of adults in our congregation have begun attending within the last four years and have no meaningful Christian background. They are unchurched. An educational program relevant for them must begin from a different point than established ministries for those adults who have been steeped in Christian faith and tradition from childhood.

My conviction is that changes in pastoral roles and educational needs are not unrelated. As I grow in my understanding of what it means to be a pastor, and as I wrestle with developing effective ministries in my church, I find myself thinking both "pastorally" and "educationally." I find myself, as pastor, thinking through what it means to be a "pastor-educator." In my journal this past week I noted some of the questions which I found myself thinking about as I prepared my sermon and the service for Sunday. While pastoral, they are also educational:

- What will Peter (a 76 year old retired professional with at least 50 years of church experience) take from this sermon?
- What about Alea (a refugee, unemployed, mother of two small children)?
- What about Alan (a tradesman with no Christian heritage, attending with his Christian lady-friend)?
- What theological words/concepts do I need to define for Frank and Ellen (a retired couple, with no church background, who began attending recently)?
- What biblical illustrations do I need to contextualize for Mike (a junior high youth who began coming in September)?
- Do I need to introduce these hymns? Are there words, ideas, allusions that may be unknown or

[4]A trend Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby, author of several books and articles on religion in Canada, refers to as "the circulation of the saints," particularly common among large, urban evangelical churches (Bibby and Brinkeroff, 1973, 1983, 1994).

confusing?[5]

- As I prepare the pastoral prayer, can I teach people about how to pray through my prayer?

I find myself defining my role as pastor-educator. While I see myself as a pastor, I also sense a strong educational component within my vocation. There is a creative tension between my sense of calling as pastor and my role as an educator in the church and social context in which I function.

Coming to Grips with Change

At one level, the role of pastor-educator has been easy for me to assume. Teaching is part of my heritage. My father was an English teacher. My mother taught nursing. One of my grandmothers taught school in Bella Bella, BC. My other grandmother taught in Hope, BC. Four of my six uncles are teachers. My brother graduated with an electrical engineering degree, worked in engineering for one year; now he teaches math and physics. His wife teaches French and Spanish. My wife is a math teacher. Growing up surrounded by teachers, I promised myself I would never become one. When I began studying to be a pastor I thought I had made the break. I believed I had successfully broken the family tradition.

But as I reflect on my role as a pastor in the 1990s, I am profoundly aware that I, too, am a teacher. This was not something I was led to expect during my educational preparation for ministry at two seminaries. Rather, as I have been involved in the practice of ministry I have discovered myself educating. I have been surprised to notice how much of what I do is fundamentally educational in nature. Visiting, leading groups, facilitating worship, preaching, providing leadership to boards and committees -- all these activities can have strong educational components.

I do teach in a traditional sense, in various class contexts. But more than that, I do other tasks which are fundamentally educational. For instance, I make decisions about what is important to teach (in classes, in services, at meetings) and how things ought to be taught (formal curriculum). I am concerned about the emotional and physical environment which people experience in the church in which I minister (informal curriculum). I am thoughtful of the overall educational experience people find in this faith community. In short, I am an educator, concerned with educational issues, making educational decisions.

For me, seeing myself as a pastor-educator has been a significant development in my pilgrimage as a person and a pastor. Cynically, of course, I berate myself for not successfully breaking with my family teaching tradition. But more substantively, I am challenged to reflect on my role as pastor-educator. Am I aware of my role as an educator? How does acknowledging that role make me feel? How ought that self-awareness impact my attitudes, my decisions and my work? How do I reflect on educational issues in my context, a church? Do I discuss these issues with my colleagues?

As I write these lines I am cognizant that, in my academic and professional background, I have had no encouragement to see myself as an educator. In my experience, words like "educator" and "curriculum" have rarely, if ever, been mentioned with reference to pastors. A distinct subfield of religious or Christian education deals with educational issues, but it is very distinct from pastoral theology, which considers the person and work of pastors. From my reading, not only the terms, but even the concepts of "education" and "curriculum" are foreign to pastoral literature and in pastoral practice.

I am increasingly uncomfortable with the schism in the Christian community between pastoral theology and Christian education.[6] Pastoral theologians have deemphasized education. A crass summary

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[5]For instance, consider the meaning of these words for someone with no church background: "Come, Thou fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace; Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above; Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it, Mount of God's unchanging love." The second verse begins with the obscure phrase, "Here I raise my Ebenezer ..."

[6]This gulf has been noted by Osmer (1990) who urges the two sides to begin dialogue.

of education themes in pastoral theology would be (1) that education is something that happens only in formal Sunday/Church School or other classroom settings; (2) pastors want to have as little to do with it as possible; and (3) if you are in a church where you need to be involved in education, try to mentor lay leadership or recruit a Christian education staff person as quickly as possible so you can disentangle yourself from educational ministries. Pastoral theology texts make virtually no references to Christian education writers.

A crude caricature of much Christian education literature echoes these themes: (1) pastors (if they are considered part of Christian education at all) function best as cheerleaders, encouraging congregants to be involved, (2) pastors may have a role encouraging and helping real teachers, and (3) pastors do not know much about education; professional Christian educators are the experts. Pastors, themselves, are excluded from educational ministry. They have a limited - or non-existent - role in the teaching ministry of the church. Religious education texts and journals contain virtually no citations from pastoral theologians.

Pastoral theology and Christian education literatures exist as two solitudes -- virtually distinct. Unfortunately this dichotomy has desensitized both pastoral theologians (and hence pastors) and Christian educators to the profound educational nature, and educational potential, of pastoral ministry.

My personal experience and interviews with colleagues suggest that, despite the neat distinctions in the literature and in theological education institutions between pastoral ministry and educational ministries, in practice, in real congregations, the distinction is blurry at best. Though pastors may not have been educated to appreciate the educational nature of what we do, as we reflect on our practice of ministry we appreciate that much of what we do is -- or has the potential to be -- educational. Most churches in North America do not have staff persons with formal Christian education training. Pastors are the Christian education "experts" and "resource people" in their churches. Therefore, pastors need to hear the words of a religious educator like Thomas Groome: "... each of us must come consciously to realize and intend what we are doing as Christian religious educators (I would add, as pastor-educators), why we are doing it, the social context in which our educating takes place, the 'readiness' of our copartners for our educational approach (our congregants), and their and our identity in that partnership" (1980, p. xiv).

As I understand both education and pastoral ministry I believe all pastors (even those who may have Christian education support staff) are involved in educational ministry in their congregations. Therefore we need -- self-consciously and intentionally -- to reflect on our educational role. We need to think about who we are, what it is we are doing, why we do what we do, and how we do it. We need to understand our society, which influences us and the people with whom we minister. And we need to reflect seriously on the characteristics and educational needs of our congregations and specific individuals in our congregations.

In my personal and pastoral pilgrimage I am growing in my understanding of what it means to think "educationally" as a pastor. By this I am <u>not</u> saying that I see one of my many roles as a pastor as being a teacher. I am <u>not</u> implying I spend more of my time formally teaching small groups or classes than before. I am <u>not</u> saying that I have taken another task upon myself -- while I always preached, visited, administered, and did a variety of tasks -- I have simply added a more active teaching role.

What I <u>do</u> mean is that my basic philosophy about the nature of pastoral ministry is changing. I am beginning to appreciate more and more that every activity in which I am already involved has profound educational potential. Opportunities to instruct or help persons grow in Christian knowledge, values and life are latent in almost every task in which I find myself already involved. I am trying to recognize those opportunities. And I am trying to take advantage of those possibilities more frequently. My perspective is changing. I am developing an "educational mindset" which influences and shapes how I perform the tasks I have always performed. I now try to see the educational possibilities latent within all of the activities in which I am already involved. And, increasingly, I try to make the most of those opportunities.

My Pilgrimage

In 1963, off the coast of Iceland, a brand new Island named Surtsey was formed in a dramatic volcanic eruption. The earth was changing -- forever. In 1963, in Dallas, Texas, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Society was changing -- forever. And, in 1963, I was born. I am among the senior members of what western Canadian novelist Douglas Coupland has described as "Generation X." All of my life I have known dramatic change as fundamental to the world in which I live. Old orders are changing. New patterns are emerging.

As I write these lines I have just finished reading two reviews of postmodernism, one by a theologian (Inbody, 1995), one by an educator (MacLure, 1995). From my life experiences, I find it easy to resonate with the social commentaries of theorists like Lyotard, Foucault, Baudrillard and Derrida who see fundamental social shifts occurring. As a starting point for discussion about fundamental "paradigm shifts" taking place in our cultural context, I find the concept of "postmodernity" helpful. Regardless of what we think about various theories of postmodernism or their prescriptions for social problems, postmodern writers alert us to the reality of deep social changes taking place around us.

I am of a generation where the "metanarratives" (of science, progress, Marxism, even Christianity) have been fragmented. While various "worldviews" may have dominated entire societies' thoughts in the past, this has not been true in my experience. Reinhold Niebuhr has suggested that,

> in every civilization its most impressive period seems to precede death by only a moment. Like the woods of autumn, life defies death in a glorious pageantry of color. But the riot of this color has been distilled by an alchemy in which life has already been touched by death" (1937, p. 41).

If Niebuhr is correct, the zenith of modernity may have occurred in the 1960s when an unlimited optimism in the human potential to solve any problem -- scientific (landing astronauts on the moon) or social (social engineering) -- seemed to dominate social consciousness.

I do not remember those heady days. For instance, I do not remember any of the lunar landings. The first space-related event I remember with clarity was the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. I have hazy recollections of Marxism. But strident Cold War nationalism, anti-Communist rhetoric and Helms-Burton legislation seem curiously anachronistic. My world is one of disorderly local struggles between ethnic groups. My community is a global tapestry of localized cultures. My historical understanding is dominated by the balkanization of the Soviet Union and a cacophony of tribal struggles on virtually every continent and within almost every nation. My understanding of nationalism is dominated by persistent threats of national disintegration and regionalism within Canada.

In my experience, the Judeo-Christian tradition as a widely accepted standard for morality and belief has never existed. As I read David Coupland's Life after God, I find myself reading about myself -- a member of a generation "of children of the children of the pioneers -- life after God -- a life of earthly salvation on the edge of heaven" (1994, p. 273). As I grew up, I knew less of Jesus Christ's teachings (never taught in school) than I knew of Greco-Roman pantheons (Social Studies 7). I remember visiting Europe in my teens, thinking churches - regretfully - were wonderful cultural artifacts of a simpler, more credulous age. I knew no-one in my classes at school who was a Christian ... or who practiced any other religion for that matter. Like Coupland, I sensed the passing of religion and God with vague regret. Regret or not, God was past. I knew no-one who would argue that.

Subsequently I have come to believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I have discovered that being "Christ's one" means that I am a distinct minority in a complex community. Canada is not a Christian country. Voices within the church clamoring for a re-establishment of a Christian culture in this country seem antiquated to me. I have never known a time when Christian voices were highly regarded in Canada. My Christian faith has been shaped in a multi-faith community where Christianity is one of many belief systems.

I live in a world of electronic information and entertainment networks. I have learned most of what I know about the world from television. I am cognizant that those younger than I are even more "plugged in." Their education is from the internet. My world is one of words, images and messages

among which it is almost impossible to distinguish reality from fantasy, fact from fiction, Arnold Schwarzeneggar from General Schwarzkopf, the Stormtrooper/Ewok battles of the Forest Moon of Endor from civil war in Albania. In the culture of internet, national boundaries are irrelevant. Everything is open to question. Every belief and value is permissible.

Neil Postman, in his book Amusing Ourselves to Death (1985), spoke of a change from the Age of Typography to the Age of Television, a shift which has left us loaded with "information" but no real-world context, inspiring an entertainment industry specializing in "pseudo-contexts." In Edmonton, we boast the world's largest mall complete with a beach (with real palm trees), indoor amusement park (with full size roller coaster), dolphins, submarine rides, a life-size recreation of Columbus' "Santa Maria," and hundreds of stores. I can travel from 1492 to the twenty-first century ("Galaxyland"), visit a tropical beach and the British crown jewels, golf an 18-hole mini-golf course and shop for almost anything within the space of an hour on a -40 degree day! Space and time are manipulated, reality is "disnified," and utopian myth is presented as reality (Hopkins, 1990). Is it real? To my generation and those younger than I, the answer is, "In a sense, yes."

I have grown up amid a clamor of different "discourses" -- dissonant discourses -- in which established philosophies (scientism, Marxism, Judeo-Christian nominalism) are shattered. "History, time, space, representation, causality, objectivity, authorial certainty, self-knowledge - all of these have lost their innocence," writes Maggie MacLure, "Old distinctions have become blurred ..." (1995, p. 109). In art, literature, architecture, TV, fashion, film and advertising styles and periods are mixed, cynicism and irony are common themes, fragmentation and incoherence are celebrated, the self becomes the only point of reference. Contingency and relativity can be taken to a ruthless extreme. Marva Dawn (theologian, author, and educator with Christians Equipped for Ministry) uses a baseball joke to explore the progression from premodern belief in objective truth to postmodern deconstructionism:

> A premodern umpire once said, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em as they is." Believing in an absolute truth that could be found, earlier societies looked for evidence to discover that truth. A modern umpire would say instead, "There's balls and there's strikes, and I call 'em as I sees 'em." For the modernist, truth is to be found in one's own experience. Now a postmodern umpire would say, "There's balls and there's strikes, and they ain't nothin' till I calls 'em." No truth exists unless we create it (1995, p. 36).

I would suggest that postmodern umpire might rather say, "There's balls and there's strikes, whatever you chooses to call 'em."

The challenge I have felt, then, having taken upon this role called "pastor" is to understand what being "pastor" is all about in the late twentieth century world. Frankly, I have found many of the pastoral theology texts to be of only moderate help. In seminary, in 1986, I wrote of Thomas Oden's Pastoral Theology (1983):

> This is a great book if: (1) I am a pastor in a Christian culture. (2) I am a pastor of Christian people who understand Christian norms, values, beliefs, etc., etc., (3) people know what the "church" is, both those in the church and those in society, (4) the church is an already established, thriving institutional organization (what about a (sic) church plants? useless!), (5) I simply want to run the organization. In other words, this is a great book if I have time, nothing better to do.

On reflection, I may have been too hard on the text. And yet, my inklings have proven true in ten years of pastoral experience. In a syncretistic world placing little value on churches or pastors, in churches where persons with diverse backgrounds, experiences and knowledge bases co-exist, it is not as simple as the texts suggest. There is ambiguity. There is contradiction. There is complexity.

For instance, as I have grown in my self-understanding as a pastor-educator, I find old-order patterns for ministry and neat divisions in seminaries and in the literature do not fit my lived experience. In my journal, two years after graduating from seminary, I wrote:

> I have found myself "un-learning" much of what I learned in seminary. I am rediscovering what it means to be creative. I am rediscovering a world without three-point-all-start-with-the-letter-'C' sermons. I am rediscovering the real world. The pre-seminary (this-is-how-you're-supposed-to-do-it-world). A world of wonder not systematic theology. A world of discovery, not commentary. A world I had forgotten.

"The old order changeth..." Patterns and principles of ministry from previous decades may no longer fit.[7]

Postmodern writers encourage us to beware of exclusive categories, to resist the impulse to find neat dichotomies. Certainly, as a Christian, I need to be discerning about where I choose to employ such syncretism. I unashamedly hold to an exclusivist view of salvation in Christ alone. However a binary view of pastoral ministry as one thing or another may not be helpful. To choose between theory and practice, nature and culture, "man" and machine, progressive and traditional, church, home and workplace, pastor and teacher, structured Sunday School and informal Christian nurture, may not be helpful. A dynamic tension is essential. Perhaps I may need to hold things in creative tension.

Through my work I deliberately want to emphasize this dynamic tension. To this point I have used the expression "pastor-educator" rather than "pastor/educator" or "pastor as educator." This is a deliberate choice. The use of a stroke ("/") implies that pastor and educator are interchangeable terms. I do not believe they are. Similarly the expression "Pastor as educator" implies that education or teaching is one role the pastor undertakes. The use of a dash ("-"), holds the words together and apart, showing both their presupposition of each other and their difference from one another. I believe the role of "pastor" and "educator" are intimately connected, but are still distinct. In subsequent chapters I will develop this concept further.

I have referred to myself as a person on a personal and pastoral pilgrimage. I believe that. I see myself as a person in process of growing in my understanding of the Christian faith. As I read Scripture and discover more about the Christian tradition I find myself growing in my appreciation of the Creative genius of the Father, the salvific grace of Christ, and the blessings of the Holy Spirit. As I live each day, I am learning more about myself. I am appreciating more and more how my story and my unique abilities and gifts have made me who I am and have equipped me -- and limited me -- as a Christian, as a husband and father, and as a pastor. And as I work at this vocation called "pastor" I am continually developing a deeper and richer understanding of some of its many facets. I am very aware that I am learning and growing all the time. I am on a pilgrimage. I have not discovered everything about being a Christian yet, about being Bruce Martin yet, or about being a pastor yet. I am not an expert.

This work, then, is personal. I am reflecting on my experiences and my thoughts. I do not pretend to have the understanding of what it means to be a pastor in the new order. I do know what I am learning through reading, reflection and dialogue with my colleagues, my congregation, and literature.

I am not alone in my quest to understand who I am as a pastor. As I have interviewed many of my colleagues I sense concern, frustration, confusion, and even fear about the future of pastoral ministry. But most of us are so concerned with simply surviving the day-to-day pressures of ministry we take little time to reflect deeply on changing times and changing roles. Most of us have not been educated to think critically and creatively about those sorts of issues. We have not been educated to reflect on our own faith, our own persons, our own experiences and our own understandings of pastoral ministry. Our educational preparation for ministry has emphasized reading "experts" and trusting their insights. We follow the principles of "successful" models elsewhere. And we do what we have done in the past.

My plea for my fellow pastors is that we encourage ourselves and our colleagues to be more reflective. I hope my reflections -- as one pastor trying to make sense of his work in one local

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[7]Significantly, Kennon Callahan, Professor at Candler School of Theology, Emory University and author of Twelve keys to an effective church (1983) and Effective church leadership (1990), concurs, drawing a distinction between the "professional minister" role which has dominated the twentieth century church and the "missionary pastor" model which Callahan believes must emerge.

congregation -- will encourage others to reflect as well. What does it mean for you to be a pastor in your church? My aim is to encourage a renewed dialogue among pastors about who we are and what we do.

A Note on Context ...

The context for this reflecting, rethinking and reshaping occurs in a dialogue on three levels. Part of it is personal. We reflect on our stories, experiences and understandings. Another part involves dialogue with colleagues and lay members of congregations. This discussion must also be conducted in creative dialogue with the Creator of the universe. God, ultimately, is our partner and guide in understanding and applying His Word to our changing world. Thus it is in an attitude of prayer that I reflect upon my role. It is in the conviction that God would have us dialogue with Him about His vision and goals for us in the twenty-first century.

King Arthur, setting out in his funeral barge, adds these last words to his friends as the old world changeth ...

> "Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
> Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
> For what are men better than sheep or goats
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,
> If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
> Both for themselves and those who call them friend?"
> (Tennyson, 1833/1958, p.470).

May we lift up such hands of prayer!

Moving Forward ...

This chapter has suggested that, in the late twentieth century, pastoral ministry is changing. Through my personal story and reflection, I have also suggested that pastors are engaged in tasks related to the disciplines of pastoral theology and Christian education. I have suggested that these disciplines are struggling with "paradigm shifts" in contemporary society. I have also discussed how, in my experience, pastoral theology and Christian education are not distinct disciplines, but -- in practice -- are intimately related.

Is my experience simply that -- a unique, personal view? Or, have others noted changes in society and in churches? Are other voices calling for pastors to reflect and review their role? Are others recognizing the educational task of pastors and calling for integration?

Chapter Two will begin to explore these issues. It will place my experience in the context of the broader Christian community.

CHAPTER TWO

Are the Paradigms Really Lost?

Are things really changing? Is the nature of pastoral work really being redefined? Are educational needs in churches really different than they were? Do we really need to reflect upon our role and ministries as pastors? My hunch is that changes are occurring, but hunches may be wrong. This chapter will explore these questions by considering contemporary literature in pastoral theology and Christian education.

Change

"There is nothing permanent except change," wrote the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. His insights appear valid when discussing society. In the late 1980's I had the opportunity to do graduate work in social geography at the University of British Columbia. I examined social changes and religious transitions occurring across Canada and particularly in urban communities from the late nineteenth century to the present day (Martin, 1989). As I reviewed literature on social change it was apparent that society is changing -- migration, urbanization and gentrification are twentieth century realities.[1] Fundamental economic and social changes are redefining the nature of society and communities (Ley, 1980; Martin and Ley, 1993). Sociologists and religious studies scholars note parallel changes in religious belief. In North America, traditional faiths (including Christianity) are declining, and secularism, non-traditional faiths (new religious movements) and other religions are increasing (McKenna, 1996). While scholars may not agree on the nature of changes,[2] it is not surprising that, if changes are taking place in society, the nature of church and pastoral ministry is changing, too. When I asked my colleagues, "Has pastoral ministry changed in the last five - ten years?" everyone answered, emphatically, "Yes." One pastor commented, "Someone said that if you haven't pastored in the last five years, you haven't pastored."

Pastors: Strangers in a strange calling

> It is too common for men to think that the work of the ministry is nothing but to preach, and to baptize, and to administer the Lord's supper, and to visit the sick ... too many ministers are such strangers to their own calling, that they will do no more. It hath oft grieved my heart to observe eminent able preachers, how little they do for the saving of souls, save only in the pulpit; and to how little purpose much of their labor is, by this neglect. They have hundreds of people that they never spoke a word to personally for their salvation; and if we may judge by their practice, they consider it not as their duty ... (Baxter, 1656/1983, pp. 178-9).

Thus Richard Baxter, author of one of the "classics" on pastoral ministry, The Reformed Pastor, lamented the vocation of pastor as it was commonly understood in the seventeenth century. These words were written in the context of Baxter's exhortation to pastors to take seriously their responsibility for the Christian education and spiritual nurture of persons in their congregations. In his plea to make education a priority, Baxter argued "the ministry is another kind of business than too many excellent preachers take it to be" (1656/1983, p. 179).

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[1]See also Chandler (1992), Anderson (1992), Sweet (1994), Urban missions newsletter (1997).

[2]For instance scholars of religion debate whether "secularization" or "religious change" is a better explanatory theory for contemporary trends (Martin, 1989).

If, in the seventeenth century, Baxter could observe that many pastors were "strangers to their own calling," the same could be said -- even more emphatically -- in the late twentieth century. Little consensus appears to exist about the nature of the pastoral role or pastoral work. In the 1950's, Richard Niebuhr, Director of the Study of Theological Education in the United States and Canada, referred to the pastorate as "the perplexed profession" (1956, p. 48). In the early 1990's, George Barna, well-known researcher into the challenges facing contemporary churches, observed that "anguish, confusion and frustration ... characterizes much of the daily experience of pastors" (1993, p. 12).

"Strangers to their own calling, "the perplexed profession," characterized by "anguish, confusion and frustration"... it is apparent that pastors struggle with their sense of identity! A consensual paradigm of who pastors are or what pastors do does not exist at the dawn of the twenty-first century. But discussion about who pastors and what they do is desperately needed:

> Warning: the list of endangered species is growing: To bald eagles, koalas, and spotted owls, add another: ordained pastors energized by what they do. A majority of American ministers are suffering from spiritual burnout and buckling under family and financial pressures. (Asimakoupoulos, 1994, p. 123)

In a book provocatively titled Pastors at Risk, London and Wiseman begin:

> Contemporary pastors are caught in frightening spiritual and social tornadoes which are now raging through home, church, community, and culture. No one knows where the next twister might touch down or what values the storm will destroy....
>
> Something has to be done. Ministry hazards are choking the hope out of pastors' souls. They feel disenchanted, discouraged, and often even outraged. They question why they should be expected to squander energy on trivial matters when evil threatens to wreck the human race. Fatigue shows in their eyes. Worry slows their stride. And vagueness dulls their preaching.... Some pastors consider their lives to be shadows of what they dreamed they would be, because many old formulas for ministry no longer work.
>
> Something has to be done. Overwork, low pay, and desperation take a terrible toll as pastors struggle to make sense of crammed calendars, hectic homes, splintered dreams, starved intimacy, and shriveled purpose. Some quit in utter hopelessness to sell used cars, hawk Amway, or peddle water softeners. Others lapse into passivity like holy robots. And many of the remaining stouthearted hold on by their fingernails, hoping to find a hidden spring to refresh their weary spirits and scrambled thoughts. (1993, pp. 11-12)

Meier et al observe:

> To fill the job description of today's pastor sounds like a job for Superman. A pastor is expected to make house calls as willingly as yesterday's country doctor, to shake hands and smile like a politician on the campaign trail, to entertain like a stand-up comedian, to teach the Scriptures like a theology professor, and to counsel like a psychologist with the wisdom of Solomon. He should run the church like a top-level business executive, handle finances like a career accountant, and deal with the public like an expert diplomat at the United Nations. No wonder so many pastors are confused about just what is expected of them and how they will ever manage to live up to all those expectations. (1993, p. 165)

Personal stories from pastors (Ulstein, 1993) emphasize that many pastors feel battered and bruised. Pastors are struggling to define who they are and what they are to do.

The pastors I interviewed were less dramatic in their discussions of pastoral ministry. But they did express confusion and frustration:

> I know what I need to do, you know, but people load all this other stuff on you. It's like they don't want you to feel like you might not have enough to do (laughter. Sometimes it's comical really. If they only sat back and looked at what they were doing ...
>
> What's the most important thing for me? Survival! No, seriously, I do OK managing my time and stuff. I'm not overwhelmed or anything. But finding the time to plan -- really plan where we're going and stuff -- that's the hard part. There's so much that needs to be done right now!
>
> It goes in cycles. Some days I hate it! I hate the church! I hate ministry! I just want to go flip burgers or something! Other days it's the best job in the world. Right now things are going great. This church is wonderful. My last church, well, that was a different story.

Niebuhr suggests that, at various stages in history, widely accepted paradigms did provide frameworks for pastors to understand and fulfill their role. In the middle ages, Niebuhr suggests, a "pastoral ruler" paradigm dominated: the chief pastoral function was the "government of souls": "so directing needy souls that they might escape from the snares of sin and achieve everlasting life" (1956, p.59). Through preaching and teaching, administering sacraments, leading worship, and supervising church activities, these pastoral rulers aimed to save souls from hell.

In the Reformation age, Niebuhr suggests, Protestant pastors were primarily "preachers." While the Reformation preacher also taught, administered sacraments, led in prayer, administered churches and cared for the needy:

> there was no question about his chief office nor about the chief purpose which he had before him in the performance of all traditional and new functions. His main work was preaching the gospel of forgiveness, declaring God's love for man as revealed in Jesus Christ. And in all his other work the objective of such preaching was his guiding purpose. (1956, p. 59)

The evangelist of the Wesleyan, Evangelical, Pietist movement, Niebuhr suggests, represented a variation on the paradigm of the Reformation preacher, emphasizing even more the pastor's role in proclamation.

In the Roman Catholic tradition (and more liturgical Protestant traditions) the "pastor as priest" paradigm has dominated. The priest teaches and preaches, governs a church, and cares for the needy, but above all, he emphasizes administering the sacraments. The purpose of the sacraments is the reconciliation of God to humanity and humanity to God. The priest's role is as mediator between people and God.

Niebuhr comments: "As these examples of typical ideas about ministry all indicate, a clear-cut conception always includes not only an understanding of what the most important work of the ministry is but also the recognition that it must perform other functions" (1956, p. 62). In these paradigms the pastor always knew what his chief function was[3] and what his chief end was.[4] Niebuhr suggests that, by the 1950's, there was tremendous confusion among both Christian traditions who emphasized the "pastor as preacher" paradigm and those who have followed the "pastor as priest" paradigm on both points: "... inability to define what the most important activity of the ministry is and ... uncertainty about the proximate end toward which all activities are directed" (1956, p. 63).

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[3]E.g. "the government of souls," preaching, and administering the sacraments.

[4]E.g. salvation from eternal punishment, the cure of souls through hearing and responding to the gospel, and the reconciliation of God and humanity through the sacrament.

Niebuhr perceived a "mistiness" of the conception of ministry. Those pastors who had developed a clear definition of their task, and office, he observed, often did so in isolation, without help from theological education or denominational structures. Pastoral identity was developed by individual clergy who, in their personal pilgrimages, worked out for themselves a sense of vocation, a sense of their work and purpose as pastors. This sense of pastoral self-identity, Niebuhr observed, was critical if pastors were to find satisfaction in their work. Ministers who had clear vocational identities were able to resist the many pressures to which they were subject from their churches, from society, from denominational structures, and from personal goals and focus on clear tasks and purposes.

In contrast, pastors without a strong sense of personal pastoral identity were subject to innumerable pressures. Analyzing the survey results, Niebuhr noted the overbusyness and sense of tremendous pressure experienced by those pastors unable to define priorities in their ministries. Niebuhr suggested that this hazy notion of pastoral work may have been responsible for many pastors leaving ministry. Unclear about their duties and with no specific standards by which to judge themselves many pastors became frustrated and left the profession altogether (1956, pp. 53-4).

Niebuhr cited a variety of possible causes for this vocational confusion. He suggested persons entering seminary may have had mediocre Christian conviction or a weak sense of call to ministry. Or perhaps seminaries had lost their spiritual vitality through an emphasis on making themselves attractive to the greatest number of people. Perhaps, Niebuhr mused, the sociology of secularization was a contributing factor: non-church agencies had taken over social agencies once run by churches, religious values and influence were becoming been marginalized, and the ministry was declining sharply as a respected profession. Many pastors were left unsure of their task, purpose, and value. Whatever the causes of the vocational confusion, Niebuhr's analysis highlighted that pastors were, indeed, "perplexed."

Niebuhr's conclusions were based on a study of more than one hundred theological colleges, commissioned by the American Association of Theological Schools. His description of the pastorate as a "perplexed profession" noted that, in contrast to periods in church history when a definite conception of the pastoral role may have existed, by the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, no consensus on the nature of pastoral work existed. Paradigm lost.

In 1992, the Barna Research Group, specializing in conducting research for Christian churches and church-related groups, conducted an extensive survey of Protestant pastors in the United states. Among the conclusions:

> our research points out that pastors are disappointed with much of what is transpiring under their leadership and are greatly frustrated in their efforts to serve God and His people ... the research confirms that pastors are often "spread too thin." Because they have become jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none, they and the people they seek to assist suffer the consequences" (Barna, 1993, pp. 24-5).

Pastors, Barna's research concludes, are "one of the most frustrated occupational groups" in society (1993, p. 59). "Frustration" is a theme British pastor and author, David Watson, recognized fifteen years earlier among clergy as he quoted a newspaper article on the state of pastoral ministry in the United Kingdom:

> The Anglican priests of England, a motley band of underpaid and generally frustrated men, provide some of the most poignant casualties of the 20th century ... They are like armless lifeguards trying to save the drowning. They become priests because they believe they can help people through God -- and the find themselves trapped in an archaic structure. (The Daily Telegraph in Watson, 1978, p. 245)

Barna's research linked frustration to pastors feeling inadequate given the expectations placed upon them, overwhelmed by their jobs, trapped between a need for lay volunteers and apathetic lay members, chafing within rigid denominational structures, and stagnation in their own personal spiritual lives.

Coupled with these frustrations pastors feel regarding their role within churches, pastors have seen their role in society change, too. Barna's research notes that only 9% of the unchurched believe local churches are sensitive to their needs, implicating pastors among the major problems. Twice as many

adults believe Christianity is relevant to life today as those who claim local churches (and pastors) are relevant (Barna, 1993, p. 50). People's confidence in the church, as an institution, and pastors, as resources, appears to be dramatically declining.[5]

According to most statistics, religious participation in Canada has plummeted in the past three decades. Among the many reasons cited is that churches (and by implication, pastors) have presented people with programs with irrelevant content and antiquated practices (Berton, 1965; Lyon, 1985; Bibby, 1995). These theories suggest that pastors and other church leaders have not appreciated the need to understand their congregations or communities and develop curriculum (including worship services, sermons, classes and other programs) that is relevant.

In Congregational Megatrends, Jeff Woods notes:

> There was a time when a local church pastor was among the most respected and educated people in a community. The pastor seemed to know all of the community movers and shakers by name. For good reason. The pastor was one of the movers and shakers. Society held a high regard for the pastoral office. The pastor received a lot of privileges in town, not just from parishioners. Everyone wanted to get on the good side of the local pastor. (1996, p. 103)

Those days, Woods suggests, are largely over. "More and more, a church and its leadership gain respect within a community by meeting the needs of people within the community, not by virtue of their official status," Woods notes (1996, p. 104). Woods observations are echoed by Loren Mead:

> The older ones among us (pastors) remember when ministry was a profession of high status and low stress. In the course of 30 or 40 years it has become one of much lower status and much higher stress. (1994a, pp. 310-311)

This changing social role, Woods argues, is but the "tip of the leadership iceberg." Even larger are changes within churches themselves.

> Many pastors have put forth the notions that only they can deliver sermons, counsel people on spiritual issues, discuss death, deliver eulogies, baptize, hand out the bread and the cup, pray for the ill, visit the sick, wash feet, or moderate a church meeting. Some of the laity are beginning to ask why. (1996, p. 105)

From inside the church, what little defining structures pastors had to structure their roles appear to be being challenged. The "megatrend," Woods contends, is a shift from official leadership to gifted leadership. Congregational consultant, Mead, agrees: "I sense the continuing struggle of clergy to understand their role and an uncertainty about what that role entails" (1994a, p. 310). The challenge for pastors is this: What is the role of pastors in this twenty-first century church?

In the midst of these changes, pastors know that congregations have high expectations of them. Pastors are expected to:

- live exemplary lives, with higher standards than most people;
- be available at all times to all people for all purposes;
- lead their churches to grow numerically and financially;
- provide visionary leadership, tempered with wisdom and genuine love;
- teach people the deeper truths of the faith in ways that are readily applicable to all persons in all life situations;
- be prepared to answer questions or provide advice on any topic;
- provide counsel to persons in a variety of life crises;
- be committed family members who demonstrate what it means to be spiritual leaders in their

[5]For further discussion see Barna (1991), Russell (1992), Posterski and Barker (1993), and Bibby (1995).

families, faithful, loving spouses, and positive role models, active in the lives of their children;
- keep pace with the latest trends and developments in church life and in society at large;
- build significant relationships with all members of the congregation;
- represent the church as an ambassador in the community, active in community organizations;
- take primary responsibility for both evangelism and proclamation;
- nurture their own growing, meaningful spiritual lives; and run their churches in crisp, professional, business-like manners, tempered with sensitivity and grace.

The battle-cry with which many pastors enter ministry is often similar to this noble statement from George Sweazey, Francis Landey Pattoe Professor of Homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary:

> A Minister ... is not allowed to be a specialist. He dare not think of himself as primarily an evangelist, an educator, an inspirer, a counselor, or an enabler of social action. His congregation will be deprived if he is not all of these, and more. (1976, p. 21)

Being "all of these and more" places tremendous pressure upon pastors. As pastors struggle to define their role in society and in their churches they cope with overwhelming expectations.

> The pressure on a pastor is enormous. It may be a privilege to lead God's people into a deeper relationship with Him. But, all too often, the privilege fits like a noose around the pastor's neck. By God's grace, he reasons, the slack in the rope has not been tightened. (Barna, 1993, p. 52).

Of course changes in status have occurred among many professions and occupations outside the church in the second half of the twentieth century. Barna suggests, however, that pastors are acutely aware of the phenomenon as many people have left churches altogether.

Lloyd Rediger, commenting upon his research among pastors, contends that pastors "must become more proactive in reshaping the clergy role, or it will be done to us" (1995, p. 18). Rediger's research, conducted between 1987 and 1993, notes both the "enormous energy drains" associated with being a pastor ("the loneliness of pseudo-intimacies ... of being available to parishioners in caring, intimate, and confidential ways ... which are not typically reciprocated") and the incredibly varied expectations of pastors (1995, p. 19). Much of the problem, he notes, is "the mystique" of the pastoral role. "Who really knows what pastors do, or what kind of support they need to do it?" (1995, p. 19).

How do we measure "success" as pastors, Rediger asks, when we neither have a good concept of what our role is nor are the usual indicators of success (money, fame and power) legitimate goals? He argues that while most professions have well-accepted criteria upon which a person's performance can be evaluated, pastors do not. The goals for which most professionals can strive (status, salary, prestige) are not considered legitimate objectives for pastors.

Pastoral ministry is also unique because our professional role is inextricably connected with our sense of personhood. "Our profession," he observes, "is the only one in which personal identity, professional identity, and religious faith are all wrapped up in the same package" (1995, p. 19). When we do not know who we are, vocationally, he suggests, we struggle as individuals to know who we are, personally or spiritually. When our professional role is confusing, our personal and spiritual identities are often ambiguous, too.

Barna's study underlines many of these observations. Barna notes that pastors cannot be champions of every cause under the broad umbrella of the church, yet they are often expected to do so. Expectations of pastors, he believes, are often unrealistic. Pastors, by implication, need to identify what their true task or vocation is. As Niebuhr suggested three decades earlier, both Rediger and Barna believe pastors must define the relative importance of their activities and identify the primary purpose of their ministries. Pastors who do so appear to be professionally and personally satisfied. Pastors who struggle with who they are and what they do are frustrated and unhappy.

Perhaps pastoral ministry may be described as "post-paradigmatic." Arguably, clear paradigms may have once existed. But no longer. Rediger hints that a new pastoral paradigm may be being created for pastors from the outside. In a society in which "consumer" religion has become popular (Bibby, 1987), pastors have lost status (Barna, 1991; 1993; Woods, 1996), and leadership changes are occurring within churches (Mead, 1991; 1994a; 1994b; Woods, 1996), pastoral paradigms are changing. Bibby suggests that society is defining a "paradigm" for pastors -- as religious "consultants" whom persons may seek out when they are in the market for religious services or rites of passage (Bibby, 1995). Willimon suggests pastors may find themselves neatly packaged as "helping professionals."

Congregations, themselves, appear to be replacing the paradigm of pastor as "mover and shaker" with a leadership paradigm that sees pastors as gifted leaders on a leadership team, gifted leaders working in partnership with other gifted leaders. Woods believes pastors need to see themselves as "pastoral consultants," who attempt to nurture lay leaders to "take over" every ministry in their congregations.

Whatever the paradigm proposed, all of these voices concur that the pastoral role <u>is</u> changing, it <u>is</u> being redefined. The challenge for pastors is whether or not we choose to be part of the discussion.

Christian education: A tired enterprise

In the late 1980s the Search Institute undertook a comprehensive three and a half year study of Christian education ministries in churches in the United States. They consulted more than eleven thousand individuals in over five hundred and fifty congregations representing six major Protestant denominations. Their goal was to probe the effectiveness of Christian education ministries in congregations.

The <u>Effective Christian Education</u> findings were disturbing. The study identified a vast difference in the maturity of the faith of those over sixty and those under (Benson and Eklin, 1990, pp. 12-13).[6] Among adults under sixty, a majority reported they did not read the Bible privately or pray regularly, many never talk about God, two-thirds never or rarely encouraged someone to believe in Jesus Christ, and over half reported they had never given time to help the poor, hungry or sick. Despite verbal concern about youth, half of the respondents indicated they had never given time to help children, youth or families. More than two-thirds expressed difficulty accepting salvation as a free gift from God; they sensed that their salvation was earned by obeying rules and commandments. Among youth the study revealed even higher rates of religious apathy and ignorance.

In the Canadian context, Bellous' study of Christian education in Baptist Union of Western Canada churches reveals complimentary findings. For instance, age had a strong bearing on faith maturity. While 20-30% of adults 25-39 years of age indicated undeveloped faith, only 8% of adults over 60 years of age had an undeveloped faith (1994, p. 94). While noting that life experience was undoubtedly important in nurturing these older adults into a mature faith, Bellous also suggests that educational ministries have been progressively deemphasized in churches:

> Christian education has, in many cases, been relegated to secondary status in the structure and planning of church action strategies. We ignore to our peril this important and integral part of church ministry. (1994, p. 98)

David Schuller, a consultant for the Search Institute study, concluded, "the greatest symptom of need in the average Protestant congregation is the large number of members who have failed to internalize and manifest a life-transforming, life-shaping faith" (1993, p. 6). A summary report concluded:

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[6]The concept of "faith maturity" is discussed extensively in literature from the Search Institute and in analyses and applications of its findings. Key elements of faith maturity include orthodox doctrinal beliefs, an understanding that religious faith needs to be integrated in all aspects of one's life, and evidence of activities or attitudes shaped by faith being demonstrated (Benson and Eklin, 1990, p. 10; Bellous, 1994, pp. 20-27).

> Christian education in a majority of congregations is a tired enterprise in need of reform. Often out-of-touch with adult and adolescent needs, it experiences increasing difficulty in finding and motivating volunteers, faces general disinterest among its 'clients,' and employs models and procedures that have changed little over time. (Benson and Eklin, 1990, p. 58)

The Search Institute study was particularly insightful into the status of current educational ministries. Other indicators support the expressions of concern in the Institute report. American studies note that church-attenders rank the church's teaching ministries at the bottom of the quality scale; only youth programs are more poorly evaluated (Barna, 1991, p. 280). "Sunday schools, " Barna comments, "do not provide the quality of teaching and experience that people demand these days in exchange for their time" (in Schultz and Schultz, 1993, p. 9). In 1965, Unites States denominations reported 45,803,074 enrolled in educational programs; thirty years later, only 24,924,203 persons were reported as enrolled (Yearbook of American churches, 1965, p. 267; Yearbook of American & Canadian churches, 1995, pp. 265-272). In Canada, statistics showed even more dramatic decline from 874,828 persons involved in educational ministries in 1969 (in only six denominations reporting) to 340,906 persons enrolled (in over thirty denominations reporting) in 1995 (Yearbook of Canadian and American Churches, 1970 and 1995).

A cursory survey of Christian education texts is interesting. Besides the Search Institute study, virtually every recent text in Christian education begins with a lengthy discussion of problems in educational ministries. The titles of opening chapters in these texts speak of deep concerns:

> "The shaking of the foundations" (Westerhoff, 1976),
> "The current lack of purpose (in Christian education)" (Wilhoit, 1986),
> "Mainline churches in crisis" (Osmer, 1990),
> "Churches at risk?" (Roehlkepartain, 1993),
> "The lost art of learning in the church" (Schultz and Schultz, 1993),
> "Flaws in the church education vessel" (Foster, 1994).

Robert Pazmino contends that the problem, in part, is that Christian education is "preparadigmatic," that it has not developed a paradigm -- a dominant and widely accepted understanding, framework, or concept that guides all thought and practice (1988, p. 13). The implication of his critique is that the field of Christian education is still developing a paradigm. If Christian educators can locate a new paradigm, all will be well.

I would suggest, however, that historically, Christian education has been dominated by specific paradigms. Jesus, although he taught large groups on occasion, particularly worked with small groups, often drawing lessons from everyday experiences. Many writers have studied his methods, analyzed his ministry, and described his educational practices (Guthrie, 1975; Gangel and Benson 1983, pp. 66-73; Reed and Prevost 1993, pp. 61-68).

In the post-apostolic church a catechetical paradigm dominated (Gangel and Benson, 1983, pp. 88-91; Reed and Prevost, 1993, pp. 75-103; Burgess, 1996, pp. 31-32). Burgess suggests that this movement became the "historic prototype" -- or paradigm -- that dominated Christian education until the twentieth century. Through the Middle Ages a strong educational movement flourished among clergy, through the monastic movement and development of universities, but chatechesis remained the dominant education paradigm for both lay people and pastors (Gangel and Benson, 1983, pp. 95-116; Reed and Prevost, 1993, pp. 111-162; Burgess, 1996). Through the Protestant Reformation, Luther, Calvin and others emphasized Christian education for everyone as the means to create Christian communities, again with a strong emphasis on the use of catechesis (Gangel and Benson, 1983, pp. 135-151; Reed and Prevost, 1993, pp. 189-201; Burgess, 1996, pp. 45-53). Christian education was perceived fundamentally as accurately communicating a revealed message.

> Compactly stated, the historic prototype assumes (1) that religious education is fundamentally concerned with communicating a divinely given message; (2) that aims and subject matter are best ascertained from the Bible and from carefully preserved doctrines rooted in it; (3) that the teacher's role is to communicate the spirit and facts of the saving me as well as to assist the learner's assimilation into the church; and (4) that learners will live out the implications of the message with respect to their participation in the church, as well as their eternal destiny. (Burgess, 1996, p. 26)

By the nineteenth century, however, Harold Burgess, Professor of Pastoral Ministries and Christian Education at Asbury Theological Seminary, suggests that philosophical ideas from the Enlightenment were shaking the foundations of the historic prototype. He identifies four dominant models (or paradigms) which he sees as particularly influential in twentieth century Christian education.

First he discusses a "classical liberal model" associated with theorists including Horace Bushnell, John Dewey, George Albert Coe, William Clayton Bower, Adelaide Teague Case, George Herbert Betts, Walter Scott Athearn and Ernest John Chave. Burgess suggests this paradigm was very influential for religious education during the first four decades of the twentieth century. In this model, a reliance upon revealed truth (which had previously been assumed) was superseded by a commitment to discover and test truth through application of the scientific method. Burgess summarizes the characteristics of the paradigm as:

> (1) the assumption that theological constructs are open to continual change (thus human experience becomes normative for religion itself as well as for religious education theory and practice); (2) the conviction that religious education is essentially concerned with social and cultural construction, not with individual salvation; (3) the view that the religion teacher's task is to create social consciousness, and to develop social living skills, by arranging situations in which learners participate directly in the social process,; and (4) the espoused doctrine that Christian personality and lifestyle arise from the development of latent personality and religious capacities. (1996, p. 76)

Burgess argues that social changes in the 1930's and 1940's, coupled with a renewed interest in theology, undermined the optimistic tenets of the model. The model was replaced by what Burgess terms a "mainline theological" paradigm.

"The mid-century mainline model of religious education" grew out of the "liberal model," but emphasized considerably more theological reflection. Randolph Crump Miller, Sara Little, James Smart, Iris Cully, D. Campbell Wyckoff, C. Ellis Nelson, John Westerhoff III, and Maria Harris are names associated with this paradigm. Burgess suggests that this model is defined by these criteria:

> (1) Normative educational decisions are based on judgments informed by a wide range of twentieth-century theological expressions including, though not limited to, those commonly labeled neo-orthodox, process, and liberation. (2) The broad aim is to establish individuals in a right relationship with God and the to educate them for socially responsible, intelligent, and adult Christian (religious) living. (3) The teacher's task is regarded as one of entering into a communal relationship with learners for the express purpose of guiding them in their growth within themselves, toward God, and toward others. (4) The learner's spiritual life is most effectively fostered within the revelatory fellowship of the church (religious community). (1996, pp. 111-112)

This model moved beyond the optimistic thought and individualism of the liberal model. It emphasizes that individuals do need some kind of spiritual redemption and that the church (rather than society as a whole) is the proper locus for religious life and education. Its broad aim is to foster growth among

learners toward God, toward others and within themselves through encouraging a right relationship with God within the context of communal relationship in the church.

The third model, the "evangelical/kerygmatic model," Burgess links to a continuation or revival of the historic prototype which had dominated Christianity from the early church through the Reformation. Burgess sees the link between catechesis of the church through Reformation coming through the blossoming Sunday School movement of the nineteenth century and continuing through to the present:

> Here (in mid-nineteenth century America) the Bible replaced the catechism books spawned by the Reformation. During much of the nineteenth century, then, while Catholic and Lutheran children were busy memorizing the lessons of the catechism, children in Sunday Schools were busy memorizing the Bible. In either case, when a child could repeat what was true and right, he or she would surely believe the truth and do the right thing as the Holy Spirit worked within through the lessons learned -- or so the prevailing theory went. (Burgess, 1996, p. 146)

Burgess notes that this paradigm is present both in Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, promoted by theorists including Frank Gaebelein, Lois LeBar, Clarence Benson, Kenneth Gangel, Larry Richards, Findley Edge, Robert Pazmino, Josef Jungmann, Johannes Hofinger and Marcel van Caster. The key components of this model include:

> First, theological views derived from data to be received by authoritative revelation are normative for theory and practice. The Bible is the source of authoritative revelation for Protestants. Roman Catholics include church tradition which, with the Bible, is interpreted by the magisterium. Second, both aim and content are fundamentally concerned with the transmission of a unique message derived from the facts of revelation. Third, the primary teaching task is to fully and faithfully transmit the message to learners. Fourth, learners will then live out the implications of the message with respect to Christian living and eternal destiny. (1996, p. 150)

The fourth model Burgess discusses he calls the "social science model" or "religious instruction model." He identifies the writings of James Michael Lee as foundational to this perspective which emphasizes empirical methodologies, objective, quantitative data collection, religious behavioral prediction based on empirical observation, hypothesis-making and testing for evaluating teaching practices, and a strong theory-practice integration.

Several other theorists fall outside Burgess' typography. Timothy Lines has proposed a model based upon systems theory (1987). Richard Osmer (1990), strongly influenced by Luther and Calvin, calls for a recovery of the "teaching office." Thomas Groome has proposed a "shared Christian praxis" approach (1980, 1991). Mary Boys argues for a blurring of distinctions between disciplines, including theology and education (1980, 1989).

Through his detailed discussion, Burgess traces common themes and notes the influence theorists -- from different paradigms -- have had on one another. Burgess' work is particularly helpful to help identify the theoretical underpinnings of paradigms which have powerfully shaped contemporary understandings of Christian education. His work, however, also draws into clear focus that paradigms need to be flexible and change. Old paradigms need to be reevaluated and reformed. New paradigms may need to emerge.

Certainly the old paradigms have been under attack. For instance, the evangelical/kerygmatic model has been sharply criticized: "The Sunday School ... is increasingly archaic in a time when family patterns have changed" (Lynn in Chandler 1992, p. 112). The Search Institute results suggest that the mainline model's emphasis on Christian nurture is not being effective either. The mosaic of literature in contemporary Christian education, drawing on a myriad of philosophical and theological traditions suggests a field where new ideas are likely to increase, rather than decrease. Christian education, like pastoral ministry, may, in fact be "postparadigmatic."

As noted earlier, Jeff Woods identifies a Christian education "megatrend": a shift from what he calls "tribal education to "immigrant education." "In the past," Woods writes, "churches educated their members as if they were educating members of a tribe ... those teaching were very similar to those learning" (1996, p. 58). This approach worked well in the context of liberal, evangelical/kerygmatic and mainline paradigms. In Sunday School, children, growing up in the church, learned more and more about the Bible and their faith. By the time they became adults they had absorbed many years of sequential, graded learning. Adult Sunday School (if it existed) typically assumed biblical knowledge and faith maturity. Liberal and mainline emphases on Christian nurture worked well, too, when young children could learn from mature adult role models. Children could assume that the adults around them were further along in faith development than they were. Younger adults could look to older adults as role models.

But in a cultural context where many do not begin their faith journey as children these paradigms break down. In my church, some of my children in our grade three-four Sunday School class know far more about the Bible and have a more mature, integrated faith than many of our adults who have just begun attending in the last few months. Several of our seniors (who have only just started coming to church) could well look at a young man in his early twenties as a role model in maturing faith development. The old paradigms no longer work.

"Today," Woods suggests, "churches need to view their educational ministries as the education of immigrants who have chosen to move onto their soil with little, if any, previous knowledge of the land and its people" (1996, p. 58). In this context, new approaches, new paradigms, need to be considered. The entire church culture and program, Woods suggests, needs to nurture an educational atmosphere where learning is not limited to specific programs or classes. It permeates everything the church does. Woods specifically identifies three key methods:

- mentoring (intentionally encouraging relationships where two people at different stages in their faith development are able to discuss any and every topic);
- assimilation (involving people in groups where the can explore the deeper meanings of faith in their context); and
- life-long learning (recognizing people need opportunities to learn at every stage of their faith development).

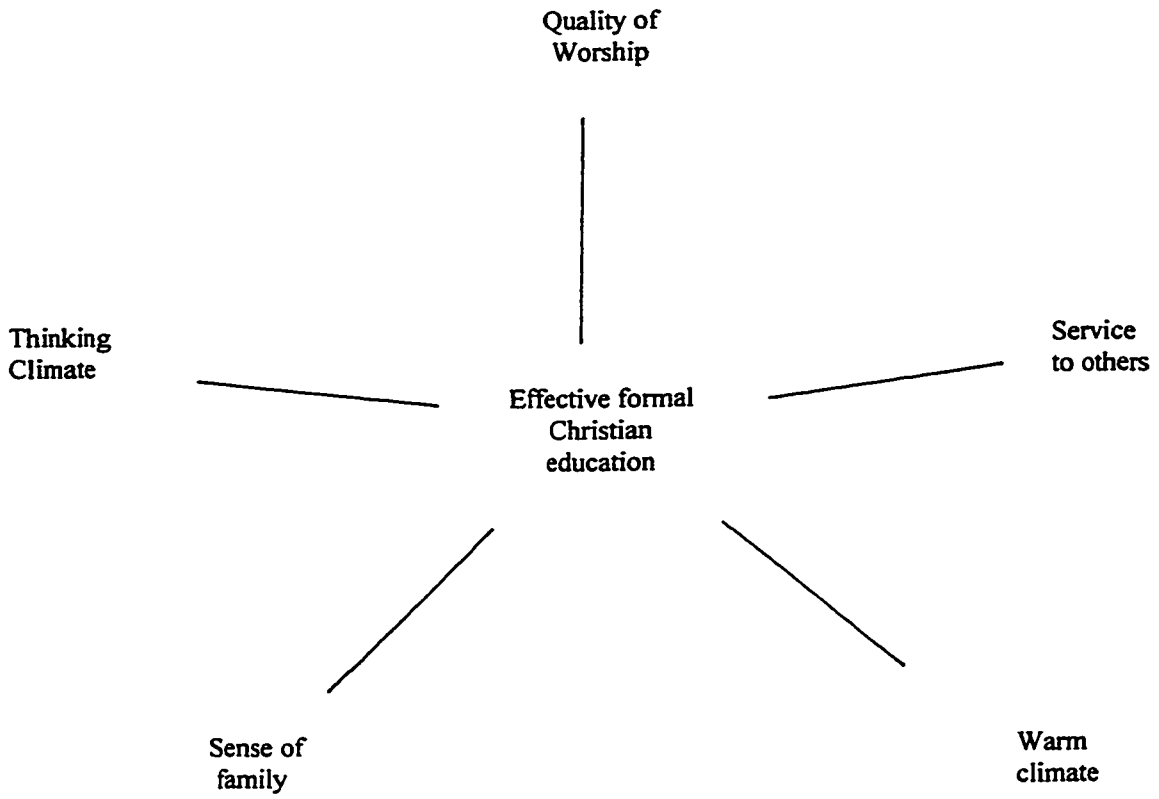
Woods concludes his discussion by suggesting an old paradigm: "Jesus knew all about mentoring, assimilation and life-long learning ... Jesus was an educator and took that role very seriously" (1996, p. 70). If Jesus took education seriously, then Woods suggests contemporary churches must take it seriously, too. In this paradigm, education becomes something that is latent within all the relationships, activities and programs a church offers. The challenge, Woods suggests, is to see that educational potential and capitalize upon it.

Significantly, the Search Institute researchers arrived at a similar conclusion. As they went beyond analyzing the spiritual profile of individuals, they asked the question, "What in the life of the local church -- both its climate as well as its formal programs -- contributes most to nurturing a strong faith?" The research team identified six aspects of congregational life which most directly contributed to the maturity of faith among youth and adults (Figure 1). The six aspects were all interrelated. Mature faith development was most likely to occur in churches which offered quality worship, a thinking climate, opportunities to serve others, a sense of family, a warm climate and a formal Christian education program. The Christian education program emerged as the most important factor in nurturing mature Christian faith.

Schuller notes that, despite a distrust of formal schooling (both in public education and churches), and a growing emphasis on the church as a faith community sharing common beliefs, worship and care for one another (shifting the focus away from education per se), local churches which appeared to be most effective in nurturing faith emphasized formal and informal Christian education at all age levels. These churches maintained formal Christian education programs although they may or may not resemble traditional Sunday School or Christian nurture structures.

Figure 1:

Faith-enhancing factors in congregations



(Schuller 1993, p. 10)

Key elements in effective education programs included:

* **characteristics of teachers:** teachers with maturing faiths and a knowledge of teaching methods were most significant in making a program effective. Significantly, while over half of the teachers surveyed reported annual opportunities to learn teaching methods, few reported receiving spiritual nurture themselves.

* **pastoral leadership:** "For Christian education to most effective," Schuller comments, "the congregation's pastor must be highly committed to the educational program, devote significant time to it, and know educational theory and practice" (1993, p. 11). The research notes less than half of pastors are actively involved in educational programs.

* **educational process:** the study notes that spiritual growth happens best when spiritual insight arises from life experiences. Ideally, in a community of faith, individuals should help each other develop faith and values, in a climate which recognizes each person's unique faith journey and which encourages independent thinking and honest questioning.

* **educational content:** integration of Biblical knowledge, social awareness, moral decision making with personal understanding is critical. While most youth and adults reported their educational ministries emphasized the Bible, many expressed concern that the issues discussed were not relevant to their daily lives.

* **peer interest:** Congregations with many youth and adults involved found that participating individuals drew others into educational programs.

* **goals:** Churches which made education a clear priority, including a clear set of learning objectives for various age levels, appeared to be most effective.

The Search Institute study noted other, informal factors which were influential in nurturing faith, including warmth (hospitality and acceptance), thinking climate (questions encouraged, thinking challenged), quality worship (people involved in worship service), care-giving (care is often given and received) and service to others (incorporating beliefs into actions).

Putting the Search Institute results together with Woods' insights a new paradigm emerges (or rather an old paradigm reemerges). In this paradigm formal programs (classes, etc.) are still important. But just as important is a climate where education and learning are valued and educational possibilities are recognized in informal as well as formal educational settings. Relationships (whether between a teacher and his pupil, between a more mature mentor and her friend, among members of a small group) are recognized as having educational value.

In this paradigm, the programs and structures of education are flexible -- while a traditional Sunday School format may work for one church and a home-based small group structure may work for another -- two key elements are present. First, an atmosphere that values education and encourages learning is present. Second, some intentional program exists to help persons of all ages grow in their faith.

> Tomorrow's churches must discover productive means of teaching the diverse set of people who will come to them seeking the Lord. Some of these means may be radically different from the old, but each method must sent the same Jesus whom the pillars of the church have come to know well. How can this generation of learners know Jesus like the last generation? That is the task before us. (Woods 1996, p. 70)

Moving Forward ...

Pastoral theologians agree that the pastoral role is changing; it is being redefined. Christian educators concur that the educational ministry of churches is changing, it is being redefined. Are pastors involved in these process? I believe they ought be.

My conviction is that a redefinition of the pastoral role goes hand-in-hand with a redefinition of educational ministries within local congregations. It has to. Because I am convinced that Scripture, the Christian tradition and pastoral experience all insist that pastors be actively involved in educational ministry.

Chapter Three explores understandings of and metaphors for pastoral ministry. What emerges, I believe, is a biblical metaphor that emphasizes that pastors must be deeply concerned with educational issues. Chapter Four will then consider how this metaphor has been practiced and developed within the Christian tradition.

CHAPTER THREE

The Teaching of the Five Thousand

What is a "pastor"? What does a pastor do? The previous chapter suggested that there is little consensus on the answers to these questions. The research suggested that this lack of a clear pastoral paradigm creates confusion and frustration. I begin this chapter by reflecting on how crucial these questions have been in my ministry and in the work of my colleagues.

From this starting point, I explore possible pastoral paradigms by considering several key metaphors for pastoral ministry. In my surveys and interviews of pastors and lay-people I inquired about their metaphors for pastoral ministry. Often respondents chose to identify with traditional metaphors of pastor as shepherd or pastor as educator. Other times, people chose unconventional metaphors.

By discussing these metaphors which came from my research with respondents in dialogue with the literature, I propose a possible paradigm for pastoral ministry: pastor-educator or teaching shepherd. In the following chapter I examine this paradigm further, exploring how this has been developed through the history of the Christian church.

What Is a "Pastor"?

George MacDonald's (1876) novel, Thomas Wingfold, Curate, is one pastor's coming of age story. Initially MacDonald writes of the Reverend Thomas Wingfold:

> The church was to him an ancient institution of such approved respectability that it was able to communicate it, possessing emoluments, and requiring observances. He had entered her service; she was his mistress, and in return for the narrow shelter, humble fare, and not quite too shabby garments she allotted him, he would perform her hests - in the spirit of a servant who abideth not in the house for ever ... He did not philosophize much upon life or his position in it, taking everything with a cold, hopeless kind of acceptance, and laying no claim to courage, devotion, or even bare suffering ... He liked reading the prayers, for the making of them vocal in the church was pleasant to him, and he had a not unmusical voice. He visited the sick - with some repugnance, it is true, but without delay, and spoke to them such religious commonplaces as occurred to him, depending mainly on the prayers belonging to their condition for the right performance of his office. He never thought about being a gentleman, but always behaved like one. (1876, pp. 13-14)

MacDonald paints a rather cynical portrait of Thomas Wingfold, carrying on his pastoral duties with little conviction and less reflection. Rev. Wingfold may be more shallow and flawed than most of us, but his experience is common enough. Many of us settle into a comfortable routine which we perform week after week, month after month, year after year with little conviction or reflection. We do what we have always done. We do what our congregation seems to expect of us. We do what the college classroom taught us to do. We rarely think about why we do it. We rarely reflect on the bigger questions of what a pastor ought to do and what a pastor ought to be.

Early in Thomas Wingfold, a bright barrister, George Bascombe, challenges Wingfold to define and defend his pastoral role and purpose. Wingfold, confronted with the question, "Who are you, as a pastor?" is speechless. He is unable to clearly say who he is and what it is he does. It is a defining moment in the novel. For several days he considers walking away from ministry altogether. Then he considers another option: the challenge of wrestling through what this vocation called "pastor" means for him and what his goals in ministry might be.

The writers cited in the previous chapter -- Baxter, Niebuhr, Rediger and Barna -- emphasize that all of us pastors, at some point, must wrestle with that same question: "Who am I, as a pastor?" In my

interviews with my colleagues, all spoke of their personal growth in self-understanding. At some point, in each case in the first five years of ministry, each of them struggled with this same question. That personal struggle was a defining moment in their ministries.

In a cultural context in which the position of "pastor" has lost status in the community, and the pastoral role is being redefined within churches, this question -- "Who am I, as a pastor?" -- is critical. It probes to the roots of our personal, spiritual and vocational identities. It explores our sense of "call" to ministry. It asks us to consider our self-understanding of ourselves and of our roles as pastors. It challenges us to reflect on our sense of meaning and purpose as pastors. It is a question that insists we try to define who we are personally, professionally and spiritually.

As MacDonald's novel develops, Wingfold rediscovers his Christian faith. And, from that starting point, he is also able to define his role as a pastor. He discovers that, for him, to be a pastor is to feed others with the same food with which his soul is fed. He discovers that, starting from his personal Christian experience, he is able to offer authentic spiritual counsel to those around him. He is able to help others grow spiritually by nurturing his own spirituality. Wingfold is able to define his role as pastor as helping others grow spiritually through sharing his own pilgrimage.

For Wingfold, the defining moment was a question from an agnostic barrister. For others of us pastors, the challenges to define our ministries come from different sources. We may face hard questions from persons outside our church. We may find lay people within our churches have taken upon themselves tasks we considered "ours." We may find ourselves between churches. We may be starting ministry at our first church:

> A thunderbolt of truth struck me my last semester of seminary: Within months I would be a Christian pastor. Frightened into good sense, I began to study and pray quite differently. And deep inside me a gnawing question began to grow: <u>What would I do every day?</u> At first it was very practical. Soon it became more basic and very real. (Fisher, 1996, p. 15)

Whatever the circumstances, at some point we are forced to come to terms with what <u>we</u>, as persons, believe pastoral ministry to be. David Fisher ,an eperienced pastor, describes his personal pilgrimage for pastoral identity through his seminary notes and pastoral theology texts:

> My colleagues in churches large and small, rural and urban seemed as confused as I was. The question grew larger, "What is a Christian pastor at the end of the twentieth century?" (1996, p. 24)

One of my colleagues noted a similar experience:

> One of the experiences I had in the first parish -- which obviously I've never forgotten because I'll quote it to you -- is that about two years into the ministry, you know, I was preaching some real hard sermons -- hellfire and damnation, I don't know what I was doing -- but anyhow I remember one of the members of the congregation phoned me up on Monday morning and said, "I got to come and see you." And I said, "Sure." So he came in and we sat down. "You know," he says, "my week is usually pretty terrible. I get all kinds of grief (he was a management person). I get all kinds of grief from the people I work with. And this falls apart and that falls apart. An in my own life there are problems -- you know my wife gets mad at me and my kids aren't doing the things I want them to. And it's just terrible. And when the week's over I say, 'Well, gee, at least I can go to church and have at least one hour where I can here some real good news instead of real bad news.'" And then he said, "And then you preach a sermon like that!" And I came to realize I was a little bit legalistic. And I came to realize that, yeah, my job is to make sure that God comes into this person's life.

For me, discovering my vocational identity has been a gradual process. Working in churches part-time through my undergraduate program I had a sense of the role of "pastor" watching others function as pastors. In college, my understanding was shaped through more academic reflection. However it has primarily been through experience in full-time ministry that my sense of pastoral self-identity has been formulated, tested and continually reshaped.

During my first couple of years of full-time work I was primarily concerned with survival! Church programs and structures, congregational expectations and community commitments determined my activities. I felt my role was defined by others; I just tried to get everything done that was put on my desk. However as I mastered many of the duties and began to be more active in shaping my church and community activities, I started to reflect on what I was doing, what I should be doing and why I should be doing it. I began to try to define for myself what my purpose was and what my priorities were as a pastor. I sensed I needed to make choices. I had to evaluate what the best choices might be. In my journal, during the second year of full-time ministry, I wrote:

> What am I doing here? Spinning my wheels? It all seems so banal, so trivial, so useless. There must be more than "doing church." Dear God, help me to get a grander vision of who I am! Help me not to settle for the triviality of "playing church." Help me catch a grander vision of the Kingdom of God. Help me catch a grander vision of your work in the world. Help me catch a grander vision of my life. Help me catch a grander vision of this thing called "pastor"! God, help me!

Part of my pilgrimage has been one of professional self-discovery. I have read widely on what others have written about the pastoral role. I have observed and talked with peers about how they understand pastoral work. I have tried to understand the changing definition and role of pastors within the general community, and within the specific community of the church.

And part of my pilgrimage has been one of personal self-discovery. Through my work and reflection I have also learned much about myself. I have discovered my gifts and my strengths as well as my weaknesses and limitations. I have recognized and accepted that I am not omni-gifted or omni-competent. Consequently as I integrate my understanding of the pastoral role with my knowledge of who I am, I am developing a pastoral self-identity that is shaped by both a general knowledge of the nature of pastoral work informed by literature and my peers, and by a specific knowledge of myself as a unique individual trying to incarnate this role.

I have been impressed how each of the pastors I interviewed described a similar pilgrimage. The circumstances in each case were unique. The self-understanding that has emerged, in each case, is unique. But each pastor spoke at length about their sense of "call" to ministry and a growing awareness and understanding of who they are as pastors:

> The way I've changed is that I no longer feel such a strong sense of responsibility as I used to. When I was first ordained, oh, you know, it all rested on me. If I blew it, well that was it. And now I 'm very much more relaxed in the sense of inviting others and just allowing the movement that wants to take place. I'm not passive. I'm sure people wouldn't describe me as passive. But I'm far less structured and I don't need structure. I'm far more able to allow the movement of the Spirit I think.

> I think I'm more comfortable with my role today than I was when I started off. Partly because the expectations that I had were imposed on me by people around who wanted me, you know, to perform in a certain way. But very much tied up with my call from the outset was an understanding that since I hadn't chosen this profession -- I was called to it -- that I could just be a truck driver who had the privilege to preach. And therefore that I didn't have to live up to some other standard out there. So to me that has been critical all the way through -- the permission to not have to simply say things the right way or a certain way or in a defined way.

> When I came out (of seminary) I felt had to know the answers. And I felt I had to be right. And I spent a fair amount of time always trying to defend myself or make myself look great. And what I've done over the years is come to realize I can be as wrong as anyone, but just own up to it and work together with the people. In other words I don't have to know more than the people. In fact sometimes the people may know a lot more than I do.
>
> Being a pastor is something that I've sort of evolved into. I think it's contextual. I'm a certain kind of person, here, that I might not be if I was in another place, because of what's required of me here. Who I am as a pastor is a certain kind of a place where I'm at in my own spiritual life. It allows me to be integrous to who I am. There's a certain kind of thing -- I think my life experiences created a certain kind of person. So there's a sense that I'm who am as a pastor because of who I am at an internal level. There's things that have been happening that have given me a framework.

This chapter reflects on the general knowledge about the role of pastor which I have been gleaning from both literary and interview sources.

Metaphors of Pastoral Ministry[1]

In the biblical creation narrative, God encourages mankind with the injunction, "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28). Shortly thereafter, "He (the LORD GOD) brought them (the beasts of the field and the birds of the air) to the man to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (Genesis 2:19). In Hebrew thought, the ability to name things represents a powerful way to assert one's authority or sovereignty (Wenham, 1987, p. 68; Hamilton, 1990, p. 176). Scholars continue to emphasize the power of language in shaping our perception of our world and of ourselves (Derrida, 1974; Foucault, 1977).

In order to communicate we use language. And in order to clarify our meaning we often use similes, metaphors, analogies or parables. For instance, we commonly use expressions like "black as night," "busy as a beaver," "as trustworthy as a used-car salesman" to communicate ideas. Pastors live and work in a world of metaphor and analogy. Routinely we engage in the hermeneutical task of communicating biblical truths in contemporary situations. Our use of Bible translations is a use of metaphor; translators try to interpret in contemporary English what Biblical writers originally expressed in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. In our preaching and teaching we try to find current illustrations that reflect several thousand year old truths.

The metaphors we choose, the words we choose to describe things, are not neutral. No word can be a perfect description of an object or a concept. At best metaphors are symbolic representations which may mean very different things to different people. Paul Ricouer, in his studies of the use of language, has focussed on the role of words as metaphors in the creation of meaning. Ricoeur contends that the use of metaphors enables us to (1) describe the discrepancies between the expected and the experienced, (2) use expressions reflecting the experience of multiple meanings or values in a situation, and (3) create new understandings in a given situation (Ricoeur, 1977).

No metaphor "fits" perfectly. Nights are not absolutely black, as the metaphor implies. Beavers may be industrious by nature, but they also hibernate. Not all used-car salesmen are disreputable. No translation of the Bible can reflect the specific nuances and meanings the original text would have had for its readers. And no contemporary illustration perfectly expresses its biblical referent. By using a metaphor, a statement is made that something resembles ("is like") something else. This implies that there is also an element of nonresemblance ("is unlike"). Within a metaphor, then, a tension exists between what is like and what is unlike, between what fits and what does not fit.

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[1] A version of this section has been published. Martin (1998), The clergy journal. 74(4), pp. 26-28.

These are helpful insights as we reflect on an occupational role like that of "pastor." Metaphors can be a helpful method of clarifying what an occupation is really all about in a culture where many people bring their own -- very different -- expectations and understandings. Metaphors can become extraordinarily powerful tools through which we can express more fully our understanding of who we are and what we do in ambiguous settings. And, in turn, the metaphors which we self-consciously choose for ourselves provide insight into what we feel it means to be pastors. How we define "pastor" -- the metaphors we choose -- express to others what we believe the pastoral role to be about. What we think "pastor" means shapes how we do our work.

Ricoeur's notion that no metaphor fits perfectly is helpful. This reminds us that while a metaphor may work to describe some aspects of pastoral ministry, no metaphor will fit exactly. There will inevitably be elements of "like" and "unlike." In preparing for pastoral ministry, for instance, a person often develops a sense of what that ministry is all about -- a metaphor. However, in practice, a dichotomy may develop between what new pastors expect their roles to be and what, in fact, they find themselves doing. Recognizing this tension of "like" and "unlike" provides a conceptual framework for us to begin to reflect on our expectations and experiences.

Part of the power of metaphors is that they can be reshaped. Ricoeur emphasizes that metaphors must be adapted to "redescribe" our reality. We need to reflect on our metaphors and revise them so they give meaning within the current context of our work.

Earlier I proposed that pastoral theology is postparadigmatic. This does not mean that earlier paradigms have passed away. Rather, the old paradigms still exist as competing voices in a confused cacophony of ideas. "One of the curious things about history is that it seldom really leaves anything behind," writes Ted Peters, "It accumulates" (1992, p. 19). Premodern ways of thinking, Peters suggests, have not been totally abandoned. They continue to coexist with modern ideas. These two views of the world, in turn, coexist with emerging postmodern perspectives. What I hear in pastoral theology literature is a cacophony of competing voices exhorting pastors to be everything from preachers to administrators, from counsellors to social activists, from evangelists to church marketers, from visionary leaders to spiritual mentors. No clear paradigm is evident.

And in practice, as I have interviewed pastors from several Christian traditions, I sense confusion, too. What I hear, from my interviews with pastors, is a struggle to integrate the literature, the expectations of their congregants, and personal self-understandings into a coherent self-identity as pastor. No clear paradigm is evident. No two pastors I interviewed selected the same metaphor. When asked what metaphor he preferred, one pastor commented:

> The right answer is leadership but I don't think that's what I'd choose. At least that's the "in vogue" answer these days, you know. I guess I would say "representing Christ" ... That's why I teach kindergarten. (Rock star) Marilyn Manson is a product of bad experience with the church. That's why he's so anti-religion, anti-Christianity. Why he has, what I would say, is a vendetta against the establishment, particularly Christianity. And I thought to myself, some place along the way, then, if Marilyn Manson is the product of bad encounters, then there ought to be good ones. And so kindergarten offers me an opportunity to sit down with kids and start off right there with them, and hopefully they'll stay in the church long enough that as they come along they won't know that preachers aren't OK. They will have an experience that's much different from that. So it starts there.

The pastor went on to describe how in every encounter it was important that he have as his first aim to "represent Christ" in whatever situation he encountered.

Another pastor offered this metaphor:

> "Midwife," might be a metaphor I readily identify with, particularly in terms of looking for what wants to be born and helping that to be born ... I practice being a pastor in the pastorate. So that means being part of the congregational life. And a large part of that task is making space. Making space so that people's personal

> spiritual needs are met and the community's need for identity and is met. So it means making space for things that want to be born, for things that want to happen. It's not my agenda. It means being open to the agenda of the community of faith. So that means I have to listen a lot. And it also means I have to share what I've heard with the congregation. Sundays are that wonderful opportunity to do some of that.

Another pastor commented on a changing sense of pastoral identity:

> Part of my struggle is I probably would have had different views (about being a pastor) at different times. I guess now it's -- this is going to sound really weird -- I mean, I would have considered "wounded healer" as a very strong metaphor for me. And I don't think that I've put that aside. But I now would take the role of prophet much more -- in the sense of calling people to something bigger than themselves which, I think, is so crucial. So I mean there's a couple of images which I would have seen in myself before -- like wounded healer -- which now have moved me to a place of seeing myself more in a prophet kind of a role. Not outside of this church, but within this church. More kind of saying, "We've got to live differently and this is what it means."

These metaphors are not traditional metaphors for pastoral ministry. These pastors reacted against traditional metaphors, arguing that traditional ideas did not represent their reality. They pastors described a tension between what they had expected pastoral ministry to be and what they eventually experienced in churches. These metaphors help these pastors make sense of their own lived experience and express the distinctions between what they had anticipated ministry to be and what it actually is.

The Root Metaphor: Pastor/Shepherd

In my surveys, over one hundred pastors responded to a question in which several current metaphors were provided as possible options to help them define their role as pastor. Over 57% chose to describe themselves as "shepherds." Among lay people, 48% preferred "shepherd" as the best metaphor for "pastor."

The popularity of this metaphor is very natural. The English word "pastor" is derived from the Latin "pastoris," literally meaning "shepherd." I have, then, deliberately chosen to use a slash (/) when speaking of this pastor/shepherd metaphor. Etymologically the two words are interchangeable.

This metaphor has a rich biblical and ecclesiastical heritage. In the New Testament, Jesus self-consciously assumed the image of pastor or shepherd (Greek "poimen"). Jesus claims, "I am the good shepherd (pastor)" (John 10:14). In doing so he identified with an Old Testament tradition in which God was called the shepherd of Israel (e.g. Psalm 23, Psalm 68:7. Isaiah 40:11), and with rich messianic imagery which developed a shepherd metaphor (Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:22-24, Zechariah 12:10, 13:1-9). Jesus' use of the metaphor of shepherd for his own ministry emphasized his self-identification with the Father and with the promised Messiah.

Jesus' understanding of his shepherding task is significant. In Mark's account of the feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle to be recorded in all four gospels, Mark tersely notes that Jesus "saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34a). It is significant that Mark, the most succinct of the four gospel writers, comments that, in this context, Jesus assumed the role of shepherd. And it is also significant that, according to Mark, Jesus' primary ministry as shepherd was not one of healing, of meeting physical needs for food, or of counselling. Because the people were like sheep without a shepherd, Mark states bluntly that Jesus "began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34b). "Strike you as a bit odd?" asks William Willimon, "Jesus begins with teaching. Out of all the possible needs to be addressed, Jesus first offers education" (1993, p. 48).

Often the shepherd motif is identified with therapeutic ministries like counselling and pastoral care (Hiltner, 1949, 1959), but significantly Mark uses the image, not to show Jesus counselling or healing, but to show him teaching. The shepherd showed compassion by teaching.

Jesus, in turn, ascribed the role of pastor/shepherd to leaders in the church. In John 21:15-17, Jesus exhorted Peter to "Feeds my lambs" ("boske ta arnia mou"); "Shepherd my sheep" ("poimane to probata mou"); and ""Feed my sheep" ("boske ta probata mou"). Although Ephesians 4:11[2] some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers ..." is the only text in the New Testament in which the noun "pastor" ("poimen") actually occurs in reference to work within the church, the derivative verb "to shepherd" (Greek "poimaino") is used several times in this sense (John 21:16, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 9:7, 1 Peter 5:2). Nouns for "flock"[3] are used of the church (1 Corinthians 9:7, Acts 20:28-29, 1 Peter 5:2-3) (Jeremias, 1974; Bruce, 1984). New Testament writers intentionally developed a shepherding metaphor for leaders in the church.

Throughout church history the shepherd motif has been prominent. Writers, from the early church (Constitutions of the holy apostles, pre-325/1956; Augustine, 416/1956) through to contemporary theologians (Oden, 1983; Tidball, 1986; Stowell, 1994) have used the metaphor of church congregations as flocks and pastors/shepherds as key metaphors for pastoral ministry. One pastor I interviewed drew on this rich historical imagery to comment:

> The word pastor means shepherd. So it means to be out in front of the people, leading the way. Not behind them with a cattle prod. But out in front of them with a shepherd's staff. Leading people. Going through experiences. Revealing the holes in my own life so that people can realize that I have a word to say, too, because we're all the same in this. We're all standing in need of God's grace. And I need their help as much as they need mine. I like that image very much. In fact in our (denominational) office we have guys that call themselves -- like one of the guys is a fellow named John Smith, he's an ordained person, and he calls himself Pastor Smith -- and I always, John, you can be the Rev., you can be Reverend, you can be the Right Reverend Smith, or Most Holy Ordained Smith, but you cannot be Pastor Smith unless you are in a parish. So I make that distinction very strongly. Pastor means shepherd. Pastor is a term reserved for the one who is really walking with the parishioners not the one who is in an administrative or advisory role somewhere else.

Oden asserts that "shepherd" is the essential image of leadership in the New Testament. "Other important images of ministry," he argues, "such as teacher, overseer, liturgist, elder, or priest, became infused with special significance by analogy to good shepherding" (1983, p. 52).

A metaphor like "pastor/shepherd," however, may mean many things to many people, particularly in contemporary North America where agriculture in general and sheep-herding in particular are foreign to many or our life experiences. Oden analyzes this pastor/shepherd metaphor by attempting to expound a pastor's vocation in specific animal husbandry terms: The pastor has to

> know the parish territory, its dangers, its green meadows, its steep precipices, its seasons and its possibilities. The pastor leads the flock to spring water and safe vegetation. The flock recognize their own good through the shepherd's voice. They do not see it in their interest to follow strangers. They know their own shepherd will not mislead them. The shepherd is willing to anticipate their needs in advance and is willing to deal with each one individually" (1983, p. 52).

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[2]"It was he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers ..."

[3]Also derived from the noun "shepherd"; Greek "poimne" and "poimnion."

The essence of this image, Oden contends, is "vigilant caring." Oden's description does full credit to the metaphor, but provides little concrete direction for pastors of local congregations at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The pastor cited above saw "shepherding" as leadership. Responding to questionnaires pastors described their understanding of the shepherding metaphor as:

- "giving spiritual counsel and direction;"
- "providing for their needs -- we run a food bank, counselling centre, programme for ex-offenders, etc.;"
- "I do a lot of visiting;"
- "preaching expository sermons;"
- "helping people do what God wants them to do;"
- "people need the truth; my job is to make sure they know truth and error;"
- "love -- that's it in a nutshell."

Lay people responding to the survey described the "shepherd motif" in these terms:

- "I want a pastor who cares for me;"
- "our church is currently looking for a pastor. I want someone who will listen to me. Our last pastor was more interested in building his own little empire;"
- "I want a pastor who can give our church direction;"
- "a shepherd leads -- so lead!"
- "I want someone who will care for our community -- we have lots of people who need help;"
- "more and more pastors seem to think shepherding means being a counsellor. I don't think so. I think pastors have to help others be counsellors. I can do some things better than my pastor can. He's got to help me do it."

The shepherd motif is ambiguous. The agricultural metaphors Oden uses to define pastoral work -- if they have any meaning at all in contemporary urban contexts, for instance -- could imply that a pastor's vocation is almost infinitely broad in scope. "The term ('shepherd') can indicate that the one who holds this office is to do everything for his people that their well-being demands ... (the term conveys) the idea of an all-embracing ministerial post" (Cooke, 1976, p. 212). In light of the discussion in Chapter Two, although this sounds laudable, it creates confusion, stress, and difficulty in practice. Pastors cannot do everything for the well-being of all members of their congregations and their communities.

The comments by pastors an lay people, above, suggest that different people may have very different understandings of what being a "shepherd" means. They may also have very different expectations of what a shepherd does. If this metaphor is adopted without qualification or better definition, it can lead to an ambiguous or overwhelming expectation of pastoral ministry in which a pastor has unlimited responsibilities and obligations.

Because of some of these ambiguities, three of the pastors I interviewed reacted strongly against a "shepherd" metaphor for pastoral ministry:

> I don't like the metaphor. First of all it's not familiar to me. I've never been a shepherd, so I don't know. I don't like it as well because the teaching and training and educating for church growth tells me that probably in some ways, you know, that's where I would do best is in pastoral ministry - caring for people, shepherding them, healing their hurts, putting salve on their wounds. But I don't know if I'm really equipped, then, to become something more. So I think the problem with that, is the shepherd is always a shepherd and the sheep are always the sheep. But the (purpose of) Christian ministry is to take people beyond that, to where they become leaders, where they become reflectors of Christ in their world, and their community, and in their daily life wherever they are.

> No, I am not a shepherd. No. Not a shepherd. "Shepherd" doesn't speak to me a whole lot. For me "shepherd" -- I guess it's part of the connotations that I've grown up with -- the shepherd knows what's good for the sheep. Well I don't always know what's needed!
>
> I'm not a shepherd. Then my congregation are sheep. I've lived in places where there are lots of sheep. Sheep are stupid. Sheep are always getting into trouble. They even smell bad. I don't believe my people are that stupid. I don't believe they will get into trouble without me. And I, of course, am not the shining shepherd Jesus was.

These comments illustrate how these pastors struggled to contextualize the New Testament metaphor into their experience. For whatever reasons, they were unable to identify the essential meanings of the biblical metaphor and apply that to their situation.

Henri Nouwen is credited with commenting that if pastors do not know what is absolutely essential for them to do, then they will only do what is important for them to do (in Willimon, 1993, p. 50). There are so many possible tasks in which a pastor may be involved that a more nuanced metaphor may be more helpful.

At this point Jesus' example is particularly helpful. The shepherd has to start somewhere. Shepherds have to define what their essential purpose is and thus what their basic tasks are. Jesus evaluated the needs of the people with whom he was ministering and, in Mark's account of the feeding of the five thousand, saw education as his primary purpose and thus teaching as his task. Good shepherding, Jesus' pattern suggests, begins with feeding people, educationally as well as emotionally and physically.

Derek Prime comments on the "shepherd" metaphor: "This description (of church leader as shepherd) demands that we should know our flock well, so that we appreciate where they are in their understanding" (1989, p. 15). Prime argues that it is when we are sensitive to people's educational needs and respondent in an educational way, that we can truly begin to shepherd. He implies that the way we actually enact many of the qualities of shepherding such as those explored by Oden, is by providing specific educational direction to people.

Oden, like other writers in pastoral theology (e.g. Hiltner, 1959; Tidball, 1986; Stowell, 1994), advances the shepherding paradigm, un-nuanced, as the quintessential biblical model. While shepherding is certainly an important biblical image, the New Testament does not assert that shepherding, by itself, is the essential analogy for church leadership. Careful consideration of New Testament usage suggests that the essential image or metaphor of church leadership in the New Testament may be more than simply that of "pastor/shepherd."

Pastor as Teacher

In my research, after "shepherd," the dominant metaphors pastors chose to describe themselves and lay-people chose to describe their pastors focussed on education. Pastors described themselves with terms like "spiritual guide," "spiritual mentor," "teacher," and "educator." Pastors commented:

- "my task is to preach and teach;"
- "God has called me to help people learn about God in their everyday lives. God is not abstract. He's real;"
- "I want people to be different because they discover the Bible is relevant;"
- "I only preach expository sermons that teach people;"
- "I teach in all sorts of ways: preaching, adult baptism classes, confirmation classes, marriage preparation classes, Bible studies ...;"
- "It's all wrapped in my call. That's to teaching God's word;"

Lay-people commented:

- "Our pastor doesn't set the world on fire but he preaches from the heart. Good expository sermons;"
- "I want to learn something!" (a lay person in the church less than three years);
- "Young people in our church don't know much anymore. We need more teaching;"
- "Pastors have lots of education in theology (I assume!); they need to help us learn! I mean, if they ask me what I think, it's OK I guess. But they ought to know. I am concerned that my pastor doesn't know any more than I do. If that's the case then shut down the church!"

This suggests another metaphor for pastoral ministry: pastor as teacher.[4] This is also a strong biblical image. Jesus self-consciously assumed the image of teacher (Greek "didaskolos," parallel to the Hebrew "rabbi")[5] Jesus is presented in the gospels as teaching far more often than preaching. He was often referred to by the term "rabbi."[6] This was most appropriate given that Jesus followed many patterns of first-century rabbis: he gathered a community of disciples around himself (Matthew 4:18), taught in synagogues (Luke 4:16), asked and answered questions regarding the law (Matthew 15:1-9) and instructed people in ethics (Matthew 5:21-7:5).

In the Jewish tradition, teaching (Greek "didasko") specifically had as its object the clear communication of God's will, both in an intellectual and volitional sense (Rengstorf, 1974). A teacher (Greek "didaskolos") was an expositor of Scripture, one who gave direction in the ways of God. In the New Testament, "didaskolos" is used 58 times, 48 instances in the gospels, in all but 7 cases referring to Jesus (the other instances referring to John the Baptist, Nicodemus, the general relation of a disciple to a teacher, and, in Luke 2:46, in reference to Jewish leaders). Rengstorf (1974) argues that the addressing of Jesus as "didaskolos" shows that outwardly he fit the picture of a rabbinic teacher in the Jewish tradition. He expounded the divine will as laid down in Scripture and explored its practical implications for people's lives.

People in the first century, however, noticed a difference between Jesus and other rabbis. Rabbinic teaching in Jesus' day tended to be stuffy and rigid. Rabbis used rote exercises so disciples would be able to repeat the rabbi's words perfectly. Rabbis emphasized traditional stories and hypothetical examples. Their authority as teachers was derived from "schools" of rabbinic interpretation and tradition. Jesus' educational methods stood in striking contrast. He did appear to repeat some key lessons on several occasions (Matthew 5-7, Luke 6), but in general his teaching style was characterized by spontaneity, a delight in unscripted dialogue, a vivid use of metaphors, similes and hyperboles, and critical thinking. He encouraged people to apply biblical truths to their present circumstances and personal lives. He often responded to and drew lessons from his immediate context. People noted Jesus' personal authority as a teacher (Matthew 7:28-29). Not surprisingly, Christian educators unanimously see Jesus as a "Master Teacher" (Gangel and Benson, 1983; Reed and Prevost, 1993).

It is significant that Jesus also ascribed the role of teacher to leaders in the church. He did this during his own ministry (Mark 6:30) and as he prepared to ascend to heaven (Matthew 28:19-20). Through the earliest accounts of Christian communities, leaders are frequently referred to as teachers ("didaskolos" occurs in Acts 13:1, 1 Corinthians 12:28-29, Ephesians 4:11, Hebrews 5:12, James 3:1). Teachers were specially recognized within the early church. Their responsibility was to expound the Scripture in such a way that people would understand God's will and apply it to their lives and ethics (Rengstorf, 1974; Schweizer, 1961; von Campenhausen, 1969).

Some biblical commentators have attempted to define an essential difference between proclamation ("kerygma") and teaching ("didache") in the early church (Dodd, 1936; MacDonald, 1980).

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[4]Following from the previous section I might say "pastor/shepherd as teacher." However this construction is very awkward. Because "pastor" and "shepherd" have the same root meaning, I have chosen simply to use the word "pastor."

[5]The Greek and Hebrew terms appear to be treated as equivalent by New Testament writers (Matthew 23:7, 26:25; John 1:38, 20:16). For further discussion see Rengstorf (1974).

[6]"Rabbis" were primarily involved in teaching rather than preaching (Rengstorf, 1974).

They argue that proclamation -- "announcing" the basic Christian message -- was the domain of those in the office of evangelist. "Kerygma" referred to an initial presentation of doctrine aimed at awakening faith, triggering a response to the message and entry into the Christian community. In contrast, teaching -- the task of spiritual formation and helping people apply the Scriptures to their everyday lives -- was the responsibility of the teacher. "Didache" was the process of helping Christians better understand, articulate and live their faith. The content of this teaching would include learning about the person, activity and teaching of Jesus, more detailed instruction about life in the Christian community, and fuller understanding of the church and its rites (including baptism and the Eucharist).

This distinction may be evident to some extent in biblical text, but a definitive separation between proclamation and teaching is not clearly developed (Worley, 1967; Friedrich, 1974; Bruce, 1984; Giles, 1989). Certainly there is a distinction between basic presentation of the Christian message with an invitation to respond to God's gracious initiative in Jesus Christ (proclamation), and a long term commitment to promote the process of growth, understanding and spiritual maturity necessary for incorporating Christian beliefs in lifestyle (teaching). But the New Testament does not clearly see this as the task of "teachers," but rather as the task of pastor-teachers. Worley argues that, "Early church leaders and interstestamental Jews before them used the words 'preaching' and 'teaching' interchangeably to refer to a large variety of activities, one of which was missionary proselytizing" (1967, p. 132). Biblical texts note that some individuals sent as missionaries to evangelize new areas and encourage existing churches were involved in proclamation ("kerusso"), presenting the Christian message to potential converts and in teaching ("didache"), instructing Christians in doctrinal beliefs and Christian ethics and principles of living (e.g. Acts 11:22, 13:1-3). These pastor-teachers were concerned for both correct theology and thorough understanding of the implications for Christian living. Worley contends that, in fact, "teaching" is the more general term, one facet of which may be understood to be "preaching."

"Pastor as teacher" certainly emphasizes the teaching ministry of pastors. But if a metaphor of pastor as teacher is proposed, important dimensions of pastoral work may be lost. Some of the tasks in which a pastor is normally involved can easily become one dimensional. For instance, if a worship service is perceived to be simply a teaching time, the awesomeness of the divine-human encounter which comes through adoration, confession and prayer may be lost. If pastoral care becomes simply a series of small group (even one-one-one) tutorials, something of the mystery of pastoral presence and spiritual comfort is lost. If service ministries are valued as learning opportunities rather than opportunities to meet human needs, something of the self-effacing nature of ministry is sacrificed. If administrative tasks focus simply upon education, the larger purposes of the church's mission and vision may be deemphasized.

Pastor-educators

I wish to propose a more helpful biblical metaphor for pastors: "pastor-educators."

As discussed above, Jesus self-consciously assumed roles of both shepherd and teacher. Both roles were passed on to the same leaders among his followers. The roles of pastor and teacher were inextricably linked in the New Testament. Paul, describing gifted leaders in the church, notes, "It was he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastor\shepherds and teachers, to prepare God's people for service, so that the body of Christ (the church) may be built up ..." (Ephesians 4:11).

As noted, this is the only occurrence of the noun "pastor" in the New Testament; it is partnered with "teacher." Greek grammar, specifically the lack of repetition of the definite article before "teachers," demands a reading which suggests the two terms are not separate ministries in Paul's list, but rather relate to the same office (Abbott, 1897; Moule, 1902; Findlay, 1908; Hodge, 1954; Barth, 1960; Hendriksen, 1967; Wood, 1978; Bruce, 1984; Patzia, 1990; Liefeld, 1997). Several biblical commentators do try to make a case that, in this passage, Paul is denoting separate offices of pastors and teachers. These scholars make each office parallel: "... some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and some to be teachers." Without exception, however, these authors fail to deal with the Greek construction, severely weakening their argument (Robinson, 1922; Mitton, 1976; Lincoln, 1990).

The Greek text reads: "... edoken (he gave) tous men apostolous (some [to be] apostles), tous de prophetas (some [to be] prophets), tous de euangelistas (some [to be] evangelists), tous de poimenas (some [to be] shepherds/pastors) kai didaskalous (and teachers)."[7] The pronominal article "tous men," "tous de," ("men" and "de" are interchangeable particles)[8] repeated before the each of the first four ministries listed is absent before "teachers." Most scholars treat Paul's decision to include pastors and teachers in the same phrase as theologically significant. Paul could easily have continued the "tous men"/"tous de" parallelism, but he chose not to do so. The implication is that Paul considers pastors and teachers to be inextricably linked. Paul's theology recognizes distinct offices of "apostle," "prophet," "evangelist" and "pastor and teacher."

Commenting on this text, Barth notes that "kai" (poimenas kai didaskalous) often means, simply, "and." However "kai" may also be translated "that is" or "in particular." The phrase could read, then, that Christ "gave some to be ... pastors, that is, teachers." Paul could have been making a very strong statement that pastors needed to be deeply involved in teaching ministry. Elsewhere in the Pauline literature, as throughout the New Testament, pastors (as local church leaders) were clearly seen as teachers (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; Chadwick, 1907; Longenecker, 1975).

"Pastor and teacher" emerges as the full title which Paul ascribed to those in the church charged with the task of spiritual formation, Christian nurture, and pastoral care. Markus Barth concludes that "teaching shepherd" or "shepherding teacher" is the pastoral metaphor Paul deliberately defined (Barth, 1960, pp. 438-9). Joseph Stowell concurs and highlights how these two facets of pastoral ministry complement and compete with one another in pastoral practice:

> The gift of pastor/teacher combines two key elements of local church leadership; one being the ministry of caring and concern, combined with the indispensable ingredient of instructing the flock in the truth of God and its ramifications for their lives. Those with the gift of pastor/teacher are individuals who are particularly inclined toward the needs of people and who as well are committed to meeting those needs not just through the ministries of personal resourcing, but public proclamation. Interestingly, the tension in this double-edged gift is that ofttimes those of us who are the pastoral types (i.e., high relational, high-touch people) find it difficult to be disciplined in sufficient measure to stay away from people and their needs long enough to adequately prepare the effective teaching that is the vital, in fact, the most important part of our caring ministry. Most of us as pastors/teachers will fault toward pastoring more than teaching or teaching more than pastoring and constantly strive to blend the gift into a balance that moves us toward the described goal of the function of our ministry. (1994, pp. 72-73)

In contemporary culture, teaching is most commonly understood to refer to more formalized, institutionally-based learning. In the New Testament, teaching was understood to include a wide variety of activities including evangelistic proclamation, formal classroom instruction, informal conversation, and pastoral care ministry. My preference is to use the more general term "education" to cover the varied activities suggested by the New Testament sense of teaching. The term "education" would include proclamation, formal teaching, and less formal methods of disciple-making present in the early church. My purpose in preferring "education" is not to devalue the biblical term "teaching." Rather my conviction is that a better contemporary metaphor for what New Testament Christians understood by "teaching" is "education." Paul and his contemporaries would not have had as narrow a definition of "teaching" as many of us do today.

Pastors I interviewed responded positively to understanding our role as "education" rather than "teaching":

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[7]There is no variation in readings among the major Greek texts of this verse (Metzger, 1971; Aland et al, 1975).

[8]For a discussion of this construction see Moulton and Milligan (1957, p.396).

> "Teaching," to me, I guess ... well, I don't see what I do as teaching. Because I don't work in a classroom. But I like "education." I can educate in my office. I can educate in the parish. I can educate on the phone (laughter) (I spend lots of time on the phone). You know, it's kind of like I do teach people all the time, but not in the school sense.
>
> Education is the generic, teaching is the specific. I see teaching as one part of education. It's OK. But I am working with people who don't want to be taught. They want to learn. I read somewhere that there's a shift from "teaching" to "learning." I like that. I like to think I help people learn what they need to learn right now ... Education helps me see learning as important, too. Teaching, you know, it's kind of like, it's me doing something to someone ... it's ... well, I didn't like some of my teachers but I liked to learn. Does that make sense?
>
> Was Jesus a teacher? Of course we have to say yes. But not like I was taught to be. I was taught to say, "This is it. I know what you need, take it!" In the parish it's not like that. It's give and take, too. With the woman at the well. Where did Jesus start? With her. He helped her right there by the well. He didn't ram it down her throat. He helped her find something. My goal on Sunday is to help someone find something, too. I want them to go home saying, "Thank you, pastor, I found God today." I guess that's teaching, but in a different sense. Yeah, "education" works.

Barth's "teaching shepherds" is a literal translation of what Paul wrote. But I suggest that a better contemporary metaphor for "pastor," one which accurately conveys the meaning that the New Testament writers intended to convey, is "pastor-educator."

Other Metaphors

In response to questionnaires and in interviews, some pastors chose to emphasize very specific aspects of pastoral ministry. "I am a counsellor (M.A. Providence)," one questionnaire respondent claimed. Interestingly, five Baptist pastors chose their key metaphor as "priest." More contemporary metaphors, drawing on traditional paradigms, included the respondents who identified their key metaphors as "worship leader" or "administrator." Another described himself as both a shepherd and a prophet.

A few pastors chose unconventional and nontraditional metaphors to describe their role. One pastor commented:

> Everything lands on my desk. I am expected to do it all. Except I don't make big decisions; that's where my council takes over. I would describe myself as sort of an emasculated CEO. (all responsibility, no authority)

Another responded,

> I feel like the captain of the Titanic. I see the iceberg, but I can't turn the ship around.

Still another tersely wrote: "Pastor as octopus."

Why would pastors use such unconventional metaphors? If Ricoeur is correct that the use of metaphor implies both that something is like and is unlike something else, then the use of these metaphors may express something of the tension pastors feel. The use of unconventional metaphors to express a range of meaning, or the creation of unique metaphors, may express the discrepancy pastors feel between what they expect pastoral ministry to be and what they actually experience.

"Pastoral call and parish reality," David Fisher suggests are often very different. He comments:

> I have a theory about starting out in a ministry. We all begin with high ideals and expectations. It takes about three years for me to offend everyone (although some pastors can do it a lot quicker). By then I've failed to meet all the impossible and unspoken expectations of the congregation. And by then they've disappointed me and failed to live up to my unreal expectations. Then, and only then, can real pastoral ministry begin, for it is then we have to decide if we will love one another and believe the gospel. But too often we can't make that decision. Far too often many of us are wrecked on the shore of harsh reality. (1996, p. 106)

Moving Forward ...

This chapter began with the story of Thomas Wingfold, a young man struggling to bring his sense of pastoral call into harmony with parish reality. My story, and the stories of the pastors I interviewed, is one of pilgrimage, trying to make sense of who we are as pastors.

This chapter has suggested that one of the ways we understand our roles is through the use of metaphors. Pastors use metaphors to express their self-understanding of who they are and what they do. Significantly, most pastors (82%) and lay-people (76%) identified shepherd or educational metaphors as helpful for them to describe pastoral ministry.

I have suggested that neither of these metaphors, by themselves, may be adequate. I have proposed that a metaphor of "pastor-educator" more accurately reflects the biblical pattern set by Jesus and described in the early church. In Chapter Four I will explore how the "pastor-educator" metaphor has, in fact, been a strong paradigm for pastoral ministry throughout the history of the Christian church.

CHAPTER FOUR

Pastor-educators Through The Ages

If Markus Barth is correct in his analysis that "teaching shepherd" (or, as I prefer, "pastor-educator") is the New Testament metaphor for the pastoral office, has this metaphor been adopted in the past? Did the early church really understand the pastoral role this way? How has this paradigm been developed through history?

This chapter will focus on understandings of the educational role of pastors in the early church. I will then briefly survey historical development of the office of pastor examining evolving understandings of pastoral and educational ministries. In conclusion I will propose that the contemporary dichotomizing of pastoral theology and Christian education needs to be broken down. Pastors need to rediscover and revalue their educational role and responsibility.

Pastor-educators in the Apostolic Church

The earliest Christian communities did not emerge out of a vacuum. These communities were primarily Jewish communities. Education, in Hebrew tradition, was centered in Torah, the Law of God, first communicated orally, later canonized in Scripture. Scripture was understood to contain the spiritual and moral self-revelation of God himself. The purpose of education for the Jewish community was to understand God and spiritual holiness so that persons might live faithfully and purely.

The primary context for education was the home: parents were responsible to instruct their children in the Law, educate them about godly living, and train them for a trade (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Barclay, 1974). "Hebrew parents," Kenneth Gangel observes, "were continually to whet the intellectual appetites of their children ... to sharpen their minds, prompting questions which would create teachable moments so that instruction in the faith of Israel might be given" (1977, p. 60).

As Jewish society developed, communal religious experiences increasingly played an essential role in religious education. Religious festivals as well as emerging regular synagogue assemblies (by the fifth century BC) played major educational roles. The priestly order, initiated during the time of Moses (Exodus 28:29), not only mediated between people and God, it increasingly became responsible for education (Ezekiel 44:23).

By the time of Jesus, Jewish religious education was dominated by "professional" religious educators (particularly scribes) in synagogues and schools. The old custom of teaching children within the family had degenerated with more emphasis placed on institutional learning (Ulich, 1968, p. 13). Methodology in rabbinical schools was mostly oral with a strong emphasis on memorization and recitation.

Both the content and the methodology of Jesus' teachings challenged established Jewish beliefs. He challenged Jewish understandings of God's actions in the world, particularly regarding the coming of the promised Messiah. Those who believed Jesus to be the Messiah were immediately identified as a distinctive people (Acts 9:2, 24:14). Although Romans saw Christ's followers as simply a Jewish sect, to the Jewish establishment "Christians," as they became known, were not Jewish. Christ's followers soon realized they were distinct from orthodox Jews. They recognized a need to educate people in their local communities about Jesus' life and teachings.

From the very beginning of the Christian church, and for several decades thereafter, this education was relatively informal. Sometimes this Christian nurture happened in homes, in keeping with traditional Jewish practices. Timothy was influenced by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 13:15, 1:5). Paul encouraged parents to recognize the educational potential within their families (Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2). At other times, education appears to have taken place in meetings, not dissimilar to Jewish synagogues. Small, close-knit church communities "devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Giles notes that in the early church

apostles taught, prophets taught, bishops (pastors) taught, deacons taught, elders taught, women taught, and a variety of other church members taught (1989, pp. 114-118).

Giles (1989, pp. 99-114), drawing on Filson (1941), argues that a distinct class of "teachers" was not clearly developed in the earliest churches. He suggests three reasons why "teachers," as a separate group, are not clearly defined. First, he proposes that the early Christians were conscious that they were disciples of Jesus, and there could be no successor to Jesus as "the Teacher" (Matthew 23:8-12). Second, Giles argues that the early church understanding of the universal bestowal of the Holy Spirit insisted that, in principle, every believer should be involved in teaching. Third, he defines the early church as "radically egalitarian:" believers rebelled against any priestly class or divisions of status similar to those in contemporary Judaism.

The office of "bishop" (best understood in the New Testament as a local church pastor-educator)[1] was quickly established within Christian churches. Bishops were perceived to have primary educational and responsibility for overall church leadership (Giles, 1989). These persons, with recognized teaching abilities and gifts, gave leadership within local congregations and the growing network of churches. Paul encouraged Timothy, for instance, to pursue a teaching ministry and to entrust what he had learned to reliable Christians "who will also be qualified to teach others" (1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 2:2). These pastor-educators would preserve congregations against a variety of doctrines and ideas contrary to the life and teachings of Jesus promoted by "false teachers" (1 Timothy 1:4-7, 2 Timothy 4:3, Titus 1:11). And these pastor-educators would instruct people in the practical implications of their faith for daily living (1 Timothy 6:17-19, Titus 2:1-3:11).

Those who actually knew Jesus (the apostles) enjoyed a privileged role in leadership, including teaching. Those who were eye witnesses of the events of Jesus' life and firsthand hearers of his words were particularly qualified to instruct others about his life, his deeds, and his teachings (Acts 2:42; 4:2, 18; 5:21, 28, 42). Where first-hand witnesses were not present, some of the earliest converts in a community often took on the responsibility of leadership and the instruction of recent converts (von Campenhausen, 1969). Converts who were better educated often became recognized as pastor-educators. They were well prepared to understand the nuances of Jesus' teachings, its implications for Christian life and express themselves clearly and articulately. Jewish religious leaders and priests who accepted the Christian message (who may have been fairly numerous [Acts 6:7]) were likely candidates for educational leadership. Paul, a well-educated Pharisee (Acts 22:3, Philippians 3:5) converted to Christianity, stands out prominently from this group (Acts 18:11; 20:20; 21:21, 28; 28:31).[2]

The purposes of education in the early church were twofold. First, education provided Christians with the ability to defend Christian claims against skeptics, opponents, or those who wished to corrupt basic doctrines. Believers were encouraged to understand the Old Testament in light of Christ's life and ministry. And believers were encouraged to learn orthodox Christian doctrines about the person and work of Christ. Second, Christ's teachings needed to be applied to the lives of the faithful. Jesus, in his ministry, was not only concerned with orthodox theology, but also ethics and practical living. He applied truths about God to people's lives (Matthew 5-7). Early Christians, based on Jesus' model, emphasized that faith needed to be expressed in a person's way of life. In Paul's epistles, for instance, Christ's teachings about God, his own personhood, his death, and his resurrection are inevitably linked to ethical concerns about how these theological principles ought to affect how people lives their lives. The standard pattern in most of Paul's letters is a theological introduction followed by practical, life-application conclusion. The role of the pastor-educator, then, was to instruct Christians both in terms of doctrine and ethical conduct. Worley writes:

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[1]The exact nature of the offices of "bishop," "deacon," and "elder" has been the subject of considerable debate. However most scholars agree that in the earliest churches "bishops" were the leaders of local congregations (Beyer, 1974; Giles, 1989). Certainly this was the understanding of early Christian writers (E.g. The Didache, The Shepherd of Hermas, Ignatius, Origen).

[2]See also Paul's own comments on his educational ministry: Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 4:17, 15:1; 2 Corinthians 11:7; Galatians 1:1,15; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 1:11, etc.)

> Teacher-preachers of the early church were not concerned primarily with educating a person in the facts of the faith. Something more was at stake than the communication of the sayings of Jesus, or the stories about Jesus. Teaching-preaching was the way of communicating Christianity to believers and unbelievers in different contexts through the interpretation of tradition, and the interpretation of the work, person and sayings of Jesus, using a variety of methods, ideas and practices from different sources to the that those who heard would receive life ... in Christ ... (1967, pp. 144-145).

Early Christians appreciated the importance of example. Jesus had used his life as an example which he encouraged his followers to imitate: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15).[3] "The apostles of Jesus," Gangel and Benson observe, "learned the meaning of God's initiative of love, not from a textbook, but by accompanying Him" (1983, p. 70). In Matthew 10:24-25, Jesus observed that "a student is not above his teacher ... it is enough for the student to be like his teacher ..." Commenting on this passage, Magness (1975) argues that this was Jesus' preeminent statement about the purpose of Christian education. Learning was the means of relating to Jesus. The goal of learning was to become like Christ. Learning involved more than memorizing facts or sayings, knowing a body of tradition, identifying with a philosophy or worldview. Learning was living according to Jesus' example.

> For the disciples, learning was living, living with and like Jesus ... learning was becoming, being like Jesus. Education in Christ was not even merely the mimicry of Jesus' habits; it was growth into a state of being which was Christ-like. (Magness, 1975, p. 35)

Early Christian pastor-educators used other religious heroes as role models: James writes, "Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord" (5:10). Paul even set himself up as an example: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1); "join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you ... Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me -- put it into practice" (Philippians 3:17, 4:9). Warning against following the example of those who do "not live according to the teaching you received from us" and whose lives do not evidence Christian virtue, Paul encourages Christians: "you yourselves know you ought to follow our example" (2 Thessalonians 3:7).[4] Paul, as he taught that Jesus came to eliminate the ancient divisions between Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles), traveled with a Gentile, Titus, so that churches could see Jewish-Gentile community in action.

Pastors were educators, both in word and action.

Pastor-educators in the Post-apostolic Church

In the second and third centuries, all Christians agreed that education was important. But believers differed in their opinions about how formal and institutionalized this teaching and learning ought to be. Some Christians despised the formal educational systems which dominated the Greco-Roman world. Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenaeus, Tertullian and others argued that the things of God could be best be learned by uneducated people, much as the beggars, blind, and deaf were attracted to Christ. Using Jesus' methodologies as models, they preferred an educational model which emphasized informal, practical instruction growing out of everyday experience (Cooke, 1976).

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[3]Other injunctions to follow Jesus' example are found in Matthew 11:29, 16:24; Romans 15:5; 2 Corinthians 10:1; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:21.

[4]Similar exhortations are found in 2 Thessalonians 3:9, 1 Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:7-8.

Others argued that Christianity had to answer its critics and maintain orthodox doctrine. Origen and others worked to develop a Christian scholarship capable of responding to challenges from those outside the faith and those within the church who were questioning or changing fundamental doctrines. These leaders insisted that theological principles needed to be clearly defined. Formal curricula and educational programs needed to be established to ensure proper, orthodox instruction could be provided for pastors, lay leaders, and congregants. Clergy began to systematize and standardize evangelistic and educational materials. A New Testament canon was established. Basic creeds were developed, adopted, and taught.

One of the most significant developments of this time was catechumenate training. Origen and Hippolytus pioneered the development of basic curricula for instruction of converts prior to baptism. In subsequent centuries much more elaborate guidelines for catechumenal education were developed and expanded to nurture believers after baptism. Formal curricula emphasized learning Christian doctrine and developing distinctive Christian lifestyles.

Catechetical "schools" also began to emerge for advanced education. Clement, Origen, and Chrysostom developed colleges where Scripture, theology, and liberal arts disciplines were studied. They believed that in a social context hostile to Christianity, highly educated apologists were needed to interpret the faith in new contexts and to articulate Christian responses to challenging worldviews and accusations of immorality.

The early church fathers who discussed the nature of pastoral office emphasized that pastors were critically important educators in the Christian community. Pastors needed to emphasize education in the their churches. Drawing on the Pauline injunction that leaders preserve and pass on "sound doctrine," these early theologians believed education ought to be the focus of much of the work of early "bishops." Even as the understanding of "bishop" grew from the New Testament understanding of pastor-educator within a local congregation to an interpretation of bishops as overseers responsible for several congregations or districts, bishops took their educational responsibility most seriously. Bishops (including Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril, Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, and Chrysostom) retained a primary emphasis upon education, despite growing administrative responsibilities. Their educational ministry was motivated by a theological concern that educational nurture was a fundamental aspect of their shepherding care for people.

In the "Constitutions of the holy apostles" (written before 325), the authors emphasized the pastor-educator metaphor: "As to a good shepherd (or pastor), let the lay person honor him (the pastor), love him, revere him as his lord, as his master, as the high priest of God, as a teacher of piety" (404). The pastor's task was seen as that of "pastor and teacher," emphasizing both shepherding (understood to mean fostering and cherishing his congregation) and educating (understood to include admonishing, reproving, warning sinners, chiding, feeding, and confirming with exhortation). The pastor was to be "holy unblamable, no striker, not soon angry, not cruel; but a builder up, a converter, apt to teach, forbearer of evil, of a gentle mind, meek, long-suffering, ready to comfort, as a man of God" (421).

Similarly, John Chrysostom, in his "Treatise concerning the Christian priesthood," emphasized that pastor-educators must be caring pastors and skillful teachers (pre-392/1956). Gregory Nazianzus saw pastor-educators as teaching shepherds who protected their people from error, cared for them in their needs, administered the sacraments of baptism and penitence, led them in the Eucharist, and inspired them by their own examples of holiness (Cooke, 1976, p. 80).

Origen, one of the sharpest theological minds in the early church, believed strongly that teaching was a primary responsibility of educated, ordained clergy. Origen's conviction was not that status as a pastor gave pedagogical authority. Rather he emphasized that those with theological education and insight were most qualified for teaching and had responsibility to teach those less well-educated (von Campenhausen, 1969).

Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and the Pastor of Hermas also emphasized the pastor's educative role. In the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian, "teachers" were assumed to be pastors or, if lay people, worked very closely with clergy. Others than clergy taught, but their curricula and methodologies were developed and overseen by pastors.

Through the post-apostolic period the role of the pastor as educational role model was consistently emphasized. In Gregory I's Pastoral Care, Chrysostom's On the Priesthood, and other

writings the role of pastors as examples of Christian virtue was emphasized. Through Nicea, pastors were urged follow Paul's example, encouraging people to see the example of Christ in the pastor's life and thus follow his example (Clement, Origen, Iranaeus, Athanasius).

Pastor-educators in the Medieval Church

From the seventh century onward, the role of pastors as teachers began to change. New emphases challenged a "teaching shepherd" metaphor of pastors. Pastors were increasingly seen more as priests -- sacramental functionaries -- than as educators. Many pastors themselves were poorly educated and therefore ill-equipped to teach or preach (Cooke, 1976). Social histories of the age emphasize that serious religious education was virtually non-existent within many churches, superstition was widespread, and many unscrupulous characters (both clergy and lay) took ready advantage of the credulity of religiously uneducated people.

While education at the congregational level (again, both clergy and lay) floundered during the middle ages, education among some members of the clergy flourished. Through the development of monastic orders and university faculties, some clergy established a pre-eminent educational presence in society. Many clergy "specialized" as scholars (including the Dominicans and Franciscans). Others specialized as preachers and missionaries. Unfortunately much of this education was largely unavailable to local church pastors and completely inaccessible to most lay people. Because most people in society had little or no education, the assumption of most religious authorities was that pastors and lay people they could not learn doctrine or appreciate theological truths.

Although in practice, the educative role of pastors appeared to have been devalued in the medieval church, a strong undercurrent within the church continued to emphasize the educative role of pastors. In the early middle ages, in response to the beginnings of urbanization in Europe, a renaissance of preaching and educational ministry occurred among some better educated pastors (Cooke, 1976, p. 122). Europe was nominally "Christian," but many pastors recognized that most people were ignorant of basic Christian doctrines and ethics. Preaching and education received a renewed emphasis among some clergy who took seriously their responsibility to educate person in both doctrine and ethics.

Cooke (1976, p. 277) notes a six-fold reemphasis on education in the medieval period. First, traditional preaching as part of the mass celebrating the Eucharist was reemphasized. Second, in "parish missions" services with evangelistic preaching and ethical instruction were introduced. Third, instruction was given to monks and friars within monastic communities. Fourth, art, statuary, glass, and illuminated manuscripts were intentionally developed and promoted as educational tools. Fifth, religious theater was encouraged. Sixth, sophisticated commentary on Scripture was developed by an emerging group of university-based theologians.

This educational concern, however, was sporadic and unevenly distributed. While bishops were officially given the responsibility for providing education in Scriptural truths, most were no longer involved in preaching or education. They functioned primarily as administrators of cathedral schools and overseers of parish pastors. Education for pastors was haphazard, dominated by a few influential handbooks, particularly Gregory I's Pastoral care. While cathedral schools and universities attempted to provide educational preparation for parish pastors, some provided little quality instruction.

Despite corruption and poor pastoral preparation among many pastors, among some clergy there continued to be a strong emphasis on the importance of moral purity among pastors. A pastor's example was understood to speak as loudly as his words; people would not follow the instructions of a man whose lifestyle contradicted his teaching. Second, strong ethical principles and actions were viewed as prerequisites to the spiritual insight necessary for effective instruction (Cooke 1976, 279). Cooke notes, however, that the content of this instruction was rarely, however, toward the aim of spiritual understanding (common people neither needed nor could understand spiritual "mysteries"). Rather the dominant emphasis was towards good behavior. And, tragically, despite the fine rhetoric, many pastors failed to provide good examples.

Through the later Middle Ages, preaching and education continued to be emphasized by many clergy. Preaching as a highly developed art form was flourishing thanks to the men like Vincent Ferre,

Bernadine of Sienna, and Jean Gerson (Cooke, 1976, p. 285). Theological accuracy was very important. Education had as its goal the laudable objective of nurturing Christian values to produce Christian behavior. However, problems were emerging. Some pastors had a penchant for uncontrolled allegorizing; others over-used relics as object lessons; still others displayed an obvious discrepancy between the content of their sermons and their own lifestyles.

Roman Catholic officials were aware of the problems and were committed to improving the educational work of pastors. The Fifth Lateran Council's (1512-1517) decree on preaching (Supernae maiestate praesidio), published less than a year before Luther's posting of his theses in Wittenberg, attempted to address some of the problems in late medieval education. The decree insisted upon the examination and approval of all involved in preaching by establishing standards of knowledge, prudence and moral behavior and by insisting preaching primarily explain Scripture, consistent with orthodox theology.

Pastor-educators in the Reformation

The history of attempts at reforms within the church are well-documented. For my purposes it is interesting to note how the role of pastor changed during this period. Within both the Catholic tradition and the emerging Lutheran movement, two well-defined groups of pastors existed: some were well-educated and predominantly located in cities. Others were poorly-educated and normally ministered in rural contexts. Scholars in both Catholic and reforming traditions advocated better pastoral education and a greater emphasis on preaching and teaching.

Reformers, however, went further than their Catholic contemporaries by advocating substantial reinterpretations of the pastoral office. Luther, Bucer, Zwingli, and other reformers rebelled against the concept of an "official church" with hierarchical control. They viewed the Roman Catholic church's monarchical papacy, claims to be able to define truth, and demands for absolute acceptance of the church's teachings as oppressive and unbiblical. Reformers, spurred by the doctrine of justification by faith alone, advocated a preeminent place for scriptural authority. They proposed a new congregationalism in which each congregation would call its own pastors and manage its ecclesiastical affairs and ministries. While "bishops" still existed within some schemes (as traveling superintendents, not as a higher ecclesiastical order), local church pastors were perceived as the basic office of ministry. Pastors were charged with preaching, teaching, and administering the sacraments within the local community.

Within the Lutheran movement, for instance, pastors were encouraged to reemphasize their educational role. For those with little or no formal education this presented a considerable challenge. "There was no place in the new Lutheran approach for the nonpastoral minister," Cooke notes, "the individual whose ordination found no expression other than 'saying Mass'" (1976, p. 143). The pastor's authority was not based on his position in an ecclesiastical hierarchy or as a representative of an apostolic tradition, but upon the authority of scripture. According to Luther, pastors functioned as people, specially ordained by God, who would proclaim the Word of God faithfully.

Through the sixteenth century, reformers (including Luther, Bucer, Melancthon, Calvin, and Zwingli) insisted upon the primacy of preaching scripture (over against an emphasis on sacraments or teaching moral behavior). Differences certainly existed among these leaders. Luther and Bucer valued the liturgy of the Catholic tradition and viewed the sacraments as evangelistic opportunities. Education could occur in conjunction with the sacraments. Zwingli, by contrast, deemphasized the sacraments, valuing instead the preaching service. Melancthon's understanding of the church and its ministry is explicitly governed by a school model. He argued that, where authentic teaching occurred, authentic faith could exist, and a "true church" could exist. Melancthon deemphasized the sacraments even more than Zwingli and stressed the primary importance of preaching and teaching in pastoral ministry (Cooke, 1976, p. 291).

A reformation theology emphasizing the "priesthood of all believers" encouraged a renewed concern for educating lay people. The translation of the Bible into the vernacular helped facilitate the

biblical instruction of lay persons. A reemphasis upon the home as a critical locus for Christian nurture encouraged pastors to be active and diligent in teaching doctrine and ethics in their congregations so that parents could provide religious instruction for their children. Luther, for instance, insisted that parents play a key role in the catechizing of their children. For this to occur, parents had to be nurtured in their faith by pastors.

Calvin similarly stressed the educational role of pastors. Calvin had a vision of a Christian society, or commonwealth, in which pastors would function as teachers of the law and the gospel. Church members were to have "gentle and teachable spirits" as they were instructed and "governed" by their pastors. Pastors, in turn, were encouraged to remain teachable themselves, recognizing their need to learn from church councils, theologians, and other pastors. The importance of maintaining doctrinal purity in schools necessitated pastors, as the most highly theologically educated members of society, emphasize education in their ministries. Most practical ministries (caring for the sick, the poor, etc.) were to be performed by lay elders and deacons rather than pastors.

Within the Roman Catholic church, the Reformation hastened attempts to improve the frequency, accuracy, and overall quality of preaching. The Council of Trent's decree on preaching (1546) noted several problems: bishops and pastors often did not preach or teach; many clergy who were preaching were not legitimately appointed, adequately educated, or morally exemplary; many itinerant preachers were unordained "pretenders" who were profiting by spreading error, superstition, and false prophecies. In its recommendations, the decree reasserted the pre-eminent educational role of bishops and the need for clergy -- at all levels -- to preach and teach Scripture.

Both Catholic and Protestant theologians believed clergy should be actively and accurately involved in preaching and teaching. Disagreements about the pastoral role focused on the other aspects of pastoral work, including the pastor's role in the celebration of sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and absolution. The educational task of pastors, however, was a point of agreement and emphasis within all Christian traditions.

A significant educational phenomenon during the Reformation was a renewed emphasis upon catechizing as an instructional method. Catechesis had continued to be used through the Middle Ages. However it had been limited to the use of simple handbooks of faith, intended only for adults, particularly clergy. The Reformation, however, encouraged an unprecedented use of catechisms in both Catholic and Protestant churches. Both traditions felt obligated to instruct their faithful about "truth" and "error." The catechetical tradition, combined with newly available printing technologies, encouraged widespread use of catechetical materials. The role of pastors in catechises is unclear. Certainly the initial writers of these materials (for example, Luther and Calvin) were pastors. But a variety of persons (including parents) were probably involved in actual instruction using these manuals as curricula.

Pastor-educators in the Modern Era

The modern era has been characterized by dramatic social changes which have tremendously altered the role and status of Christianity (and thus pastors). The Industrial Revolution sparked large-scale urbanization, new social relationships and new attitudes to work. These social transformations, laced with the philosophical fruits of the Enlightenment, challenged existing modes of understanding. In an intellectual climate emphasizing "reason" and mesmerized by the machine, Christianity was seen as anachronistic (at best) and evil (at worst). This process became known as secularization: "a societal process in which an overarching and transcendent religious system is being reduced to a sub-system of society alongside other sub-systems, and the overarching claims of which have a shrinking relevance" (Dobbelaere, 1984, p. 200; Cox, 1965).

From the early sociological accounts of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, through the mid-twentieth century work of theorists like Peter Berger and Bryan Wilson, secularization -- the inevitable demise of Christianity -- was considered inevitable. However beginning in the 1960's, other social theorists began noticing that religious belief was not inexorably retreating. David Martin, Daniel Bell, Stark and Bainbridge, and David Lyon all noted that Christianity persisted and new religious movements

were flourishing. Christian churches have continued, even grown, as the twentieth century draws to a close.

Christianity is no longer an the overarching system that defines all social relations and ethics as it once might have been. More and more people in western countries are uninvolved in churches and ambivalent to or ignorant of Christian doctrines or ethics. The numbers of those nominally affiliating with religious groups has declined. Regular attendance at church services has decreased. Church leaders, both at local and national levels, may once have had social influence, but now their role has diminished. Nations like Canada and the United States have become multi-faith societies where other religious beliefs (and no religious beliefs) and values are evident. Secularization may not mean so much the demise of Christianity as a radically changed status for Christianity as one religion among many.

These social changes have tremendously influenced the role of pastors within society and local churches. On the one hand, pastors have lost status as highly respected members of a community. On the other hand, pastors have been encouraged to perceive themselves as "professionals" (akin to doctors and lawyers). Pastors have more opportunities to pursue further, specialized education than before. More resources help pastors do everything from marketing their churches to counseling persons in crisis, from preaching better sermons to administering larger churches.

Pastoral ministry has changed. Nelson (1992) notes that early in the century pastors were encouraged to develop a sense of "professionalism" which defined their role in terms of preaching and as "managers of congregations." Since World War Two, other scholars have noted a growing movement among pastors to gain expertise in psychological counseling skills. But education, as a key role for pastors, has not been emphasized.

Richard Baxter's (1656/1983) passionate plea to pastors to recover their sense of responsibility for teaching their congregations can certainly be considered a classic pastoral theology, but it may also be read as a scathing commentary on the moribund state of pastoral ministry in the post-reformation era. Baxter noted that, while some pastors took their educational responsibility seriously, many became more and more public functionaries, continuing to preach and conduct services, but in a fashion which was ritualized and lifeless. For the most part pastors were viewed as good people, respected and often loved by their people. But their work had become hollow and routine. George MacDonald's (1876) Reverend Thomas Wingfold may not be as atypical as we would like to believe.

Contemporary pastoral theologians comment little upon the educational mandate or responsibility of pastors. As will be reviewed in the next chapter, the key elements of pastoral ministry are defined as distinct from education or teaching. The net result is that most pastoral theology texts imply that education is not a priority for pastors.

In the modern era, religious education has continued to increase in importance and prominence. During the reformation and immediate post-reformation period, one of the basic pastoral tasks was assumed to be catechetical instruction. But by the eighteenth century catechesis was becoming more exclusively focused on children, emphasizing rote religious instruction, preparing children for confirmation or First Communion. As the number of children to be catechized multiplied, others than pastors often took on the educational task. From the late eighteenth century on, lay people were commonly used as catechists in Roman Catholic and Protestant communions.

In the nineteenth century two developments further encouraged lay people to become involved in education. The establishment of parochial schools required lay religious educators. As public schools became less explicitly Christian, and as the Sunday School movement developed, churches developed a schooling model to ensure the religious education of children. The scope of this schooling required high levels of lay involvement. Pastors, if they were involved at all, functioned as "principals," overseeing and administering the church school.

The disciplines of religious education and pastoral theology emerged as distinct fields of study during this period. Religious educators considered themselves distinct from pastors. As the distinct discipline of Christian education has emerged, pastors have been seen as educational administrators, promoters, and encouragers of teachers (Person, 1960; LeBar, 1968; Gangel, 1970; Miller, 1977; Cionca, 1986; Wade, 1987). Pastors participate in the educational ministry of churches insofar as they support the educational vision, encourage and nurture leaders and offer moral support to educational ministry. But pastors have not been not viewed as educators. Pastors function as principals rather than educators (either

of teachers or their congregations), perhaps because their educational preparation has emphasized administrative competence rather than educational methodology (Nelson, 1992). The majority of Christian educators suggest that pastors should see themselves as spiritual leaders and caregivers, but not as teachers. Significantly, as Burgess (1996) reviews the four models or paradigms of Christian education, pastors are invisible in both the writings of the theorists Burgess cites, and in his analysis.

One of the key trends in the modern age, as noted earlier, has been this growing dichotomy between what is perceived to be "pastoral ministry" and "Christian education." Pastoral ministry has increasingly been defined in terms that exclude education. Christian education has emerged as a discipline independent of pastoral theology. Pastors are no longer encouraged (either by pastoral theologians or by educators) to have a strong educational mandate.

This represents a shift from historical paradigms. Through the first nineteen centuries of the Christian church, education and pastoral ministry were (in the best examples) intimately connected. Indeed through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many Sunday services lasted several hours and it was difficult to tell when the sermon ended and religious education began. Preaching and religious education was intertwined in the oratory of well known pastors like Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, and Horace Bushnell. Pastors were involved in the development and teaching of catechetical and Sunday School materials. But in the twentieth century, preaching has become very distinct from teaching. And educational ministries have been perceived as distinct from pastoral ministry.

Bringing Pastoral Theology and Christian Education together

I would suggest that this pastoral theology/Christian education schism is problematic. The biblical model suggests that "pastor" and "educator" are intimately connected terms. And throughout much of church history, pastoral and educational roles and responsibilities for clergy have been seen as intertwined. Although a variety of other paradigms have been proposed and practiced, historically pastors have consistently been called back to a biblical paradigm for ministry which recognizes education as a foundational task. This is the root metaphor -- teaching shepherd or pastor-educator -- to which pastors have been called to return to again and again.

> When God calls a person into pastoral ministry it is a two-fold call. The call certainly centers in preaching, but it just as surely includes responsibility for the teaching aspect of the ministry. To fail to assume the educational role along with the proclamation role is to be unresponsive to the full scope of God's call. Furthermore, the neglect or disparagement of education is to guarantee an incomplete if not an ineffective ministry and to shortchange a church in its most basic approach to its God-given task" (Sisemore, 1978, pp. 124-5).

This balance, I propose, is essential for pastors to recover. This is not to deny that some pastors will emphasize pastoral care ministries more than others while other pastors may emphasize education. It is to affirm the biblical and Christian tradition principle that "educator" and "pastor" are not distinct offices, but rather extensions of a continuum. It is to affirm that education has a pastoral component. And it is to assert that pastoral ministry is strongly educational in nature:

> The minister has a clear duty to counsel the ill and dying, but he should first have helped create a community with a religiocultural view of the meaning of illness and death. Certainly the minister should counsel persons with marriage problems, sexual problems, and divorce problems, but he should first have helped to create among his people a positive vision of the normative meaning of marriage, sexuality, and even divorce. The difficulty with much of pastoral counseling is that more time is spent discussing the tools of counseling than in the more challenging process of developing the structure of meanings that should constitute the context for counseling. (Browning, 1976, pp. 108-9)

The term "pastor-educator" avoids the temptation of seeing education and pastoring/shepherding as distinct, mutually exclusive ministries. A "pastor-educator" metaphor emphasizes the importance of teaching for pastors. Biblically, pastors are consistently portrayed as teachers. One essential criteria for pastors is that they "be able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul uses domestic images to emphasize the pastoral role as both a caring and nurturing shepherding task and an educational teaching task (2:7-12). Commenting on Ephesians 4:11, John Stott writes, "... every pastor must be a teacher, gifted in the ministry of God's Word to people (whether a congregation or groups or individuals) ..." (1979, pp. 163-164).

One of the strengths of the twentieth century models or paradigms of Christian education, of course, is that they emphasize lay responsibility for and involvement in the educational and nurturing ministries of the congregation. This is an essential development. I am not suggesting pastors somehow reassert authority over the educational ministries of their congregations. Rather, I am suggesting pastors recognize their educational responsibility within the life of the congregation. My concern is that pastors work with lay persons active in educational ministry rather than seeing themselves as doing a distinct ministry. Pastor-educators can complement the educational ministries already in their congregations by being active in educational and nurturing ministries.

If a "pastor-educator" paradigm is proposed, an immediate consequence is that scholars in the disciplines of pastoral theology and Christian education must begin to dialogue more meaningfully. Pastors need to read the work of Christian educators. Christian educators need to explore pastoral theology. In most seminaries in western Canada, my review of academic calendars and interviews with faculty suggest that persons in programs designed to prepare them for pastoral ministry are required to include little, if any, instruction in education (this will be further explored in Chapter Ten). Similarly the few religious education programs emphasize educators as distinct from pastors. If a paradigm of "pastor-educator" has merit, however, pastors and pastoral theologians need to read, reflect upon, and interact with Christian educators. The corollary is also true: educators may need to reflect more deeply upon the role of pastors in educational ministries.

> Our practice today of separating preaching and teaching into distinct functions with distinct officers for each function cannot be justified from early church practices. The larger purpose of preaching-teaching in the early church overshadowed and made any distinctions that did exist subservient to that purpose (Worley, 1967, p. 135).
>
> This larger purpose was the communication of the postresurrection faith of the church ... Among church educators there is confusion about the purpose and direction of church education. Much of this confusion is related to the fact that we look for simple, neat distinctions between preaching and teaching, a single content of teaching and a single educational theory and method. This study has shown that no simple distinctions were made between preaching and teaching. There was not single content or theological interest except the desire of teacher-preachers to communicate their postresurrection faith (Worley, 1967, p. 142)

Moving Forward ...

This chapter has suggested that the metaphor of pastor-educator has been emphasized within the Christian tradition since the earliest churches. Although, throughout church history, this paradigm has been periodically obscured or ignored, it has remained an influential metaphor. In contemporary ecclesiastical institutions, pastoral theology is often seen as distinct from Christian education. I suggested that it may be helpful for pastors to reconsider the pastor-educator metaphor.

The next several chapters explore the implications of employing a pastor-educator metaphor for pastoral practice. Initially I discuss the nature of education so we understand what educational ministry involves (Chapter Five). I then explore the educational potential latent within many activities in which

pastors are already involved (Chapter Six). In Chapter Seven, I encourage pastors to think in new terms about the educational potential of their ministries by examining the concept of "curriculum." The next chapters (Chapter Eight and Nine) explore practical approaches to ministry through which pastors might incorporate these ideas into pastoral practice. Finally, Chapter Ten more fully reviews the nature of education at seminaries and proposes some ideas for how pastor-educators may be more adequately prepared for ministry.

First of all, however, I must define education as I, as a pastor-educator, perceive it. "Education" is one of those words all of us have a concept of, formed by our own educational and life experiences. My goal in Chapter Five is to propose a workable definition of education that makes sense within a church -- and specifically within a pastoral ministry -- context.

II. PARADIGM REGAINED

But rise; let us no more contend, nor blame
Each other, blamed enough elsewhere, but strive
In offices of love, how we may lighten
Each other's burden ...

- John Milton, Paradise Lost XI

CHAPTER FIVE

What is Education?

> In a comic strip, a frock-coated parson is asked a question, "Why do preachers preach?" The minister scratches his head: "Hmmmmmm," he says. Then, he opens his mouth to answer but "Duhhhh" comes out. Finally, in the last panel of the comic strip, he wanders off with a giant question mark over his head. The giant question mark -- "Why do preachers preach?" -- hangs over all ministers. (Buttrick, 1987, p. 449)

The broader question is "Why do pastors pastor?" David Fisher asks: "What is a Christian pastor at the end of the twentieth century?" (1996, p. 24). His book represents his own personal and professional pilgrimage of self-understanding. In this chapter I introduce ideas that have helped me begin to understand who I am, as a pastor.

In the previous chapters I proposed that "pastor-educator" may be a helpful metaphor for pastors to explore as we seek to understand our role. This metaphor has a rich heritage in the Christian tradition. I believe that this metaphor might suggest some answers to Buttrick's befuddled parson and help pastors like myself and David Fisher explore answers to our questions. The undercurrent, running through all of what pastors do -- including preaching, leading worship, administrating a church, providing pastoral care and counseling -- may be education.

In the next several chapters I will begin a dialogue about the possibilities of incorporating this pastor-educator metaphor into pastoral ministry. But what is "education?" And how might this "education" provide purpose to our ministry? These are questions this chapter will endeavor to explore. This chapter will set the stage for an exploration of how the concept of "education" can be seen as permeating everything a pastor does. Because education is not a term discussed in pastoral theology literature to any extent, this preliminary chapter will introduce my growing understanding of what education is and how it is expressed in a church context.

Exploring "Education"

An important concept in Taoism is "p'u," the "uncarved block." Things in their natural state are considered ideal. The same is true of people. Benjamin Hoff, in his humorous retelling of Taoist principles for Western readers, The Tao of Pooh, uses A.A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh books to illustrate the principle of p'u. Rabbit, Hoff suggests, has Knowledge for the sake of Being Clever. Owl has Knowledge for the sake of Appearing Wise. Eeyore has Knowledge for the sake of Complaining About Something. Pooh, Hoff contends, has true Wisdom -- the down-to-earth-what-is-there-to-eat variety. Pooh is the epitome of p'u. Simple, childlike understandings, Hoff believes, are the essence of Taoist philosophy. In Hoff's analysis, the primary value of teachers and formal education is to mentor others to discover the inherent simplicity of everyday life.

The Judeo-Christian tradition has perceived education and the role of educators differently. Rather than emphasizing the "natural state" of people, the Judeo-Christian tradition has emphasized the necessity of education. People have a depraved nature; their natural goodness is marred by sin. People need to be educated to know God and to know principles of moral living. They need to be educated in doctrine and ethics so that, through the grace and power of God, they can become something better than their natural selves. In both Judaic and Christian traditions structured curriculum, instruction, and learning in cognitive, affective and physical development have been highly valued (Gangel and Benson, 1983; Reed and Prevost, 1993; Burgess, 1996).

In contrast to the Taoist "uncarved block" is a Judeo-Christian ideal of a carefully formed person, molded and shaped by knowledge of the Scriptures, lived out in personal experience. "What

sculpture is to a block of marble," wrote Joseph Addison, "education is to an human soul" (in Farber, 1985, p. 89). Education is viewed as an essential aspect of human development.

In the Old Testament, education was highly valued. Biblical wisdom, shaped by familiarity with the Scriptures, was cherished. God urged the Israelites to learn his commandments and teach them to their children (Deuteronomy 6). Education in doctrine and ethics distinguished wise and foolish persons. The Wisdom literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) develops this theme. Proverbs 9:9, for instance, reads, "Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning." Proverbs 12:15 warns, "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice." The Wisdom books suggest that the "natural state" of people is inherently foolish. Careful attention to wise education was absolutely critical for personal faith and moral development and for social cohesiveness (Kidner 1985). Education was taught by wise educators: parents (Proverbs 1:8-9, 13:1) and teachers (Proverbs 13:14).

Education was also a process by which educated persons observed their context, reflected, and grew in their understanding. One of "the wise" reflected, "I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw" (Proverbs 24:32). Solomon, one of Israel's wisest teachers and leaders, muses on the value of careful observation and critical reflection: "I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

In the New Testament, Jesus emerged as the consummate teacher. His approach to his ministry was strongly educational in nature. He taught. And, in his final charge to his followers, he instructed them "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). This educational mandate was taken up by the early church. As I noted previously, education has been a strong theme throughout Christian history. The notion of biblical wisdom has continued to highly valued.

Expanding Education

In our late twentieth century North American culture, the words "education" and "teaching" are often delimited to professional teachers, teaching in a school environment. The field of "curriculum" is delimited to formal school contexts. Two dangers potentially arise from a close association among education, curriculum, and teacher-focused, school-based activities.

First, classroom teachers might assume they are the educators in society. Certainly teachers in school contexts fulfill an essential, arguably preeminent, role in developing curriculum and teaching in Western society. To imply otherwise would be foolish. However many other professionals are educators, too. Lawrence Cremin advocates an understanding of education that looks beyond simply school-based programs, considering, instead, "a broad range of educational associations and institutions" (1977, p. 136). William Schubert, in Curriculum: Perspective, Paradigm and Possibility, recognizes that teaching and curriculum development occur in nonschool educative institutions. In these contexts, Schubert recognizes that a variety of "human service professionals" (including pastors, counselors, consultants, scout leaders, etc.) are educators. These educators, like classroom teachers, "plan programs to influence the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of others; therefore they are curriculum developers" (1986, p. 3). Cremin and Schubert's comments are a helpful reminder that nonschool educators, including pastors, play an important educative role in society.

Second, a narrow, teacher/school-based understanding of education and curriculum may encourage nonschool "human service professionals" to underestimate the fundamentally educational, curricular nature of their professions. Consequently these persons may not reflect seriously on their task as educators and curriculum developers. My personal reflections, my conversations with and surveys of other pastors, and my research with lay-people (both through surveys and through the study group in my own church) have helped me to appreciate how profoundly educational much of what pastors do really is. Often, however, pastors may not perceive the educational nature of our work: we fail to appreciate the educational impact of our activities, and we miss the educational possibilities which occur every day in our work.

Defining Education

A block of marble, rough cut in a quarry, has many possible futures. It may simply remain a block of undressed stone. Or, if the expert hand of a sculptor works with stone, carefully nurturing its possibilities, working with its potentialities, a beautiful sculpture might result. A great sculptor's genius is the ability to envision the best possibilities latent in the stone and to realize that potential through careful work. Not every stone has the potential to yield the same sculpture. A sculptor's art is working with the medium to "educe" (or "lead out") a masterpiece. The sculptor works with the stone, building on its best qualities, working with its weaknesses, to allow the best possible work of art to emerge.

Thomas Groome uses this image to describe Christian education. Just as a sculptor approaches a piece of marble, recognizes what shape it has the potential to be, and works to bring out ("educe") the possibilities latent within the stone, education is a "leading out" of the potential inherent within persons. "Our metapurpose as Christian religious educators," Groome writes, "is to lead people out to the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ" (Groome, 1980, p. 35).

Etymologically, Groome is quite correct. The English verb "to educate" is, in part, derived from the Latin "educere" literally meaning "leading out." "This etymology reminds us that education is the process of leading students from where they are to a place where they can see the world -- including the spiritual and the natural dimensions -- in a more accurate way" (Wilhoit, 1986, p. 11). Education, then, is a process through which educators work with learners to lead them out to new understandings. It is a process of helping students grow in their faith maturity.

Another Latin root for the English "to educate" is "educare" which means "to bring up; to train, educate, develop; to produce" (Traupman, 1966, p. 95). This meaning hints at another aspect of education -- emphasizing that educators have a responsibility to ensure their "leading out" is purposeful. For pastor-educators, these complementary meanings suggest that education is a process, with the goal of producing spiritual growth and biblical wisdom.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary provides a helpful definition of the verb "to educate" which highlights some of the facets of this "leading out:"

> To educate is "to develop by fostering to varying degrees the growth or expansion of knowledge, wisdom, desirable qualities of mind or character, physical health or general competence, especially by a course of formal study or instruction."

This definition helpfully highlights several aspects of education:

1. Education is intentional

Education is an intentional activity. While popular opinion may suggest that all experience is educational, most educators argue that, while all experiences have the potential to be educational, intentionality must be present.[1] Without intentionality, educational opportunities may be missed, only moderately helpful, even negative. Richard Osmer proposes a definition of education which emphasizes intentionality: "Education is a community's systematic and intentional effort to transmit and evoke knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that are deemed worthwhile" (1990, p. 19 [my emphasis]). "I look on teaching in and by the church," writes Sara Little, "as a form of ministry intentionally directed toward helping persons seek and respond to truth" (1983, p. 4 [my emphasis]).

I remember, as a young teen traveling with my family, visiting Wells Cathedral in southwestern England. After several weeks in Britain we had visited so many cathedrals one seemed much like any other. To me, with no church background, the buildings represented beautiful architecture, but little else. However at this particular cathedral one priest introduced himself to my family and proceeded to give us a

[1]This has been the conviction of educators influential in Christian education from John Dewey through the present (Schuller, 1993; Roehlkepartain, 1993).

guided tour of the cathedral and other buildings into which the public normally was not invited. The priest, however, gave us more than a lesson in Gothic architecture or Somerset local history. Amidst quotes from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (which he seemed to know in its entirety), he shared with us his Christian faith, and gently challenged us to think about our faith. He linked the religious symbolism permeating the building to his own experiences as a young man searching for religious meaning, and, through his experience, to our lives. I honestly remember nothing of his history and art lessons, but I was profoundly moved by the religious education lesson he provided for us. What could have been a museum tour became, through this priest's intentional effort, an introduction to living Christian faith.

This intentional education occurs "especially by a course of formal study or instruction." Informal education (such as that of my Wells priest) is important. People are constantly learning through informal opportunities. We learn from television, radio, reading, observing, conversing, and acting. However educators insist that formal instruction is critical.

In the evangelical/kerygmatic model of Christian education, formal study and instruction have consistently been emphasized. In the mainline paradigm, educators have emphasized the educational responsibility of all congregational members in spiritual "formation" by modeling and nurturing Christian faith (Westerhoff, 1976; Harris, 1989). These writers emphasize intentionality and structure is critical to community-based spiritual formation. This paradigm has been interpreted, in practice, by some churches as suggesting that formal educational programs are not important. Little formal study or instruction may actually occur. Some churches have apparently interpreted this approach to imply that doctrinal knowledge, Christian character development, and integration of people's faith and lives happen informally, almost by osmosis. Formal instruction is at best not necessary, at worst an obstacle. Ted Ward, surveying churches' educational ministries, observed, "Christian education (as currently practiced in some congregations) is neither" (in Cannell, 1997a, p. 1). Edward Farley writes:

> Since church education emptied itself of rigorous and ordered learning[2], ... it had to settle for education as a mere shadow and distant reflection of ordered learning. The reigning consensus that education is Christian formation helps the churches hide from themselves the uncomfortable fact they promote an education that does not educate. Church education, in other words, occurs in a never-never land between a program of ordered learning ... and the general formative influence of everything the church is and does. (1990, p. 131)

Christian education writers, both in the evangelical/kerygmatic and mainline paradigms, continue to emphasize the importance of intentionality and structured study and instruction.

> When congregations as communities of faith organize their lives to help people enter into their ministries of worship and mission with a spirit of freedom and competence, they intend that people will learn to act in certain ways, be familiar with certain things, discern certain meaning, take on certain values and sensibilities, and assume certain commitments. To do less limits the quality and character of our participation in the primary events that give order and purpose to congregational life and mission." (Foster, 1994, pp. 137-138 [my emphasis])

Foster emphasizes that congregations must be both systematic and sustained in their educational efforts. Education needs to be systematic because certain learnings precede others and learners need well-rounded exposure to the Christian faith. And education needs to be sustained in the sense that learning must be understood to be lifelong. Christian beliefs and values have to be continually "recast and reinterpreted for the new circumstances and situations in which congregations find themselves" (1994, p. 138).

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[2]"Ordered learning," according to Farley, requires acquisition of knowledge, the cultivation of the ability to reflect and make judgments, and the application of faith to life in a way that uses Scripture with integrity.

2. Education for the whole person

Webster's definition also emphasizes that education is for the whole person, including intellectual, moral and physical dimensions. Often education has been limited to a concern for intellectual knowledge. Among the critics of contemporary Christian education (particularly of the evangelical/kerygmatic paradigm), this has been a common theme: in the past some educators have been so concerned with instilling orthodox doctrine that they have overlooked the need to integrate these beliefs into learners' daily lives (Westerhoff, 1976; LeBar, 1989; Schultz and Schultz, 1993; Foster, 1994). A definition of education as a holistic endeavor, emphasizing cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects, is a helpful corrective.

The Search Institute research highlighted that most church goers had low "faith maturity" -- their beliefs were poorly integrated into their daily lives.[3] They did not have "a vibrant, life-changing faith - the kind of faith that shapes a person's way of being, thinking and acting" (Roehlkepartain, 1993, p. 19). Commentators on the study emphasized that Christian education needed to address all dimensions of human experience, nurturing beliefs, values, and daily lives (Schuller, 1993; Roehlkepartain, 1993; Bellous, 1994).

Iris Cully (1967) emphasizes three aspects of Christian education: instruction, education, and nurture. Though instruction "deals with facts and meanings in order to give the learner information and understanding" (p. 151) she argues it includes more than memorization or indoctrination. Instruction also requires the learners to understand why the facts are important and how the truths are relevant. Education is much broader. Cully perceives education as including instruction and knowledge, but also permitting a learner to explore, question, discover, and apply truths for themselves. Nurture includes "habits, attitudes and actions developed through instruction and applied through educational exploration as well as being among people who practice certain habits, hold particular attitudes, and participate in various actions" (p. 161). Christian education's objective is to help people both know and live their faith.

Other voices continue to emphasize the holistic, transformational nature of Christian education. Jack Seymour argues:

> Christian education is at its best as it assists persons in dealing with the crucial issues of personal and social life in light of the gospel. Christian education teaches the faith tradition first recorded in the Bible, so that people take on the identity of Jesus and gather resources to seek God's will in day-by-day encounters. Theological reflection occurs for each individual believer as he or she confronts and makes decisions about how to live faithfully in the moments of daily life. Christian educators must provide open spaces where people can learn the faith tradition, engage that tradition with issues of life, and seek to live together in ways that are faithful to God. (1997, p. 118)

> The mature objective of religious education is more than the accumulating of knowledge about religious stories. The learner gains the ability to analyze principles and relationships so that new patterns of acting in the world may be synthesized or created from the knowledge of the basic story ... Mature religious education ... seeks to enable the learner to identify, accept, and be committed to appropriate values so that the student is characterized by a value system that has been personally developed in dialogue with the community's story. This is not something that children can complete. It is too abstract and complex. It is nurtured over a lifetime. Therefore, religious education is lifelong.
>
> Religious education is concerned with developing the whole person as a creation of God so that life might be lived in its most abundant sense ... Religious education's focus is broader than individualized salvation or leadership in the ...

[3]For a comprehensive discussion of "faith maturity" as a measurement of religious faith, see Benson and Eklin (1990); Roehlkepartain (1993, pp. 35-38); Bellous (1994, pp. 11-28).

> church. A major part of religious education is helping people live their discipleship in the world." (Revisioning the DRE, cited in Cannell, 1997b, p. 3)

"I may 'know' something," Linda Cannell, educational ministries faculty member at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, observes, "but what is more important is that I have 'learned' something" (1997b, p. 2). She argues that education is about learning, and learning is about integrating what we know into our behaviors, attitudes and value systems. "Learning involves reflection, decision making, perception, discernment, finding connections in information, in ways that lead to renewed integration into life and experience" (1997b, p. 2).

Education has to speak to our lives and our experiences. Cannell notes that people participate in formal Christian education ministries because they are seeking something important. They often drop out of Christian education (even church) if they find little of value.

> Increasingly, persons will find Christian education interesting as it taps into their experiences ... if they can bring their life stories and questions to the experience ... if they can communicate with others, engage in meaningful dialogue and explore truth in relation to life ... Where it (Christian education) leads persons into a rich encounter with God's Word and the demand to bring life into conformity with that Word (however difficult that may be), Christian education succeeds. (1997b, pp. 1-2)

> "Integration," one pastor I interviewed said, "is the key:"

> That is, the integration of various aspects of our lives. I don't really separate - I don't have a distinct separation between home and work. I don't have a distinct separation between church and world. I really try to have an integrated understanding of all the aspects of my life: heart and mind (there's a lot of integration of heart and mind), and body ... integration of body, mind and spirit ... embodying our faith.

And that integration is what this pastor aims to model in the educational ministries in the congregation.

3. Education in "varying degrees"

This definition also recognizes the value of individuals by emphasizing that education occurs in "varying degrees" with different people. People come with different levels of comprehension and expertise, with different levels of faith maturity, and of integration of faith with daily living. Within church contexts, pastors are challenged to appreciate that persons come with a variety of backgrounds. If once Christian education was "tribal" (spiritual nurture began with young children, who grew up and learned together), it is now much more a process of educating "immigrants" (persons of many age levels are who exploring faith or beginning their spiritual journeys) (Woods, 1996).

On a Palm Sunday service a few years ago, our church celebrated with a series of Scripture readings and reflections which highlighted Jesus' confrontations with the religious authorities of his time. After the service a man in his mid-thirties, who had begun attending our church a couple of months before,[4] commented, "I never knew Jesus had anything to do with Jews before. I thought they were totally separate." Often I assume adults have a basic knowledge of the Bible and the Christian tradition. Increasingly I am discovering that some adults who are beginning to attend the church are completely ignorant of religious knowledge. Currently I am leading a group for people new to our church. A couple of these people attended church years ago. One lady, now in her 60s, has never attended before. These are mature adults who are just beginning to explore what Christian faith is about and what it means in their

[4]I had asked him during a visit, "What is your church experience?" "The last six weeks," he answered, "have been my church experience." Except for an occasional wedding, he had never attended church before.

lives. Christian education for them is going to proceed from a different starting point and at a different pace than for other adults who have spent many years in the church.

> The learning process suggests a starting point -- the recognition of where I am now in my thinking, attitudes, behavior. This is the place from which I journey. Learning begins when I am jarred from this starting point. (Cannell 1997b, p. 2).

The definition also refers to education as "growing and expanding" something that is already there. Using a biblical metaphor, while education sometimes involves sowing a new seed, often education involves the cultivating, watering, and nurturing of knowledge and qualities that are already present in an individual.

When I was studying at university in the early 1980's, I worked in construction during the summers. I worked with a variety of fascinating tradesmen and fellow laborers. None would have called themselves "Christians." Yet what I found interesting was that many of these people had some knowledge and opinions about the Christian church and about Jesus Christ. Bert, a drainsmen, had swum a river to flee Communist oppression in Hungary in 1956: his experience of Christianity was of a wealthy state church whose clergy ate well while he and his family had starved. Todd, a fellow university student and varsity hockey player, had had no experience with churches, but he had opinions about Jesus: he thought Jesus taught good morals, but that was about it. What I found challenging was taking the bits of knowledge these people had and trying to educate them more accurately and adequately about who Jesus is and what the Christian church is.

Education proceeds by "varying degrees."

Moving forward ...

If Webster's definition of education is adopted, much of the work in which pastors are engaged is clearly educational. Whether we are planning and leading in worship, preaching, teaching in groups, working with individuals in a counseling relationship, in pastoral visitation, or providing leadership to a congregation, our goal is frequently "the growth or expansion of knowledge, wisdom, desirable qualities of mind or character, physical health or general competence." As pastors we may not naturally think of most of our work as education, but it is ... or, more correctly, it has the potential to be.

In Chapter Six I explore some of the educational potential latent within many of the facets of pastoral ministry in which we are engaged on a day-by-day, week-by-week, year-by-year basis. My aim is to help us appreciate the educational possibilities with which we are routinely provided. The following chapters -- seven, eight, and nine -- will suggest ways in which pastors may take educational advantage of these opportunities.

CHAPTER SIX

Educational Possibilities

Pastor-educators, I suggest, appreciate education as a key component of their ministries. Education is "to develop by fostering to varying degrees the growth or expansion of knowledge, wisdom, desirable qualities of mind or character, physical health or general competence, especially by a course of formal study or instruction." In this chapter I explore the possibilities for education within the range of activities which pastors normally are involved.

In Chapter One I suggested that many pastors are perplexed and confused about what it is they do. Significantly, of all pastors and lay people who took part in some aspect of this research, only two pastors
had anything resembling what could be called a "job description." And both of those pastors expressed frustration that what they had agreed to do (according to their job descriptions) and what they were actually expected to be doing (by their congregations) were very different. When I asked my colleagues, "Do you think a job description would be helpful?" a typical response was this:

> It wouldn't work. There are just so many little things I do, I couldn't list them all. (Pause). I don't think my congregation would ever go for it. They don't want to know where my job ends. They don't want to know there's a limit.

Meier et al comment:

> Bakers bake, bankers bank, mail carriers carry the mail, musicians make music, ministers minister. The job description for a baker, a banker, a mail carrier, and a musician are pretty clear, but what exactly does a minister do? Just what is expected of a pastor? (1993, p. 165)

From my discussions, surveys, reading, and experience, four major areas of church ministry in which all pastors are involved -- to a greater or lesser extent -- may be named: worship, formal teaching (including preaching), pastoral care/counseling/visitation, and administration. In my discussion I review pastoral theology literature on these tasks, seeking to discover educational themes. I also draw upon my interviews and surveys with pastors and lay-persons to explore their insights and experiences on the educational possibilities of these ministries. My purpose in this chapter is to begin to stimulate pastors to reflect upon the educational possibilities latent within many aspects of pastoral ministry. Pastoral work is a multi-faceted endeavor -- my goal is to begin to explore the educational aspect of pastoral ministry more fully.

The Pastor-educator in Worship

One role pastors play is as priest. By a priestly pastoral function I mean, "offering the love of God to the world, and offering before God the prayers of the people" (Oden, 1983, p. 87). Although many Christian traditions strongly emphasize that individuals have the privilege and responsibility to relate directly to God, inevitably the pastor is involved in shaping this relationship between God and people as a worship facilitator and leader.

According to the Barna Research Group, 38% of Americans attend worship on a typical Sunday, but only 16% attend Sunday School (1990, pp. 24-5). This means that for about 22% of Americans, and almost 60% of church attenders, the only church experience they have on an average week is Sunday morning worship. In Canada, only about 20% of the population claim to attend church weekly and less than 10% attend Sunday School (World Vision Canada, 1996; Yearbook of American & Canadian churches, 1995). In Canada, too, the majority of church goers' religious activities involve is worship

services. "These worship-only attenders," comments Roehlkepartain, "probably will not grow rapidly in their faith, but worship can and does have a positive influence" (1993, p. 63).

Worship services can be interpreted as a dialogue between God and the congregation. In a worship service, God speaks with people through music, prayer, readings, and spoken words. And the congregation, in turn, brings worship and prayers to God. In most congregations, pastors are highly involved in planning and leading worship services. Pastors help create a worship experience which facilitates people understanding and encountering God and which also expresses their worship to God. The freedom pastors have to shape this worship experience varies across denominations. In more liturgical traditions, service formats may be largely predetermined. In other denominations, particularly those in the Anabaptist tradition, official liturgy does not exist. In theory, then, many pastors have tremendous latitude in worship styles, themes, and content. One Baptist pastor cautioned, however, "It's not written down anywhere, but you try changing the 'big B' Baptist way of doing things around here ... then you find out we have liturgy, too!"

The question I wish to ask of worship services is: Are they educational? Can worship services play a role in "fostering to varying degrees the growth or expansion of knowledge, wisdom, desirable qualities of mind or character, physical health or general competence?" If so, then the question which logically follows is: What is the pastor's role in helping shape worship as an educational experience?

Within the Christian education community, several writers recognize the tremendous educational potential of worship. Writers who have emphasized a mainline model of Christian education, in particular, have noted the importance of worship as an instructional opportunity (Nelson, 1971; Westerhoff, 1976; Harris, 1989). These writers argue that self-identity is strongly shaped by interaction with others. Christian self-identity, therefore, is formed through socializing interactions within a Christian faith community. They emphasize the importance of the symbols and value systems in the community, including worship.[1]

C. Ellis Nelson (1971, 1991) contends that everything churches do, their whole way of being in the world and being together (including worship), is educational. "Worship ... with its prayers, music, scripture, sermon, and sacraments, stimulates, instructs, and guides the minds of believers," Nelson concludes (1991, p. 164).

John Westerhoff, describing education as "an aspect of socialization involving all deliberate, systematic and sustained efforts to transmit or evoke knowledge, attitudes, values behaviors, or sensibilities" (1976, p. 17), explicitly emphasizes the formative influence of the "church at worship" (Westerhoff, 1977; Westerhoff and Neville, 1978). He comments:

> It is important to remember that our understandings of the Christian faith are always revealed in our rituals. It is, therefore, essential that a faith community continuously judge its ritual life by the Gospel. (1977, p. 57).

He argues that churches need to "unite" learning and liturgy so that all worshippers grow in their understanding and living of Christian faith. One pastor I interviewed commented:

> I see integration of education in worship clearly. I think I constantly do it. Let's just take for example in the baptismal liturgy. There's a little section I have written into the liturgy that reviews, every time, what it is we're doing when we baptize. And, then making use of the symbols of baptism as a teaching tool as well. That's an example. I also take the opportunity, when it's appropriate, to -- for example -- give background to the hymns, like where did this hymn come from? Why do we sing it? Why do we love it? What does it mean about who we are as God's people?

Others commented:

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[1]This socialization approach draws upon the work of William James (1902), Gordon Allport (1950), Jean Piaget (1952, 1965), James Fowler (1976).

> Our worship is probably more didactic than feeling and emotive kind of stuff. We read confessions, we read litanies, we have a certain flow to things. We believe one of the reasons we do confessions -- we read confessions together -- is that it helps non-Christians learn what confession is about and how to do it. And so every week, we're all saying together: "I haven't done what I'm supposed to do; I need your forgiveness." For a secular person to confess that every week, all of a sudden they get some sort of content. If you're a contemplative person, worship here would probably be a good teaching tool. If you're a more emotive person, we probably don't do as good a job on the intimacy of God as we do on the awe part. Probably other groups do a better job on the intimacy and not so good a job on the awe.
>
> Worship, as I see it, is not coming to have an hour or an hour and a half stepping aside from the world and having a wonderful experience of singing some great songs, and saying "Oh, I need that," and then walking back to life. But worship is coming with all the hurts, and with all the pains -- not stepping aside from it for an hour and a half -- but bringing the pains here and making a confession of sin. Saying these are my hurts and these are my pains. And then saying, "God walked with me for this hour and a half." So I see worship as a time of real life, bringing God into it. We bring our real world here, put it all out, and then my job is to make sure God can walk among us as we're doing all this ... In every service I usually set a theme. Everything is integrated. So I'll say at the beginning of a service, "OK, welcome to worship this morning." And then maybe I'll tell a little story or something like that to grab everyone, and I'll say, "Well that's what we're heading toward this morning. We're going to take a look at just that concept of our life and how God fits in at that point." Away we go. The object lesson will fit in with that. And the sermon will fit in with that. And we're not going to talk in generalities or anything. I'll set out a goal at the beginning and we'll have to hit it or call it a failure. And so I think that helps. So at the end of an hour or an hour and a quarter everyone can evaluate and say, did we hit that target. He said he was going to, did we do it?

Lay-people also had interesting comments on the educational possibilities of worship. Survey respondents noted:

> Worship is where I learn <u>about</u> God. In our church our small groups do a great job of caring and praying (for) one another, but not much teaching and learning.
>
> I learn songs. I learn to pray. Sometimes our pastor reads verses I never even knew were in the Bible before.
>
> I learn to approach God.

In our study group people commented:

> It's like, I never knew how to pray -- really pray -- before I began attending church here. And I find I'm singing the songs in the care and at home. It's neat.
>
> Worship has helped me appreciate the awesomeness of God. Some of the songs send chills up my spine! But God is also close to us. I feel that, too. It's a bit of everything. But you really do experience God -- God is real, you know -- it's like here He is and you meet him in a whole new way every Sunday.

Recent Christian education writers, drawing heavily upon the work of Nelson and Westerhoff, continue to emphasize worship as one aspect of the church's educational ministry (Harris, 1989;

Roehlkepartain, 1993; Foster, 1994). The Search Institute Survey, discussed earlier, emphasizes that worship, if it is spiritually uplifting, actively promotes faith development (Benson and Elkin, 1990; Roehlkepartain, 1993).

Pastoral theology literature clearly sees worship as an activity in which pastors are involved. But no writer explores its educational potential. Several writers focus on issues of character for pastors leading worship: the importance of a sense of call and personal qualities (ethics, study habits, and spirituality). Others focus more pragmatically on specific approaches and techniques for leading worship. But no writers reflect on the educational possibilities of worship. None of the major texts on pastoral theology, in chapters on pastor as worship-leader, make reference to the educational potential of worship services or the educational role pastors could take as worship-leaders and facilitators (Baxter, 1656/1983; Jowett, 1912; Griffith Thomas, 1926/1974; Rodenmayer, 1958; Kent, 1963; Oden, 1983).

Much of the recent literature intended to help pastors lead worship perceives worship services primarily to be opportunities for churches to connect with non-churched people. The discussion is typically congregation/culture-centered: if we understand our cultures and congregations we can develop services that meet their needs (Callahan, 1983; Barna, 1988, 1990, 1991; Posterski and Barker, 1993). Unfortunately, the underlying motivation appears to be more, "How can we get more people in the church?" than "How can we help people learn about the Christian faith and how it applies to their lives?"

In Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, Kennon Callahan discusses five factors that "contribute to corporate, dynamic worship" (1983, pp. 24-34):

1. The warmth and winsomeness of the service and the congregation.
2. The dynamic nature and inspiration of the worship. Callahan estimates forty percent of a typical worship service is music. He suggests a solid music program mixes planning and spontaneity, balance and variety, quality and depth.
3. The character and quality of preaching. Discussed below.
4. The power and movement of the liturgy. Instead of a series of disconnected elements, liturgy, to be effective, is like a drama in which one element builds on the other with power, rhythm, movement, and direction.
5. The seating range of the sanctuary. A sanctuary needs to be comfortably filled, but not over-filled, for worship to be most uplifting.

With the exception of Callahan's fourth factor, the concern appears to be more on the organizational aspects and emotional climate of worship rather than serious concern for and reflection upon its content.

George Barna uses survey data to identify characteristics of the cultures in which churches conduct worship. His purpose is to sensitize churches to the values, ideologies, religious knowledge, attitudes, and social needs present in the broader cultural context. These discussions explicitly separate techniques for numerical and spiritual growth, arguing that these can complement one another (Barna, 1991, p. 23). Similarly, Posterski and Barker (1993) analyze the cultural context and offer suggestions for how churches can "contextualize" their message. But neither Barna nor Posterski and Barker reflect upon the tremendous educational potential of worship services.

Critics have argued that these discussions of "user-friendly" worship services undermine the integrity of worship (with God as both its object and subject). Worship can become a consumer-driven activity (Webster, 1992),[2] which may attract people but does little to nourish congregants' spiritual development. Musician and theologian, Marva Dawn (1995) argues these strategies "dumb down" the faith, emphasizing love without keeping a necessary dialectical tension with truth. Dawn writes:

> The Church brings truth and love together best if it genuinely praises God and consequently nurtures the character formation of people. In worship we celebrate the truths of faith that embrace participants in the love of God. The love of the worshipping community, moreover, reaches out to welcome strangers and to instill in them habits of cherishing truth" (1995, p. 67).

[2]For a further discussion of the "consumerization" of religion, see Bibby, 1987.

Worship, Webster and Dawn argue, does educate people about faith. Churches, therefore, must exercise caution not to "dumb down" their message to titillate people's whims.[3] Describing worship as a "subversive act," Dawn advocates that:

> If the Church's worship is faithful, it will eventually be subversive of the culture surrounding it, for God's love transforms the lives of those nurtured by it. Worship will turn our values, habits, and ideas upside-down as it forms our character ... (1995, p. 57).

For her, worship that is educationally transformative balances several dialectical tensions:

tradition and reformation
truth and love
social change and counterculturalism
thought and feeling

The Christian educators cited above complement Webster and Dawn's arguments. Worship services do educate people about our faith. The challenge for pastors is this: What are our worship services teaching? Are we, as Dawn suggests, "dumbing down" Christian faith? In our concern to be attractive to people are we teaching unconditional love without holiness and absolute truth? Are we teaching emotional experience and not rational reflection? Do our worship services only emphasize part of the gospel or, over time, do we deal with a broad range of biblical principles?

These are educational questions.

The Pastor as Teacher

Pastors "teach," in a more traditional sense, through both sermons and smaller group events (Bible studies, Sunday School classes, seminars, etc.) In the discussion that follows I will consider both homiletics (preaching) and other teaching opportunities in which pastors are involved.

Preaching or homiletics

Homiletics, the study of the preaching, is one area of pastoral theology in which education might be expected to be a dominant theme.

> Preaching means proclamation of the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord. Preaching is the continual and public testimony which the church is constantly seeking to make to all who would hear it, most conspicuously in the context or worship, witnessing to the church's faith in Christ. Preaching consists substantially in the clarification, exposition, interpretation, and re-appropriation of the written word that witnesses to the revealed word. It is a public exposition of Christian truth, addressed to the here-and-now community of faith, and to all who would hear it. (Oden 1983, pp. 127-8)

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[3]Supporting this concern is Hendricks' research with persons leaving churches. He notes that a market-driven approach may attract people, but fails to foster commitment or spiritual growth. Also, committed Christians often seek more substance, challenge and authenticity in worship than these "user friendly" churches provide (1993).

While much of worship represents a priestly event (addressing God in praise and prayer), preaching, in particular emphasizes a prophetic dimension (God addresses us). Preaching, Oden suggests, has the task of saying,

> Let us listen to the Scripture together. We will talk about the way in which the word of God the Father through the liberating Son meets us with the help of Spirit through the Scripture. (1983, p. 128)

"What is at issue in preaching?" asks Karl Barth: "Decisively that the community, and with it the world, should remind itself or be reminded explicitly of the witness with which it is charged; that it should find reassurance as to its content; that reflected in it Jesus Christ Himself should speak afresh to it; (and) that it should be summoned afresh to His service in the world" (1962, IV/3, p. 867).

Preaching often has an evangelistic dimension (declaring the good news and inviting people to Christ), a pastoral dimension (seeking to comfort, encourage, inspire devotion, dedication, loyalty, and discipleship), a doctrinal dimension (imparting clear, understandable biblical truths), and a moral dimension (building moral sensitivity and molding behavior).

By its nature, preaching would appear to have a fundamentally educational role. Indeed the discussion of preaching in the preceding paragraph dovetails perfectly with our definition of education: "to develop by fostering to varying degrees the growth or expansion of knowledge, wisdom, desirable qualities of mind or character, physical health or general competence." Oden emphasizes: "The preaching ministry is properly viewed as a teaching ministry" (1983, p. 147). Survey results from the open-ended question, "How are you (as a pastor) involved in education in your church?" indicated over 80% of pastors saw preaching as educational. Certainly this is the understanding of the pastors I interviewed:

> I think biblically the two terms for preaching and teaching in the Scriptures were used interchangeably, often and always. And I think that my preaching is most effective when people come away and they've learned something. The objective for teaching and preaching is both the same: to a response within a believer or a nonbeliever -- whoever hears it -- to stimulate, move them to change. So the end goals are the same.

> Preaching ... means taking the word of God and applying it to the people as they're going through their daily life. And helping them to realize that God is with them through all the things that are happening. And helping them to interpret not so much the things -- I don't think we can ever understand that (Job was told that by God) -- but to realize that God is with us through it.

> Preaching is a wonderful teaching opportunity. Sunday mornings are the time I can say, corporately to the community of faith, "This is God's word to us." This is how it relates. To us. Not to someone else.

In my research with lay-people the same understanding came through. When asked the open-ended question, "How is your pastor involved in education in your church?" over 70% of lay respondents volunteered preaching as one key element. My study group were unanimous that preaching was one of the most significant educational events in the regular life of our church.

It is interesting, however, that homiletics texts make no reference to education literature. Some texts make no attempt to place themselves within a theoretical framework broader than other homiletics literature (Robinson, 1980; Perry and Sell, 1983; Miller, 1995). Several texts use communication theory as a starting point (Sweazey, 1976; Stott, 1982; Buttrick, 1987). Significantly, not one attempted to place preaching in the context of educational theory.

Christian educators, however, have opinions on preaching. Schultz and Schultz, citing survey results about the educational ineffectiveness of sermons (just 12% of adult church-attenders say they usually remember the message, 87% report their minds wander during sermons, and 35% report the

sermons they hear are too long), suggest most sermons needs "renovating" (1993, p. 189). Schultz and Schultz suggest communication theory is important, but so is knowledge of educational principles including knowing people, involving people, and using visual aids.

Maria Harris agrees. "When we examine preaching as a form of didache (teaching) ... we recognize how rich a component it may be in the church's coming to understand and know it own life, and in the refashioning demand accompanying that life ... For some, it is not only the main way, it is the only way, they are instructed in their own fashioning as people" (1989, p. 115). Therefore, she argues, pastors must reflect upon the educational value and content of their sermons.

Linda Cannell draws upon the writings of a Jewish writer, Israel Goldman. Goldman describes the sermon as "a powerful educational tool" in synagogue life. With the "invention" of the sermon, Goldman argues, education combined the efforts to inform and to cause to think:

> To this end, the preacher would distinctly and carefully read the scriptural verses, arousing congregational interest by pointing out difficulties and indicating contradictions between verses, then resolving them ... always, by every pedagogic device, the effort was made, week after week, to stimulate each individual not merely to listen to Scripture, but actively to meditate upon it and to try to derive the deeper meanings inherent in the texts ... Now the worshipper was no mere spectator of ecclesiastical pageantry or religious ritual, no mere obedient conformity to laws pontifically promulgated, but an active, intelligent participant in the great personal and social quest of discovering and understanding the ways and the will of God (in Cannell, 1997b, p. 2).

"In my judgment, pastors are not the only (nor necessarily the most gifted) teachers in the congregation," comments Cannell, "however, if Christian education is to develop in congregations, pastors will need to internalize the attitude that characterized many of the rabbis" (1997b, pp. 2-3). She notes that in rabbinical thought every student was assumed to have the responsibility of one day being a teacher. It was inconceivable that anyone who "learned" should not also "teach." She suggests that pastors need to set the tone for education in the entire congregational life through educational reflection in their preaching.

Some homiletics writers do raise educational issues. Some books challenge pastors to consider their congregations during their sermon preparation, to shape their messages to be relevant, and to engage in thoughtful discussions with congregants (Garrison, 1954; Howe, 1967; Stott, 1982; Buttrick, 1987; Miller, 1995). Other books make fleeting references to recognizing the spiritual needs of their congregations and addressing these in their sermons. But these writers provide little reflection on why this might be important or how it might be done (Blackwood, 1953; Pearce, 1967; Perry, 1973; Fasol, 1989). Many major homiletics texts make little or no reference to educational concerns in either the sermon's preparation or delivery (Broadus, 1870/1979; Bull, 1922; Unger, 1955; Miller, 1957; Sweazey, 1976; Robinson, 1980; Vines, 1985; Bennett, 1991). All texts provide guidelines on sermon preparation, but while some encourage pastors to think educationally about the material and their congregations, others barely mention the congregation. The implication of these latter texts is that preaching occurs in a vacuum. The same message could be appropriate for any audience. Pastors begin with a biblical passage, and create sermons using well-established exegetical and hermeneutic techniques. Little discussion is undertaken about how these texts are chosen. And little reflection is spent on whether participants in the congregation learn anything or not. Indeed the congregation is scarcely mentioned at all.

This perspective is antithetical to the biblical model in which sermons were crafted to particular contexts. For instance in Acts 3, Peter, addressing a Jewish crowd, extensively quoted Old Testament prophets. Paul, speaking in Athens, referred to Greek poets in his sermon (Acts 17). In each case a similar message was contextualized to be relevant to a specific situation.

Garrison (1954) argues that homiletics literature in particular, like pastoral theology literature in general, is overly pastor-centered. He contends that most writers focus entirely on the qualities of the pastor and the mechanics of sermon preparation, excluding the educational needs, interests, and capacities of the congregation. Garrison emphasizes that, in pastors' choice of material and approaches to sermons,

they must seriously attend to the concerns of their audience. Sermons need to be approached with a pastoral-educational concern that learning occur.

Using communication theory, Howe (1967) points out that pastors and congregations bring multi-faceted experiences and understandings of religious traditions and contemporary life to church. Buttrick (1987) and Chartier (1981) join Howe in emphasizing that pastors must listen to their congregations in order to communicate effectively. Eggold (1980) proposes a similar argument in his discussion of "dialogical preaching" in which the pastor applies the sermon to the congregation's needs. Perry and Sell (1983) advocate "life-situation preaching" in which the pastor begins with a real life problem in the congregation and seeks to address the problem from the Bible. This approach is further developed by Miller (1995).

These approaches certainly display educational concern by considering the background and needs of the congregation. However such dialogical, life-situation preaching requires the pastor to understand his congregation and work with them to ensure preaching is relevant and that learning actually occurs. Unfortunately, these texts do not give any substantive, helpful ideas on how pastors might discern these needs. And the texts give little insight on how pastors might be able to discern if learning is in fact occurring. While the sentiment is laudable, the lack of substance is frustrating.

There is a decided lack of emphasis on educational planning and educational vision in preaching texts. Sermons are typically treated as isolated events, unrelated to the overall life of the church or even to the sermons of previous weeks or months! A few writers give passing comment to a concern for a balanced, comprehensive presentation of Christian doctrine and ethics through preaching. However no writer deals in depth with concerns (like those expressed by Dawn and Webster), that in many churches sermons and associated worship services do not present a balanced theological understanding.

Pastors are not encouraged by homiletics texts to wrestle with the overall educational efficacy of their preaching. No text presents a rationale or a methodology for pastors to evaluate the educational effectiveness of their preaching. Pastors are given the impression that if they follow the prescribed recipes for success, their sermons will be "good." What constitutes "good" preaching is not examined.

I would suggest that "good" preaching means people grow in knowledge, wisdom, desirable qualities of mind or character, physical health or general competence. If this proposal is helpful, we need to discuss criteria to evaluate our preaching. But no text does so. These are issues, however, with which pastors wrestle. As one pastor noted:

> I think preaching is an event. It sets an atmosphere. It sets a mood. It creates a sense. But whether they come out thinking the same thing -- I think if a preacher thought that they would he's probably kidding himself or herself. They leave here and they'll capture the mood but they may be thinking totally different things about the sermon. Someone once said: "It's not the sermons you preach, but the sermons people preach to themselves because of something you preached."

Teaching

Richard Baxter's The Reformed Pastor (1656) emphasizes that pastors' prime objectives ought to be the personal catechizing and instruction of people in their care. "The minister is in the church," Baxter writes, "as the schoolmaster is in his school, to teach, and to take an account of everyone in particular" (p. 180). Baxter identifies seventeen reasons why pastors' involvement in the educating of their congregants is critically important, including:

1. It is one way people may be converted.
2. It will "promote the orderly building up of those who are converted."
3. If people are already instructed in the basics, they can better understand sermons.
4. Personal instruction helps pastors know their people and be known by them. Pastors know better how to preach to, pray for, and care for their people.
5. Both pastors and congregants understand more fully the role of pastor as more than just

"preacher."

6. Pastors grow in their faith as they help others learn.

"In our time," Oden notes, however, "ordained ministry has often tended to shy away from entangling involvements in the teaching ministry, either viewing it as a lay activity or turning it over to staff professionals in Christian education" (1983, p. 141).

Oden's observation appears valid in the literature. Pastoral theologians writing about the teaching task of the pastor (in Bible study, Sunday School, seminar contexts) is remarkably scanty. Occasionally pastors are simply seen as administrators of Christian education programs in which they are little involved (Erdman, 1928; Anderson, 1985). Other texts recognize the dual role of pastors as both administrators and participants in the teaching activities of the church, but discuss them only briefly (Rodenmayer, 1959; Oden, 1983).

While homiletics literature often includes a discussion of the need, for effective communication, to understand the audience, literature on pastor as teacher rarely does. Only Rodenmayer (1959) discusses the need for curriculum to emerge from the questions persons in the congregation are asking. The other texts, again, are pastor-centered. They discuss the qualities of good teachers, the essentials of good lesson-planning, the organization of educational programs and the development of other teachers, but little about discerning or addressing the educational concerns or needs of learners.

Anderson (1985, p. 311) does include one page on selecting curriculum, but his focus is simply on choosing from among pre-packaged published materials. He notes that prepared curriculum may need to be supplemented by other (possibly denominational) prepared materials. While the church may need to create its own curriculum materials, this

> is an extremely difficult task and neither the pastor nor any of his members should attempt to do it unless they are experienced in the field of Christian education, understand in detail the characteristics and needs of the age group for which they are writing materials, and are absolutely positive there are no commercially-produced materials the church can adapt to meet its goals" (Anderson, 1985, pp. 311-2).

William Willimon, Professor of Christian ministry at Duke University, comments on his experience co-authoring a book about renewal in the United Methodist Church. His partner, Robert Wilson, suggested a chapter entitled, "Insist that the clergy teach in the parish." "I questioned the priority of this subject," Willimon comments, "It did not seem to fit our concerns that stressed larger, more structural changes in the church." However as the Search Institute's survey results were published, Willimon commented "Now ... I see that Bob was absolutely right ... pastors must perform many important acts of ministry for their congregations, but few are more important than the ministry of teaching" (Willimon, 1993, pp. 50-1). His plea to pastors is that they rediscover that one of Jesus' disciples' favorite designations for him was "Rabbi." As "rabbis," Willimon argues, pastors would be spiritual guides to their congregations, helping people develop their faith through "careful, intentional education and enculteration by the whole congregation" (1993, p. 54).

As pastoral theology appears to imply that teaching is an area in which pastors ought not to be involved, Christian education writers occasionally implicitly (or explicitly) make much the same point. Most Christian educators, when discussing the role of pastors, emphasize their role as organizers and planners, coordinators, promoters, theological advisors, counselors, and encouragers for teachers, but place little emphasis on the pastors as teachers themselves (Person, 1960; LeBar, 1968; Gangel, 1970; Miller, 1977; Cionca, 1986; Wade, 1987; Griggs and McKay-Walther, 1988; Nelson, 1992). The main teaching role pastors may have, according to many of these Christian educators, is as "trainers of teachers." Wade (1987), for instance, argues that pastors need to have a sound philosophy of Christian education, understand the importance of educational objectives, understand educational psychology and teaching methods so that they can be resource people to those who actually do the teaching. The (perhaps not so) subtle message in these texts is that while pastors have a role as resource persons in the teaching ministry of churches, they are not encouraged to teach themselves. This vision of pastors as resource

people is problematic given that many pastors have little or no education themselves in educational theory or practice.

Much pastoral theology literature does not encourage pastors to make a teaching emphasis in their ministries a priority. At the same time, most Christian educators seem content to exclude pastors from a significant teaching role. In practice, the literature has defined "pastor" and "teacher" as distinct offices.

The reality of pastoral experience is very different. Respondents to survey overwhelming saw pastors as involved, hands-on, in education. 73% of lay-persons and 79% of clergy perceived themselves as having a teaching role distinct from preaching. In my interviews, pastors recognized their dual role as educational resource people and as teachers.

> Formally I am there to be the support, encourager for the people who are doing education ministries. Somewhat of, I suppose, you could say, the resident expert ... Informally it takes place in that I teach a class all the time. I stepped out of it at one time and found that I lost the edge very quickly. So informally I do that. Partly also just to say that I don't want to simply ask you -- and this is an old principle, my Dad didn't live very long while I was around but one thing he did instill in me was that you never ask somebody to do something that you're not willing to do yourself. So informally I try to model teaching.
>
> I do a lot of hands-on teaching here ... we sit together and talk about what education should look like here.
>
> I probably am one of the key "educators." It's perhaps -- in some respects -- it's scholar among learners. It's also a role of inspiring our learning. For example, I believe that the pastor has a key role in the church school. I don't teach in the church school, but I work with the leaders in the church school. So I would provide a lot of the biblical background, some educational theory, all that kind of stuff. So I do a lot of hands-on stuff that way ... I guess there's this teaching element, too. Being involved in the training of all sorts of people. In the training of stewardship visitors. In the training of teachers. In the training of people who take on various roles and responsibilities. Which is a really direct kind of educational thing.
>
> I never thought that I was a good "educator" in a sense. But I think if you can put out concepts and move towards those and help people to see new things and say, "Aha!" that's the job of teaching.
>
> Of course I teach. Teaching is all around me. Some people say, "You're the pastor, you don't need to teach. Find someone else to do that." And I say, "No. Yes, I am the pastor. And because I'm pastor, because that who's I am, I've got to teach. That's part of who I am, I think. It's part of what I live and breathe. Oh yeah, I want others to teach too, and I'll do everything possible to see that happen. But I teach.

Pastors see themselves as key educators in congregations. Certainly they are involved as promoters and planners of educational ministries. But more than that, every pastor I interviewed also saw themselves as deeply involved in teaching ministries themselves. One pastor commented:

> Because of the nature of our place -- and we're struggling with this -- it's both a negative an a plus -- if I teach a Bible study ... like we've been doing a summer Bible study and we talked about just saying, "We're going to do a study on James." And then we decided we'd say, "We're going to do a study on James and the pastor is going to teach it." And that's not an ego thing, because if another person teaches it people come too, but what we're learning is -- because of the nature of our people --

they will come and study under someone they feel safe with. If they don't feel safe they won't come. So, we are also teachers here. I would see my primary roles as kind of preaching-teaching.

Pastor as Care Giver.

Pastors are also involved as care givers. Care-giving occurs in a variety of settings. Pastors are often involved with persons during various rites of passage (birth, marriage, death) offering encouragement, support, or comfort. Pastors visit and counsel persons who are ill, stressed, or troubled. Pastors often routinely visit members of their congregations to build relationships. Pastors often work with a number of other social service agencies to provide for those in physical, emotional, or spiritual need in the community as well as in their churches.

Care giving, in various forms, is one area of pastoral ministry which is receiving increasing emphasis in seminaries. Programs in clinical pastoral education and/or counseling are either being developed or are being expanded in each of the seminaries with whom I spoke.

Historically pastors have always been engaged in routine visitation of congregants, spiritual care of those in difficulty, and counseling with those celebrating a birth, anticipating marriage, or coping with a death. All texts agree that these sort of activities are important and necessary parts of a pastor's task. These visits are important means by which pastors become known to the members of the congregation, and get to know the people in their churches (Stowell, 1994). Pastoral care can provide encouragement and comfort for those in serious need (Kent, 1963; Oden, 1983; Meier et al, 1993). During people's life transitions, pastors can provide comfort and guidance (Jowett, 1912; Griffith-Thomas, 1926/1974; Erdman, 1928; Kent, 1963; Oden, 1983; Fisher, 1996).

Richard Baxter cautions, however, that it is one thing to be "acquainted with all the flock," it is another to "take heed to them" (1656/1983, p. 91). By this Baxter means that pastors ought to catechize or educate their entire congregations on a regular basis. He argued that too many pastors pay social visits or engage in crisis counseling without recognizing the educational possibilities of their role. He advocates an approach to ministry which takes the personal spiritual education of each member seriously to be proactive in care-giving ministry. He contends that pastors who educate congregants will help prevent many crises before they happen (pp. 97-100), strengthen families (pp. 100-102), and prepare people to handle health and other adversities (pp. 102-104). While contemporary writers do recognize the therapeutic value of pastoral care, Baxter's plea for an educational emphasis through the various ministries of pastoral care has been poorly developed (Oden, 1983; Stowell, 1994).

An early Roman Catholic alternative to the emphasis on pastor as sacramentalist was to see the pastor as "physician of souls." This perspective suggests that if the reality of "injury" by sin is stressed theologically, pastors have a powerful role as spiritual healers. In the writings Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, and Gregory I, this pastor as physician metaphor is presented with a strong educational emphasis. Gregory I, for instance, in Pastoral Care, stresses repeatedly that the role of the pastor is to teach sinners to recognize their sinfulness and to turn from their evil ways. He gives detailed educational insights into the needs and possibilities for discretely and effectively educating persons of various temperaments and circumstances.

Contemporary pastoral theology literature spends much time discussing the qualities of character and approaches pastors might use in caring ministries. Most theologies emphasize that pastors ought to have exemplary moral and spiritual characters (Oden, 1983; Stowell, 1994). Baxter, with his characteristic educational concern, notes that pastors educate people about God as much by their lives as they do through their words (1656/1983, pp. 53-71). And many give specific tips on how to visit (Meier et al, 1993). But none (with the notable exception of Baxter) explores the educational potential of pastoral care.

From my experience I know that a pastoral visit can be a pleasant social call. My visit may or may not be helpful to either the person I visit or to myself. In contrast, I can approach a visit with a concern to bring some educational insight into the visit. In a routine visit I can encourage my congregant to think about how Christian theology speaks to her circumstances. In a counseling session I can

endeavor to ensure I provide a learning opportunity as well as therapy. As I work with a person through a major transition in his life I can encourage him to learn how Christian principles apply. In my journal, in 1995, I wrote:

> Today I made two visits, and I tried -- really tried -- to leave the people different then when I came. Rather than just having tea with J. I wanted her to help see that God cared about her illness. Rather than just chat with I., I wanted her to have a deeper understanding of God's work in her life. It worked! It was neat! For the first time in a long time I really felt like my visits made a difference. It wasn't just gossip. It was real ministry!

Through my pastoral care I can strive to learn, too. I can learn spiritual insights from members of my congregation. I can learn about the needs and concerns of my congregation. Intentionally, I can make visits an opportunity for data gathering which will help me in my worship leading, my preaching, my teaching, and my leadership ministries in the church. After a visit with an elderly lady, unable to attend church, I wrote:

> Today I visited K. She is a very wise lady! She was talking about her life and the people she had helped. She was talking about some friends who seemed to have no time for anyone but themselves. It seemed like they just wanted more "stuff." "You don't see many hearses pulling U-hauls, now, do you?" She said with that direct, pointed twinkle in her eye. Someday I'll preach a sermon on priorities and I'll use that line. I learned a lot about life and living today. Thanks, K.

I found the pastors I interviewed helpful. One pastor commented that his work with individuals is "like untangling the thing first so they begin to understand what's happening in their world and in their life and then to teach them some techniques on how to do it." This pastor noted: "It doesn't do a whole lot of good to just sit with someone whose life is in a mess and not try to teach them something." Another commented:

> I'm fairly directive (in pastoral care). But I would say the educational component is what they have to do. In other words if a person is rehearsing a problem that they have and I listen to it, I say, "It sounds to me like your problem is this. And I'd say to them, "What do you think ... what are some of the options ... what do you think you should do about that." Now it's incumbent on them to find their way through it. We'll provide many things in the church. I'll give them help and direction. But they have to take responsibility, too. I teach them how to get through ... I show them where they need to go ... they've got to get there.

Pastoral care provides pastors with the opportunity to bring Christian faith into the context of individuals' lives:

> A lot of my stuff is one-on-one. Some of it is in groups -- small group and larger group. I do a lot of things over breakfast. When you're talking to people about life and you're bringing content into that, there's learning going on.

Care-giving allows pastors to help people grow in their faith by linking their faith to the specific situations in which they find themselves.

Interestingly, lay-people -- in surveys, in interviews, and in my study group -- showed little awareness of the educational possibilities of visiting and care-giving. I explored this in some detail with my study group. They saw visiting as encouragement, empathy, spiritual and emotional support, and counsel, but not as education. My feeling through our discussions was that we were using different definitions of education. Lay participants appeared to perceive education more formally than I did. They

could see education occurring in worship, preaching, teaching, and (to some extent) in administration, but they struggled to see most care-giving as educational. In the next chapter, as I discuss "curriculum," I will explore these issues further.

Pastor as Administrator

Often a pastor is a church's only employee. Thus pastors often function as church administrator in addition to their other tasks. For instance, in my congregation, I do everything from routine correspondence and editing the weekly bulletin to providing primary vision for long range missional planning.

The pastoral theology literature and literature on church leadership wrestle with the dichotomy of "servant leadership" (Baxter, 1656/1983; Green, 1983; Greenslade, 1984). The nature of servant leadership is discussed. Leadership styles are presented. Skills and techniques are provided. But this discussion is pastor-centered, addressing the question of how pastors can provide competent management to their congregations. Broader concerns, for the spiritual growth of the congregation or missional outreach, are at best tangential concerns, if they are discussed at all. The deeper question of the educational impact pastors' leadership styles may have on their congregations' understandings of the nature of the church and Christian leadership are unexamined.

Kennon Callahan provides a comprehensive critique of the administrative leadership many pastors provide. He perceives a "professionalization" of ministry to have occurred during the twentieth century which has emphasized organizational management skills and church growth with little concern for mission or spiritual growth. He notes that in the "churched" culture of 1950's, pastors became preoccupied with the institutional care of church, administering the many programs and activities of a busy, churched-culture church (1990, pp. 9-12). Much of the current literature on church growth and church administration, he suggests, continues to present ideas for effective management, but little more.

Callahan argues that in non-churched culture churches (characteristic of the 1990's and beyond), pastors need to develop a new approach to leadership and administration. He develops the concept of a "missionary pastor as leader", who "helps persons in their search and discovery" (1990, p. 59). He notes that missionary pastors are <u>not</u> the only leaders in their churches. As part of a leadership team, pastors ought to function as more than simply managers, bosses, enablers or charismatic inspirers. Callahan suggests pastors need to function as true "leaders."

Callahan develops his perspective on leadership by arguing that life is a pilgrimage search through unpredictable circumstances:

> Life is a search that is dynamic and random, not processive and progressive. Life is a wandering in the desert and sometimes along flowered hillsides and through gentle forests. Sometimes through dark valleys. There are times when we find ourselves caught up in bizarre events, desperate anger, and eruptive violence. Sometimes we find gentle laughter, peaceful silence, and a deep closeness. (1990, p. 60)

Pastors as leaders, Callahan suggests, recognize each person is searching for individuality, community, meaning and hope, and seek to help people discover fulfillment, to find the answers to their search in God. He suggests that if one's philosophy of life is that of pilgrimage, then a necessary philosophy of pastoral leadership must be a commitment to helping persons with discovery and fulfillment.

> Leaders lead. Leaders lead toward discovery and fulfillment. Leaders do not manage or administrate, manipulate or dictate, process or enable, mandate or command, threaten or scare. They do not push, prod, or poke -- they lead. Leaders lead. And the ... local church ... sense that <u>this person</u> is helping them toward discovery and fulfillment. (1990, p. 66)

Callahan's missionary pastor has four central tasks:

1. to help persons rediscover power in their own lives and destinies;
2. to construct new communities of reconciliation, wholeness, caring, and justice -- in the name of Christ;
3. to create a new theological direction and specific, shared purposes;
4. to launch and lead intentional missional teams to meet specific, concrete human hurts and hopes -- both societal and individual -- in the world. (1990, p. 91).

Callahan's model of pastoral leadership requires pastors to be proactive and intentional about education within their congregations. Mission and social concern do not just happen within congregations. Callahan develops detailed methodologies for nurturing concern for mission and leadership development within congregations (1983, 1990).

Jeff Woods, in his review of the changing nature of church leadership (from official leadership, based on position to gifted leadership, based on giftedness), concurs that the role of pastors in church organizations needs to be recast with a strong educational emphasis. He proposes a pastoral consultant model.

> A pastoral consultant would work with the laity from two or three congregations, attempting to train laypeople to take over every ministry within their own congregations. This is much different from two or three congregations sharing a pastor, where that pastor still does all of the preaching, baptizing, distributing of the communion elements, and so forth. In this model the pastoral consultant would train lay teams to take over every aspect of ministry within their churches: preaching, teaching, visiting, crisis ministries, funerals ... The pastoral consultant would remain as a permanent resource person for the laity and continue to offer regular training and continuing education events for the laity. (1996, p. 117)

Clearly pastoral consultants are involved in education! Indeed, education becomes the focus of their ministry.

Both Callahan and Woods propose radical revisioning of how pastors need to perceive their administrative and leadership tasks. Whether all the specifics of their models are adopted or not, the underlying theme of educational concern for developing the theological understanding and nurturing leadership abilities of laypeople is strongly evident. Pastors do need to wrestle with the educational possibilities of their administrative activities. While some writers urge pastors to "lead with people in mind," this can be a half-hearted commitment to education. Cedar (1991), for instance, suggests we lead with people in mind in the sense that goals are short-term and measurable so people have an opportunity to respond to plans. But he fails to see leadership as educational and empowering. If Callahan is correct that life is a pilgrimage, then pastors have to see their leadership as discovery, as providing real answers for the searches of people's lives ... for education.

The pastors I surveyed and interviewed clearly understood leadership as being a key -- if not the key -- component of their ministries.

> I guess the key thing (for me as a pastor) would be vision casting. I guess I see part of my role as being a catalyst. Helping motivate people to a bigger vision. But most of it -- a lot of it -- too, is keeping the big picture in mind. I want to help people see the big picture.

> I do not do the long range planning in my church. But I facilitate it. I am the one who takes the lead and gets the other leaders going.

And pastors see the educational potential in their administrative and leadership ministries:

> I see the leadership side of what I do, in part, is to do some educating. We do that a couple of ways. A few years ago I incorporated into our board plan where every second month we would have an hour that was education, so I would take a particular principle of church grow and teach on it and talk about it ... We do a yearly retreat and that becomes very much an educational time.
>
> I think that new members to boards and committees need orientation and I have a role in that. But much more than that, I think it's working with committees in a teaching capacity to enable them to discover the potential of what their work could be. And to explore new horizons. To share information from the wider church and culture. There's a lot of that. In fact, when I stop and think about it, I do that just about every day!
>
> One of the things I can do -- one of the pastoral roles -- I think is seeing the bigger picture. And I feel I do that fairly well. When the people are talking about this and this and this, I can sort of see the bigger picture and help them to synthesize it all and take their little microscopic vision and expand it a little bit, and say, "Oh gee!" To help people get perspective a little bit more. It is education. I try to create a vision that others can buy into. Sometimes they aren't quite there. It's just that sometimes when you're out in front you have to do that. The visionary is always a few steps ahead of the others. You can't avoid that. But then you have to <u>teach</u> people why that vision is there. You have to, you know, help them buy into it.
>
> More and more I find myself helping the leaders in my church understand what leadership means ... not just filling a position but providing leadership. So I work with them to do that, to create a framework, a way of doing things. Every year we lose leaders through transfers and stuff like that, so we have to be constantly bringing up new leaders. More and more that's a key part of my role.

As leaders, pastors educate their congregations. Pastors help congregants learn to be lay leaders. Pastors help congregants see the "larger picture" and develop "vision." Pastors are deeply involved in helping their churches grow in their knowledge and experience of Christian faith.

Lay-people concur. On the surveys, over 60% of lay-people felt their pastors had an educational task as they provided long-range planning leadership to their churches. In my interviews and study group within my church, respondents again saw the pastor's role as key:

> One of the things you can do is help us see what other churches are doing, because you get to talk with other pastors. Some of us have never really been in any other church.
>
> Pastors have a broader theological vision than many of us. So you can bring that.
>
> I like it when you bring us an article or a chapter of a book that makes me think. It helps me feel like I'm doing something useful, here.

Leadership ministries do provide opportunity for education.

Moving forward ...

In this chapter I explored possibilities for education within the range of activities which pastors normally are involved. From my discussions, surveys, reading, and experience, each major area of church

ministry in which all pastors are involved -- worship, formal teaching (including preaching), pastoral care/counseling/visitation, and administration -- has a potential educational component.

I noted that pastors and lay-people saw this educational component in almost every area. However what intrigued me was that while, during our discussions, people recognized educational potential in a variety of ministry activities, most people -- both clergy and lay -- had not really thought about these issues previously. One pastor commented:

> Yes, so much of what I do is education, isn't it. You know, somehow, in way or another, I always knew that. But I didn't know it. Does that make sense?

In Chapter Seven I will explore the concept of "curriculum" as a helpful way for pastors to appreciate the breadth of their educational activity more deeply.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Thinking Educationally

Chapter Six highlighted educational possibilities within the many facets of ministry. This chapter will explore "curriculum" as a useful concept to attune pastors to educational potential and possibilities. I argue that "curriculum," defined in a broad sense, helps us be sensitive to the educational cues and activities which occur in congregational life and in the rhythms of pastoral ministry -- whether or not pastors are conscious of them. My goal is to enhance our educational sensitivity, encourage reflection, and be more intentional in our educational planning and activity. This will lead into a discussion, in Chapters Eight and Nine, of practical approaches to incorporating an educational vision into pastoral ministry.

My interviews, reading and personal experience suggest that these are not issues that have been discussed in Christian circles. Only a few Christian educators speak to such issues. Pastoral theologians make no comment. As I explored these ideas with pastoral colleagues and lay people in my congregation they agreed they were important, but also acknowledged they had given many of these ideas little thought.

My discussion builds extensively upon my reading in education and upon personal experience. I try to contextualize ideas and concepts that have influenced school-based education and apply them to a church context to help pastors better appreciate their educational role. I also found my interviews with colleagues and the discussion group in my own church particularly helpful as I explored these issues.

Curriculum in the Church

If you were to ask a teacher, "What do you teach?" or "How do you teach?" at some point, early in the conversation, the word "curriculum" would probably come up. "Curriculum" is one of the words we normally associate with the content of school-based classroom teaching. Does the word "curriculum" have any meaning in church contexts? Is it a word with which pastor-educators need to be familiar?

A review of literature in pastoral theology suggests that most pastors view curriculum as something that relates to the formal educational ministry of the church, particularly Sunday School. More specifically, curriculum in the church is usually a product, a prepared packet of material with preselected theme, resource materials and suggestions for implementation. "Curriculum" typically refers to commercially-prepared "curriculum materials" delivered by volunteer teachers to passive recipients (e.g. Anderson, 1985, pp. 305-313).

My interviews suggested a similar understanding. "Curriculum," one pastor commented, "is a set, restrictive pathway ... it's like having only one program on your computer." Another commented, "Curriculum, to me, fits into the formal classroom program in our church." And another commented:

> Hmm. I never really thought about it. It would be like a framework for teaching in a structured sense, I guess. It seems narrow to me. So I've never used it.

Lay-people in our church had a similar perspective. Without exception they understood curriculum to refer to the materials various classes used in our Sunday School and formal classroom activities.

"Curriculum" can mean prepared lessons from assorted publishers. It can mean "one restrictive pathway." But it can also mean much more. For pastor-educators the concept of curriculum -- in a much broader sense -- is a helpful starting point in developing a perspective on ministry that values education and seeks to practice education in the various aspects of ministry highlighted in the previous chapter.

Consider these questions as they relate to pastoral work in the church: "What knowledge is most worthwhile? Why is it worthwhile? How is it acquired or created?" (Schubert, 1986, p. 1). Schubert, who wrote these questions, was asking them in the context of classroom teaching. But they are relevant for the work of pastors, too. Do we ask these sorts of questions? Do we pause to consider what it is

important for people in our churches to learn? Do we take time to ask ourselves why? Do we reflect on how we can effectively educate people to learn these things?

Are these questions really important? I suggest they are absolutely fundamental to our work as pastors. Our answers create the framework for how we develop worship, the themes of our preaching and teaching, our agendas in pastoral care, and the character of our overall administrative leadership in our churches. Our answers shape our theological emphases in ministry. Our answers influence how we work -- whether we emphasize preaching, counseling or small group work during the course of our ministries -- and how we relate to our congregations and colleagues.

But do we reflect on these sorts of questions? Do we even know what our answers are? Do we really have a well clear rationale for what we do and why we do it? Do we ask hard questions about how we can best help the people in our congregations learn? Many pastors do. But my experience and interviews suggest that many of us simply do things with little critical reflection. We emphasize learning certain things because we have been educated to think they are important. But are they? We have certain emphases because we have a sense they are valuable. But what really is important for people to learn? Why? In the course of a year, what do people learn in our churches? How will people in our churches be different a year from now because of our ministry?

We may emphasize a certain technique, like a traditional sermon, in our ministries because it is a well-accepted methodology with a long pedigree. Or we may emphasize small-groups because they are an approach that piques our interest and suits our personality. Or we may model our ministries after patterns that worked well in other contexts. But are those approaches best suited for the people in my congregation? Are they going to result in the learning I hope to achieve? How will I know?

These are difficult questions. They challenge us to examine the foundations upon which we build our ministries. They demand that we examine ourselves -- our personalities and our priorities. But they are essential questions for us to ask if we are genuinely concerned about the spiritual growth of people in our congregations.

These are also curriculum questions. David Pratt, writing to school-based educators asks, "What curricula are worth planning? There is no point in doing more effectively what is not worth doing in the first place!" (1994, p. 2). He might ask pastor-educators: "What is worth planning in your church? Why? There is no point in doing more effectively what is not worth doing in the first place."

All pastors, consciously or subconsciously, already have some answers to these questions. Our answers -- whether well thought out or haphazardly organized -- shape how we plan services, prepare sermons, teach, care and lead in the course of our work. Perhaps our answers are the result of careful, conscientious prayerful, thoughtful reflection. Perhaps they are shaped by the teaching of others or by observing what others have developed. Or perhaps they reflect patterns of ministry into which we have drifted by default, by habit, or by tradition. Wherever our answers come from, they profoundly influence what we emphasize and how we shape our ministries. Our answers shape who we understand ourselves to be as pastors. And as our answers shape us, they influence our congregations through us.

As pastor-educators reflect upon curriculum we are challenged to ask these hard questions again and again. We are forced to begin looking at assumptions and taken-for-granted themes and approaches to ministry. We are moved to ask "What?" We are prodded to ask, "Why?" And we are urged to ask, "How?" As we struggle to answer these questions, our understandings of who we are, what we do, and why we do it will be re-formed. We will change. So will the character of our ministries. So will our congregations.

What is "Curriculum?"

Curriculum is not an easy term to define concisely. Curriculum can be defined as a strategic plan for achieving desired ends or goals (Tyler, 1949; Taba, 1962; Wiles and Bondi, 1989). Curriculum can be viewed as dealing with the experiences of the learner, planned or actually lived (Dewey, 1938; Eisner, 1993a). Curriculum can be viewed as subject matter or content (Huebner, 1982). For the purposes of this dissertation I have modified a definition put forward by Ronald Doll (1996, p. 15):

> The curriculum of a church is the formal and informal content and process by which learners gain knowledge and understanding, develop skills, and alter attitudes, appreciations, and values under the auspices of that church.

This definition suggests that curriculum may be much more than a pre-packaged packet which arrives quarterly from a publishing house. Curriculum is much more than a plan of where you want to go. Curriculum, according to this definition, includes a plan for both content (what is taught) and process (how it is taught). And the definition also recognizes that what actually happens in churches may or may not approximate the plan.

Several aspects of this definition help us as pastor-educators appreciate the facets of educational nature of our work.

"Formal ... content"

When pastors talk about curriculum, their definition is often limited to the formal content people are exposed to in one aspect of church ministry (Sunday School and other "teaching" situations). Certainly this is one aspect of curriculum. These are specific curricular materials or resources. But curriculum is more than materials and teaching techniques. Formal curriculum content also includes other program aspects of church life including worship content (music, prayers, readings), sermons, and church literature. Many persons develop an understanding of Christianity based upon the texts of hymns, familiar creeds, prayers, frequently quoted Scripture, or repeated sermon themes. However they are never involved in a systematic course of study such as typically forms the content of instruction for church school or other formal instructional programs.

While most pastors' theological understandings have been shaped by formal courses in systematic theology and biblical studies, the members of our congregations have their theological ideas shaped by what they learn at church and their own reading and study. Most members of our congregations never take a formal course in theology or biblical studies. This places substantial responsibility upon the pastoral leadership of the church to reflect upon the formal curriculum at church to ensure that congregants are exposed to a balanced curriculum.

What is it important for congregants to learn? Why? How is the content of worship services, sermons, classes and other ministries of the church shaping the spiritual development of congregants? Over the course of a year, how balanced are the educational themes people experience? Are congregants developing a "mature" faith that integrates biblical principles with their lived experience?

These are important questions regarding the formal curriculum. They are important because, if the go unasked and unanswered problems can occur. A variety of writers have highlighted that the formal curriculum which has been used in many churches is problematic. They suggest that in many congregations people have been urged to learn much about the Bible and Christian faith, but this knowledge has not been linked to life experience. "If dumping content on people produced mature Christians," comments Frank Tillipaugh, "the church in the US would be far the most mature church which history has ever seen" (1982, p. 134). "The effort of the years to inculcate Bible knowledge has largely failed," notes Linda Cannell (1997a, p. 1). She argues that our formal curriculum needs to reappraised. She suggests many Christians have equated Christian maturity with biblical literacy, defined in terms of knowledge about the Bible. She asks tough curricular questions with which pastors must wrestle as we reflect on formal curriculum:

> Is biblical literacy knowing facts about the Bible? Is it enough just to know the major themes and concepts of Scripture? Is it adequate to know in general story form, the most popular stories in Scripture? What will help persons fashion a suitable frame of reference for biblical understanding and practice of the Christian faith? (1997a, p. 1)

Richard Foster expresses similar concerns:

> Today a form of illiteracy abounds that is especially dangerous precisely because it is unrecognized. It is particularly prevalent among those of us who read the Bible regularly, memorize verses, and are committed to the authority of Scripture.... Our understanding of the Bible ... is fragmented.... As we teach Bible stories, we may often tack on little morals.... We may never explain how all the pieces fit together, giving a sense of the great flow of holy history.... We stress experience and ignore doctrine. We stress doctrine and ignore experience. We wrench texts out of their context; we examine the context with such critical precision that we never hear the text. We take bits and pieces of the whole gospel message and turn them into the whole gospel.... We value specialization more than integration, detail more than synthesis. We see little need for organic unity, little need to understand things in their entirety." (1986, pp. 12-13)

These writers suggest that fundamental problems exist with the formal curriculum in many churches. It has stressed knowledge of biblical facts, even biblical text, but not practical life application. "The truth is this," agrees pastor, Rick Warren, "spiritual maturity is demonstrated more by behavior than by beliefs" (1995, p. 336), but our educational emphases have stressed knowledge rather than integration of faith into life experience.

Francoise Darcy-Berube (1995) draws a distinction between cultural or theological literacy (which provides persons with the knowledge to feel secure in their faith and Christian self-identity in a secularized cultural context) and "foundational religious literacy." Foundational literacy involves the assimilation or integration of religious knowledge into personal experience. She argues this is a life long process through which we continually wrestle with applying Scriptural truth to changing life experiences, questions, felt needs and longings of growing persons.

These are helpful concepts for pastors to reflect upon as we consider the formal curriculum in our churches. Is our education helping people develop cultural/theological literacy (knowledge about the Bible and the Christian tradition)? Is our education helping people develop foundational literacy (the ability of people to reflect upon and apply Scripture to their changing life circumstances)?

Pastors are involved in making decisions about formal curriculum on an ongoing basis. Through decisions about such things as preaching topics and texts, educational materials and programs to be offered by the church, worship materials for services, and overall leadership strategies to be encouraged in the church, pastors are involved in determining the knowledge and values made available to people in their churches. This discussion of curriculum challenges us to think about the decision we make. And the decisions we ought to make.

Daniel Brown and Brian Larson highlight how important reflection and planning are as we develop the formal curriculum in churches:

> All church leaders want to develop mature Christians, but that's far too general to help us plan the process. We need to specifically define the desired results. What growth do we want in the areas of ministry skills and experiences, understanding of Scripture and theology, spiritual disciplines, use of money, sensitivity to the Spirit's leading, use of leisure time, ability to share Christ with the unchurched, ability to serve Christ at work? (1996, p. 28).

Brown and Larson argue that pastors have to plan their formal curriculum carefully so that their people actually do grow in their ability to integrate their faith with their everyday lives.

"Formal content" was certainly a concern for the pastors I interviewed and my study group of lay-people. Everyone was concerned that people in congregations learn the basics of Christian faith. Pastors commented:

> There's certain things you keep coming back to. Like I want them to hear, on a regular basis the gospel message: this is what it means to be a Christian. Even long-time Christians need to hear that again and again. And then in between is when I get

into, "This is what being a Christian means..." Or, "this is what some doctrine of the church or other means ..." But I always come back to the gospel. It's like -- well the Bible says some people need milk and some people need meat. In our church we try to give a balanced diet.

I use the lectionary. It forces me to deal with passages I wouldn't talk about otherwise. It makes sure there's balance. Otherwise it was too easy for me to pick on my favorite themes and never think about the bog picture. The lectionary forces me to be more balanced.

In our church we do a lot with the church year. The beauty of the church year is it takes you through everything on an annual basis.

I try to plan about a year ahead. That makes sure I do some Old Testament, some New Testament. I do some expositional "through-a-book-of-the-Bible" stuff and some topical sermons. I try to make sure there's a bit of everything.

Lay-people in my study group concurred. They emphasized that preaching -- and formal teaching curriculum used in the church school -- needed to cover a range of themes, from basic "What is a Christian" topics through to more challenging material for maturing Christians. They also emphasized that doctrinal orthodoxy was important. For the church school, for instance, they liked using prepared materials from established publishing houses whose reputations they knew.

"Formal ... process"

Churches have formal curriculum content: specific materials and themes that are taught. Curriculum is more than just content, however. Doll's definition highlights that how one learns (process) is as important as what one learns (content). John Dewey contended that "education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (Dewey in Farber 1985, 90). Dewey believed the process of learning to be as important as the content of learning.

In churches, the content of sermons, worship services and classes may be discussed. A few isolated components of process (styles of music, for example) may be points of debate. But overall reflection on how we educate and why we use the processes we do is rare. In my interviews, few pastors had reflected on how many aspects of their churches worked. Most have thought about their sermons and reflected on their preaching styles. Two indicated they had critically examined the worship tradition they used in their churches. Only one described the pastor and congregation had examined the educational processes in the church. Similarly, my study group had given little critical though to how education was done in the church. Aspects of church life, including the form of the worship service, adult education possibilities, and the traditional schooling model used with children had not been discussed.

"Every church uses some type of methodology, intentionally or unintentionally, so the question isn't whether or not to use methods," writes Rick Warren. "The issue is what kind of methods you use, and whether or not they are biblical and effective" (Warren, 1995, p. 70).

Christian education writers are wrestling with the formal processes which have dominated those aspects of church life traditionally defined as "education:" Sunday School, children's ministries, youth ministries, and adult education (Schuller, 1993; Schultz and Schultz, 1993; Foster, 1994; Seymour, 1997). A variety of alternative formats have been proposed. One common theme is that education in the church involves growing in our understanding of what it means to be the people of God -- to learn in relationship and to live in relationship. So writers propose that educational approaches ought to foster development of a sense of actually being the people of God as well as learning about being the people of God. These writers suggest that we need to rethink our processes. If we are concerned that people learn about the Christian "community" we ought to educate in community-building ways. We ought to emphasize

working as teams, encourage cooperation, provide family/intergenerational experiences, and facilitate group learning (Harris, 1989; Roehlkepartain, 1993; Foster, 1994; Seymour, 1997).

I have been involved in three churches in which one evening a week was designated "Family Night." On this night opportunities for education or fellowship were provided for all age groups -- separately. Families may arrive together, but little in the process of "Family Night" encourages "family." Each age level (our gender) is carefully separated and instructed independently. In one church we even used materials -- at all age levels -- designed to encourage stronger family relationships. But we never encouraged families to learn about being a family as a family. Our formal content and our formal processes were inconsistent.

Several homileticians are also wrestling with the purpose and nature of preaching as a means of communication and education. These writers are asking penetrating curricular questions about the way pastors can be more effective in communicating through their preaching by understanding the ways that congregants learn (Buttrick, 1987; Wiersbe, 1994; Miller, 1995). "Skeletons in the pulpit producing cadavers in the pews," is the imagery Warren Wiersbe uses to describe much preaching. "We've analyzed and outlined the Bible death," he comments (1994, p. 9). He urges pastors to use imagination and creativity to communicate more effectively.

Marva Dawn (1995) reflects upon worship in the church. She suggests we need to reflect upon how we worship. Our approaches to worship are inadequate in both their form and substance. Therefore we must wrestle with the content of our worship (our music, prayers, and spoken words) and how we worship. We need to reconsider our understanding of what worship is and to whom worship is directed so we can create authentic and meaningful worship experiences. In many congregations, she suggests, we need to begin with basic education about the nature of worship and approaches to worship. She emphasizes that worship is both a personal and corporate activity that ought be taught and modeled with an emphases upon our identity as a community of God's people.

What processes are appropriate for education in a congregation? It is significant that many writers are emphasizing "the Christian community" (Little, 1983; Harris, 1989; Foster, 1994; Dawn, 1995; Grenz, 1996; Seymour, 1997). Cannell (1997a) notes that this is of fundamental importance. She argues that if our understanding of the context of education (the congregation) is flawed, then the way we do education in the church (the process) will also be flawed. Too often, she suggests, we have pragmatically asked, "What works?" with inadequate theological reflection upon the church as the people of God.

"Methods are just expressions of principles," Warren argues (1995, p.70). In other words, how we do things is an expression of what we believe. "We know we need more fundamental changes in the way we think about and do church -- not just in our programs and staffing but also in our very understanding of what this thing called church is supposed to do and be," argue Brown and Larson (1996, p. 14). They suggest that we need to begin thinking about our process and methodologies by reflecting on our understanding of the church.

The church is gathered by God to accomplish his purposes, argues pastor and theologian Kevin Giles (1995). Christ is the head of the church and the Holy Spirit empowers, sustains, and gifts the church. "The church is a special people, a people whom the Spirit is forming into a community," agrees theologian, Stanley Grenz (1996, p.206):

> Christ calls us to build each other up, so that we might all become spiritually mature (Eph. 4:11-14). Mutual edification is crucial to us all. The Christian life is not merely and individuals struggle for perfection. Rather, in an important sense it is a community project. (Grenz, 1996, p. 220)

As a Christian educator, Cannell (1997a) notes that this understanding of the church emphasizes that the church begins with God -- not with pious people. The church is more than a sociological entity but also a spiritual entity. As we reflect on how we educate, then, we need ask ourselves questions like:

- what does it mean for our processes that a congregation is gathered together by God under Christ's authority?
- what does it mean that congregations are called together to fulfill God's purposes in mission?

- if we believe Christ is head of the church, what is the nature and purpose of leadership (including pastoral leadership) in the congregation? To whom are leaders responsible?
- how are process influenced by our conviction that the Holy Spirit actively empowers, sustains, and gifts a congregation?

We also need to reflect on how we can best educate in a community of people who value deep, caring relationships, mutual accountability, and compassionate concern:

- what types of processes best encourage us to seek the mind of God?
- what processes are most helpful in passing faith on, from one generation to the next?
- what processes are helpful to nurture and exercise spiritual gifts?
- what processes will best foster qualities like love, unity, mutual submission, accountability, and forgiveness?
- are people in our congregations developing qualities of character consistent with our theology of congregations as the people of God?

These curricular questions challenge us to reflect on how we educate the people of God as a community of faith.

I found it significant that, in my study, few pastors or lay-people had reflected on these issues.

"Informal ... content and processes"

John Dewey noted, "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment" (1966, p. 19). Formal education does play a critical part in developing and nurturing people. But informal influences are also very formative. This "informal content" and "informal process" educates people about God, about the Christian faith, and about our congregation, also. It is crucial for us to reflect upon.

Informal curriculum includes such varied experiences or engagements as one's feelings entering the church dressed in a particular way, as a member of a particular ethnic group, or with specific personal characteristics (as a single parent, as unemployed, as a senior citizen, as someone with a physical disability). Informal curriculum includes subtle dress or personal appearance standards, assumed familiarity with "religious" vocabulary or liturgy (prayer books, music, creeds, Bibles), acceptance of newcomers, and expectations of members. It includes learning church protocol, developing attitudes toward persons of other faiths, learning to like singing, resisting pressure to engage in specific behaviors, and the way a person relates to pastor and church structures. Informal curriculum often involves unofficial opinion and unexpressed feelings. These feeling or opinions can be real and powerful -- feelings of acceptance or isolation, opinions about right and wrong, truth and error, the sacred and the profane -- and profoundly influence people's faith experience and development.

For instance, when you enter First Church on a Sunday morning, you get a certain feeling. A boutonniere-ed usher hands you bulletin. The large oak-pewed, oak-panelled, stained-glass sanctuary creates atmosphere. So does the pipe organ playing a Buxtehude prelude. So do the well-dressed congregants, sitting quietly, reverently in the sanctuary. When the pastor, dressed in a doctoral gown, comes to the pulpit and begins the service with a traditional call to worship, a mood is set. Unannounced, the people stand on cue for the first hymn, "Crown Him with Many Crowns," from well-worn hymn books with music printed in four-part harmony. The organ overwhelms the voices. Familiar liturgy, unannounced, leads congregants through the service. This church, through its architecture and style of worship is communicating certain things about God, about faith, and about the church.

When you enter Trinity Church, you get a different feeling. A man dressed in a sports shirt greets you at the door and encourages you to get a cup of coffee before the service. You enter a junior high gymnasium and sit on a wooden stacking chair above a rather nasty looking bulldog mascot painted on the floor. A variety of instruments -- most of them electronic -- are tuning up. People are wandering around with cups of coffee talking to one another. The worship leader has a difficult time getting people's

attention to start the music, a Kendrick chorus, with words (no music) projected onto a wall. Part way through the service the same man who met you at the door begins to teach from Scripture (is he the pastor?). Part way through his message, a drama team interjects a short one act play. After more singing, at the close of the service, people are reminded that the congregation is moving to a different school in two weeks. This church, through its meeting place and style of worship is communicating certain things about God, about faith, and about the church, too.

These churches, of course, are dramatically different. But both convey some similar messages. Both value worshipping God. Both value Scripture and biblical teaching. Both emphasize a strong social concern for needy people in the community. Both pastors have a desire to see their people grow in their maturity as Christians.

But there are also clear differences. Trinity Church seemed almost chaotic and fluid; First Church was ordered and solid. At First, traditional worship and liturgy were clearly important. At Trinity, worship was certainly emphasized, but traditions seemed absent; relationships seemed to be emphasized. Neither church is "better." Neither is "right" or "wrong." But through their informal curricula, intentionally or unintentionally, each is making clear statements about who they believe God to be, what they believe Christianity to be, and what they perceive the church to be.

In First church, God is an awe-inspiring, if somewhat distant being. We come in our Sunday best because we believe the King of the Universe deserves due reverence. We relate to Him as humble supplicants, coming meekly before the Almighty King. Christianity is well-ordered through centuries of refinement. We meet God in the creeds, the litanies, and the familiar readings of Sunday service. We live our faith by honoring the commandments, attending church, and being responsible citizens. The church is a building where the very architecture itself speaks of the glory of God; people are almost lost in the sweeping arches, stained-glass saints, and sonorous fugues. We relate to the church as the place whose rituals -- Sunday services and ordinances -- are essential parts of life.

At Trinity, God almost seems like a good friend with whom you might want to have brunch after the service. We come casually dressed because God is part of our everyday world. We relate to God freely. Yes, he is present at worship, but he is also present in our daily routine. Christianity is as much relationships between people in the church as it is a relationship with God. When we do worship God, emotion and experience are as important as order and teaching. We live our faith by experiencing God in our lives, by celebrating with God's people, and by being involved in service and evangelism. The church is clearly this congregation of people. They don't have a building. We relate to the church by being involved with this group of people who may meet in any number of places in the coming months.

Informal curriculum -- both content and process -- is significant because it often goes unexamined. It is simply there. It is the atmosphere that pervades a congregation and, although it may not be carefully planned, it powerfully influences what people think about God, Christian faith and the church. Sometimes the informal curriculum is even more important than the formal curriculum! When people make comments like: "That church is very warm (or cold!)"; "Our church is a family"; "Christians are hypocrites"; "That church has a good reputation in the community"; "Those people are genuine Christians," they are not talking about formal teaching or process. They are talking about atmosphere. They are talking about subtle cues that either say, "This is a congregation who actually live what they teach," or "This is a congregation who may say great things, but prove themselves very differently by their actions." A congregation's reputation in the community may have much more to do with the informal curriculum than the formal teaching. Informal curriculum may be unplanned but it is not unimportant.

Informal curriculum has been emphasized through a Christian education tradition that has proposed "socialization" as a factor in Christian formation. Horace Bushnell, George Albert Coe, C. Ellis Nelson, John Westerhoff, and Maria Harris among others have emphasized an intentional socialization approach to religious education through which the entire Christian community takes an active role in formally and informally teaching and modeling Christian faith. Their concern, however, is that if such an approach is to work, congregations need to be reflective and intentional about both the formal and informal curriculum they present.

C. Ellis Nelson (1971) argues that everything the church does, its role in society and its life together a community of faith, is profoundly educational. He emphasizes that who we are as a faith community -- the quality of our life together -- is our primary curriculum. "The problem ... is that the

process of transmitting a tradition is working too well - it is producing in the rising generation what the adults actually believe!" (Nelson 1971, p. 202). Nelson, for instance, cites church budgets as an important aspect of informal curriculum. Budgets illustrate what really takes priority in a church. As such they are profoundly educational. They reveal the core values and fundamental beliefs of a church.

Westerhoff argues against a "schooling-instructional" paradigm for education in churches in favor of a "community of faith-enculteration" paradigm (1976). Westerhoff urges religious educators not to think of themselves as those who do something to others. He suggests that a dialogue must exist between the educational community and he individual.

These writers note that if official curricula emphasize virtues like love, grace and forgiveness, but the experience of congregants is judgmentalism and long memory, there is confusion. If a church speaks of friendliness and acceptance, but in practice newcomers are not welcomed or an unspoken dress code is in effect, people learn very quickly what the real values of a church are. If a church in a multi-cultural community teaches about the love of God for all people, but the congregation is ethnically homogenous, people learn informally that this church may not, in fact, be open to racial integration.

Two aspects of informal curriculum are critically important. The first is the emotional environment. Do people feel welcome? Is the congregation warm? Do people trust their leaders? Do people come away with a sense of hope?

The second is the physical environment. How do physical arrangements contribute to the goals of the church? Is the church accessible to all?

Some questions pastors may wish to consider about the informal curriculum in their congregations include:

- what is the congregation's reputation in its community? why?
- if visitors were to come to a worship service in the congregation what informal clues would they get about God, about Christian faith, about the church:
    - from the order of service?
    - from the music?
    - from the prayers?
    - from the message?
    - from the building?
    - from the leadership?
- if visitors were to come to a worship service in your congregation, what would be their impression about your emphasis on education? on fellowship? on service ministries? on evangelism?
- how would a man dressed in a suit feel in your church? a man dressed in jeans? a woman in a dress? a woman in shorts?
- how would a person feel in your congregation who is a visible minority? who is physically handicapped?
- if you use age-graded educational classes, what does this imply? if you use inter-generational classes, what does this suggest?
- what do your church structure and decision-making processes (hierarchical? consensual?) suggest?
- what value does your church place on formal membership? what are the implications of this?

Warren examines this last question in the context of his own congregation. He believes strongly that people who attend a church should become members. He insists new members take a membership class. His analysis is interesting because, whether we agree with his insistence upon membership or not, he highlights that the informal curriculum of his membership classes are as important as the formal content.

> I believe the most important class in a church is the membership class because it sets the tone and expectation level for everything else that follows. The very best time to elicit a strong commitment from your members is at the moment they join. If little is required to join, very little can be expected from your members later on. Just as a

> weak membership class will build a weak congregation, a strong membership class will build a strong congregation. (1995, pp. 315-316)

In my research, I was encouraged to discover that the pastors I interviewed were conscious of informal curriculum.

> When people come to this church they get a feeling. Not everyone will like it. But we have taken a deliberate stand: "This is what we do here." It won't work for everyone. But for these who like the order, the litany, it works. We've decided we can't be all things to all people. You have to make a choice.
>
> Some people come and they like what we do. Some people come and they don't. And that's OK. But yes, we have thought about it. This is what believe it means for us to be the people of God, right now.
>
> A building makes a faith statement. So when I designed it, I wanted it to say, "This is what we believe."

Similarly, lay-people in my interviews and study group were concerned that people felt welcome in the church and experienced genuine Christian community. They were concerned that the worship service conveyed a sense of reverence for God. In our discussions we focused on proposed renovations to our building (which needs work). People recognized that the building's appearance did convey messages about who believed God was. One improvement we made was replacing a dilapidated wooden sign (leaning at 15 , badly weathered, with out-dated information) with a new, lighted sign with moveable letters. I shared with the group this entry from my journal.

> I visited O. today. She has come for a month now. She said, "You know I walked by the church every day to get the bus for two years. With the old sign there I thought the church was closed. I was really surprised when the new sign went up." So I decided to check it out.

The members of the group who attended the church in the days before the new sign confessed they had not noticed how unattractive it was. They knew the important information about the church. They had not considered the message the sign was giving the community. As we discussed more improvements they were much more sensitive to the messages the building conveyed.

Curriculum as outcomes

Doll's definition of curriculum emphasizes that curriculum also has outcomes. People are educated. They are changed. Some of these outcomes include gaining knowledge and understanding. Other outcomes include learning skills, attitudes, appreciations, and values.

Formal components of curriculum often have clearly defined objectives regarding outcomes. At the end of a Sunday School lesson a teacher may measure outcomes in terms of biblical knowledge or changed attitudes. After a sermon, a pastor may intend to spark personal reflection or to alter opinions or behaviors. A worship service may intend to help a person genuinely worship and dialogue with God through music, prayers, and readings.

Informal components of curriculum also have outcomes. Persons get a sense of whether or not a church is warm and friendly. People learn attitudes toward people of different social and ethnic groups. Persons learn about how people do (or do not) integrate their faith into their lifestyles by observing leaders and long-time members. They learn about how they can relate to God through the processes leaders model.

In a fascinating look at church affiliation in the United States, Warren Hale (1977) extensively interviewed persons not associated with churches in the five most unchurched counties in the country. Almost inevitably formal curriculum content or processes were not an issue. The unintended consequences of informal curriculum in churches, however, emerge as a critical factors. Recent studies have noted many of the same conclusions (Posterski and Barker, 1993; Bibby, 1995). Where people sense distinctions between churches' teachings and practices, they often choose to be uninvolved.

The Importance of Curriculum

Using this definition, pastors can appreciate that curriculum is much more than a packaged Sunday School lesson. Everything that happens under the auspices of the church, including who the pastor is and what the pastor does, has outcomes in terms of gaining knowledge and understanding, developing skills and altering attitudes, appreciations and values.

This comprehensive understanding is important. The curriculum we use, the formal and informal content and process we provide, defines the opportunities people will have to learn and grow (Eisner, 1993, p. 6). Thus in a church context if pastors choose to use a limited number of processes to teach (for instance sermons or lecture-style classes), they may not be effectively teaching a portion of their congregation who may not learn well using that teaching method. If a congregation chooses a particular approach to worship services, they may be limiting the opportunity for others to engage in meaningful worship. In terms of content, if certain themes are emphasized while others are ignored, congregants will have limited opportunities to grow in all dimensions of heir faith maturity. This definition also highlights the importance of the rites and rituals which churches use. Eisner (1993) highlights how powerful these images can be, communicating messages which text alone struggles to convey.

A final implication of this definition of curriculum is that curriculum may be improved, both in its formal and informal aspects, if it is examined. That which is formally planned and observable can be evaluated and improved. Reflection and investigation can also help reveal informal aspects of church experiences which may be improved.

The problem of curriculum, Annabelle Nelson suggests, is that "teachers experience curriculum as the textbooks which appear in their room." The same is typically true of churches. In educational ministries, "curriculum" used in traditionally defined educational ministries usually come pre-packaged. In other areas of ministry, pastors often rely upon their educational preparation and an array of programs and resources to shape their leadership and teaching. Nelson's concern is to "empower teachers with specific curriculum design techniques, so that teachers, instead of textbooks, control the curriculum" (1990, p. 1). My concern is similar. We need to empower pastors with specific design techniques, so that we control the curriculum within our churches. I believe this requires us to discuss more than techniques, however. As pastors we also need to radically reorient our thinking so we see ourselves as pastor-educators who take education seriously and also take seriously our responsibility to reflect upon and be active in shaping the curriculum in our churches.

Moving forward ...

In this chapter I discussed the concept of curriculum as a tool for pastors to appreciate educational potential and possibilities in their churches and ministries. The concept of curriculum, broadly defined, may be a helpful concept upon which pastors might reflect. The concept encourages us to appreciate the educational possibilities and potentialities in the rhythms of congregational life and pastoral ministry. I conclude by asserting that pastors need to take an active role to ensure that the curriculum -- formal and informal -- in their churches contributes toward building community and Christian maturity.

One approach I have found helpful for me, as a pastor, to be active in the shaping of curriculum in my church builds upon a "praxis" approach to ministry. In the next chapter I will introduce "praxis" as a concept that allows pastors to be actively involved in creating curriculum and creatively shaping education in their churches. This will be followed by a discussion of action research which is one helpful way of integrating "praxis" into the actual practice of pastoral ministry.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Praxis In Practice

Resources to help pastors and churches minister effectively are more prevalent and more widespread now than ever before. For formal educational ministries in churches, publishing companies offer an overwhelming array of materials that specify learning objectives, develop and organize subject matter content and activities, and provide means of evaluating whether learners achieve objectives. They outline specific step-by-step directions for how people ought to implement each aspect of the program. But will they work in my congregation? How can I know?

In Chapter Seven I discussed the concept of curriculum as a tool for pastors to appreciate educational potential and possibilities in their churches and ministries. I concluded by asserting that pastors need to take an active role to ensure that the curriculum -- formal and informal -- in their churches contributes toward building community and Christian maturity. Taking "control" of the formal and informal curriculum in our churches is not an easy task. In the past three chapters I have attempted to make us more aware, as pastors, of the educational possibilities and potential in our churches. I have tried to encourage us, as pastors, to shift from thinking that education is the communication of formal content to conceptualizing education and curriculum as the total experience -- formal and informal -- that people in our churches.

In this chapter and the next chapter I will introduce approaches I have found helpful to shape the curriculum in my church. These approaches build on a "praxis" approach to ministry. This approach allows us to consider how our congregations are growing in their knowledge and understandings well as their skills, attitudes, appreciations, and values and to be proactive in helping them grow in their faith maturity.

We may be very aware of the educational possibilities of our ministries. But often our approaches and ideas about worship, preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and leadership have been delimited by our seminary education, our denominational affiliation, the role models we have experienced, the books we have read, or the examples of effective ministries elsewhere. We are not sure where to start to see other possibilities. We do not know where to turn for new ideas. We wonder whether what works elsewhere will work in our context. We are unsure how to proceed in a way that can work with our congregation and in our situation. And we are unsure how we fit as pastors in the process of change and growth that might occur.

Or, we may be confident we have great ideas about what we think will help people grow in their faith. But our congregations seem apathetic. We think we have a new approach that will excite people about growing in their faith. But the response is lukewarm, at best. We struggle to understand what went wrong. We wonder how we could make things better. A praxis approach, I suggest, helps us work through answers to these sorts of questions.

Working with People

John Dewey, early in the twentieth century, advocated a student-centered approach to education which suggested that students (particularly children) see the world differently from adults. He reacted against what he perceived to be a "spectator theory of knowledge" to argue for an active/reflective way of knowing that arises from lived experience.[1] For Dewey, it followed that instruction would be most effective if it could respond to student's experiences and interests rather than conform to the way adults viewed the world. In practical terms this implied that a teacher ought to watch students carefully, see which activities seemed to interest students most, and plan further learning experiences making use of those activities.

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[1]On this point Dewey is consistent with a strong educational tradition including Locke, Rousseau, Froebel, and Piaget.

Many of Dewey's ideas have become so much a part of our educational system we do not even recognize them. For instance we acknowledge the value of field trips as an effective educational strategy. We assume the value of having students learn from experts involved in a particular occupation or activity.

A common theme among curriculum theorists builds on this emphasis upon experience. They argue that curriculum is created collaboratively. In the school setting this is taken to mean administrators and teachers need to work collegially (Barth, 1990). In a church setting this would imply that pastors need to have "collegial" relationships with their congregations.

What does it mean for pastors to work "collegially" with persons in their congregations? I suggest it may mean a practical reorientation of our understanding of the relationship between pastor and people. In practice, ministry can become something pastors do "to" people in their congregations or communities. We coordinate worship services <u>for</u> the church, knowing what people need. We preach or teach <u>at</u> people, what we believe they need to know. We provide leadership <u>for</u> the church, setting the agenda and direction in ways we assume is best.

Thinking collegially encourages us to minister "with" people. Members of a congregation are viewed as subjects, not objects. We see ourselves as working in dialogue and cooperation with our congregants as we shape worship, teaching opportunities, direction and structures for the church. Theologically this develops the theme of the "priesthood of all believers." Writers about the church emphasize that the New Testament model of ministry is one of leaders and congregants working together. Individuals have unique gifts and abilities that complement one another (Griffiths, 1975; Watson, 1978; Giles, 1989, 1995). These writers encourage pastors to create a congregational community where other people are actively involved with pastors in the ministry of their church (Woods 1996).

Working collegially with persons in a congregation challenges traditional models of leadership. Writers have critiqued common approaches to pastoral ministry in which the pastor was perceived as boss, chief executive officer, charismatic inspirer, even enabler within the congregation (Callahan, 1990). These models encourage pastors to view themselves as experts doing ministry <u>to</u> others. Instead these writers propose a variety of models with a common theme -- pastors and congregations working together in ministry. Callahan emphasizes that pastors certainly are leaders in their congregations, but they are not the only leaders. There are many potential leaders with whom the pastor needs to work and to empower. Leith Anderson (1990) emphasizes that pastoral leaders have to work with their congregations to make the changes that are necessary in coming decades. Jeff Woods (1994, 1996) argues that in a changing social and congregational culture, leaders will only be able to lead as they work with people rather than ministering to them.

Loren Mead (1991) reflects on this changing nature of ministry and some of the challenges that are associated with it. He comments on previous models in which pastors ministered to their congregations:

> The overwhelming majority of lay people in congregations 30 years ago understood what was expected of them. One of my senior wardens put it to me this way about thirty-five years ago: "My job is to back you up. Make sure the parish budget is raised and balanced. Make sure we're doing our part for the diocese and the mission program. Beyond that - my job is to keep my nose clean, pay my taxes, do my job, not run around, keep the booze under control, and support the governor and the president, especially if he's a Democrat!" Simple. Clear. (1991, p. 35)

Mead notes that as lay people have increasingly wanted to be involved in ministry and pastors have tried to begin to think collegially, lay people and pastors are struggling to redefine ministry and leadership within the church. The roles of "pastor" and "lay-person" are being reshaped. Mead is concerned that there are a variety of mixed messages and inconsistencies as this process occurs. What is <u>said</u> at church often undergirds principles of collegiality -- the priesthood of all believers and new models of leadership -- but what is actually <u>done</u> is often the same as what was done in previous decades. For instance:

> The rhetoric from the pulpit urges engagement with the world and defines one's "real" ministry as job, community life, family, etc., all of which take place <u>outside</u> the

> church. Yet the bulletin, the parish organization, the pastor, and staff urge and reward engagement with parish activities. Ministry outside the church is rarely recognized and never rewarded. Ministry inside is recognized and rewarded. The pastoral calling that is done is generally done in homes, not in the workplace. (1991, p. 35)

Mead notes that people are still asked to do things in the church because of the congregation's organizational needs rather than out of concern to utilize a person's abilities or gifts. The problem, Mead contends, is that despite calls for lay-people and pastors to minister collegially, "neither clergy nor laity are clear what that means" (1991, p. 36).

Mead's comments bring into focus several of the issues discussed in the previous chapter. The formal curriculum (what is taught) and the informal curriculum (what actually happens) can be inconsistent. The results for both pastors and lay-people may be confusion, frustration, and pain as people try to sort out what their real role is.

According to Mead, this confusion must be addressed. In the past, pastors were assumed to play the primary role in mission and ministry. In the emerging church, he believes, the laity are the primary ones who will provide ministry and mission. "Many clergy feel displaced and have difficulty accepting the new lay authority ..." he notes. "No one faces a greater change in the future church than clergy." (1991, p. 53). We need pastors, he argues, "who can support the ministry of others and train them, rather than act out of a need to control their ministries" (1991, pp. 53-54). Callahan (1990) and Woods (1996) agree that new, collegial forms of ministry need to emerge.

Philosophers, educators, and theologians have wrestled with what collegial education and ministry might look like. One of the terms that is commonly used is "praxis." The English word "practice" commonly means "putting theory into practice." It presents a dichotomy of theory and practice. We have a sense of what we ought to do and we try to do it. "Praxis" holds theory and practice in creative tension. As we minister our practice is influenced by theory, and our theory is modified by our practice. The two are inter-related and inter-dependent. Instead of theory leading to practice, theory and practice are inter-connected in a reflective process through which a pastor critically reflects upon theory and practice on an ongoing basis.

Praxis means that a formal curriculum, for instance, is "not simply a set of plans to be implemented, but rather is constituted through an active process in which planning, acting and evaluating are all reciprocally related and integrated into the process" (Grundy, 1987, p. 115). Thus a pastor may develop a plan for his church's worship, preaching, and programs for the coming year. If the pastor is determined to put his plan into practice without any allowance for ongoing evaluation and alteration, he would be providing leadership in a traditional managerial sense. But a pastor endeavoring to work collegially, to minister through praxis, would involve lay-people in creating the plan and in an ongoing process of evaluating and reformulating plans. Grundy argues that meaningful learning experiences can only occur within actual learning situations with actual people. Curriculum -- formal or informal, content or process -- is best seen as a social construct developed through the dynamic interaction of action and reflection.

One theme of a praxis approach is that members of a congregation are active participants. Members of a congregation are not passive recipients of expert ministry. They are actively involved in shaping the congregation. Congregants insights and knowledge are valued. Grundy, drawing on Paulo Freire, argues that curriculum ought to emerge from problems faced in the real world of lived experience. Thus congregants' experiences, needs, concerns, and present faith development are highly valued in the development of informal and formal educational experiences.

The pastor's role in leadership, then, would be as "first among equals." Doll uses this phrase of an educator's relationship to learners (1993, p. 167). Significantly, it is also a phrase used in pastoral theology to discuss the role of the pastor within a church (Richards and Hoelddtke, 1981; Tidball 1986). This phrase recognizes the pastor's unique gifts, education, and experience, but also values the gifts, education, and experience of congregants as well. Pastors work with people.

Shared Christian Praxis

Thomas Groome has extensively developed this concept of praxis as it might work in a Christian context. Groome reviews biblical and theological principles of the nature of Christian community and Christian education. He reflects on the approaches various Christian educators have developed based on these themes. Groome insists that Christian education must embody a strong sense of community in which we learn and grow in faith together. He argues that faith must be integrated into personal and corporate lived experience through reflection and discussion. Christian education should promote cooperative learning that integrates faith and lived experience. He concludes:

> The nature, purpose, and context of Christian religious education calls for a way of knowing that can hold past, present, and future in a fruitful tension, that fosters free and freeing lived Christian faith, that promotes a creative relationship with a Christian community and of that community with the world. To this we can ... add the biblical understanding of knowing the Lord points to a way of knowing that is experiential/relational and active/reflective even as lived experience is informed by the biblical message....
>
> Given the kind of knowing that Christian education should promote, I claim that a praxis way of knowing is most capable of meeting the task. It is a relational, reflective, and experiential way of knowing in which by critical reflection on lived experience people discover and name their own story and vision and, in a Christian education context, the Story and Vision of the Christian community. It thus combines the knowing which arises from present lived experience with what was known by Christians here before us. Since a praxis way of knowing always has the purpose of promoting further praxis. the knowing which arises from a reflective/experiential encounter with the Christian Story and Vision seems capable, by God's grace, of sponsoring people toward intentionally lived Christian faith. (1980, p. 149)

Groome proposes a comprehensive approach to Christian religious education which he calls "shared Christian praxis." Although his model is particularly cast in the context of Christian or religious education, if we see education as fundamental to all aspects of congregational life, this approach merits serious reflection by pastor-educators.

Groome defines a shared praxis approach as "a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith" (1980, p. 184). This approach, he notes, emphasizes and appreciates the importance of the Christian community and relationships among the people of God. It insists upon critical reflection on the Christian Story and Vision (serious study of biblical and historic Christian understandings). And it respects the individual experiences and understandings people bring to their faith development. Through discussion and interaction, pastors and people can learn together how the biblical text speaks to their contexts and life situations. And they are challenged to integrate those truths into their lived experience.

This shared praxis approach values Christian community, recognizing the educative role and ministry of all believers. This approach appreciates that mature faith is not a destination at which a person arrives, but is a journey or pilgrimage by which we learn together how our faith relates to new life experiences. And this concept also recognizes that biblical Christian faith needs to be integrated into our lived experience.

Groome recognizes five main components to this shared praxis approach:

Present action refers, in essence, the totality of who we are right now. It refers to everything we do that is intentional or deliberate, including what we do physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. It includes a past component (the experiences, beliefs, and actions that have helped shaped us), and a future component (our hopes, plans, and visions for who we want to be). His concern is that we recognize that each of us comes to our faith journey as unique people, shaped by the events, experiences

and influences of our lives, with ideas and expectations for who we want to be. "By reflecting on present action," Groome suggests, "we can uncover the 'pasts' that have brought us to such (our current) action, and raise to consciousness the 'futures' in that action by becoming aware of its likely or intended consequences" (1980, p. 185). Groome reminds pastor-educators that we need to recognize that the subjects with whom we work are complex individuals who need to work through what biblical teaching means in their unique situation.

Critical reflection is an activity through which persons attempt to understand present actions, who they are at the present time. By "critical" he does not mean negative criticism that finds only what is wrong. Rather "critical" reflection affirms what is good and true in present action, recognizes problems and limitations, and attempts to move beyond them. "Thus a critical reflection, far from being an exercise in debilitating negativism, is a positive creative activity" (Groome, 1980, p. 188). The purpose of critical reflection is to help us understand our present action so we can move forward in faith development.

Groome suggests there are three aspects of this. First, we can use **critical reason** to evaluate the present, to appreciate who and where we are at the current moment. Much of who we are we passively accept without consciously trying to understand it:

> Very often the obvious is so much part of our given world that it is "taken" for granted and either no longer noticed or seen as inevitable. Critical reflection, then, is first an attempt to notice the obvious, to critically apprehend it rather than passively accept it as "just the way things are." That's why (Paulo) Freire, the most notable proponent of a praxis approach to education, often refers to himself as "a vagabond of the obvious." (1980, p. 185)

Groome suggests that simply understanding who and where we are at the present moment is only the beginning. The next stage is to try to understand the influences, ideologies, and processes that have shaped us.

Critical memory, Groome proposes, can help us uncover the past in the present. In order to understand why we are the way we are, he argues we need to recognize the assumptions, values, and ideologies that shape us.

> A critically remembered past can be a basis from which to choose the present and its future. A "forgotten" past, on the other hand, holds unconscious sway over the present and thus limits our freedom in shaping the future. Remembering is not only a looking backward to the personal and social biographies of individual and community. It also requires looking outward, a re-membering of our present action with the source of that action in its present social context. It is becoming aware of the world of which we are members and how that membership shapes our present action. (1980, p. 186).

Critical memory, then, helps us discover the personal and social influences on our present action.

The purpose for our critical reason and critical memory is to allow us to use **creative imagination to envision the future in the present.** Groome suggests that, as Christians who believe in God and who are inspired by hope, we need to be inspired by imagination, creativity and freedom for the future:

> When education is understood as an activity of "leading out," the role of imagination seems even more obvious. The future thrust, essential to all education, demands imagination. But so much of our educational efforts stifle the imagination of the participants, telling them what to think and how to think it. So often what is authentic imaginative activity is dismissed as idle day dreaming or as naive idealism. We tell our students to "grow up," and by that we often mean "join our world and settle for it." But Jesus did not tell us to grow up. He told us, instead, that unless we become

> like little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of God (see Mark 10:15). Little children are still capable of discovery, fantasy, and openness to what is not yet. The invitation of Jesus to become as children is, among other things, an invitation to imagination, creativity, and freedom. (1980, p. 187)

Groome's concern is that we see the consequences and possibilities of our present Christian understandings and faith development.

The third component of a shared praxis approach is dialogue. Groome argues that dialogue, the sharing of our present action (who we are) and our critical reflection (the values, ideologies, and assumptions that shape us and our visions for the future) are essential aspects of Christian community building. Dialogue is a process through which two or more persons share and hear their reflective stories and visions, particularly as their lives relate to Christian faith. He emphasizes dialogue does not mean that participants talk back and forth "at" each other. Rather, authentic dialogue involves listening.

> So often when people say they are ready to dialogue, they mean that they are ready to talk. But dialogue involves listening as much as telling. It must, however, be a listening that attempts to hear with the heart what the other person is attempting to communicate. Much more that the mere words or gestures of the other person must be "heard." ... When dialogue involves authentic expressing/listening activity, then the consequences are both disclosure and discovery for the people involved. By listening to others disclose themselves to me, I can help them discover themselves. And in disclosing myself to others, I can discover myself. If the dialogue is an expressing/hearing of our reflective stories and visions, then there is in it for everyone the possibility of discovering much more than we set out to disclose. (1980, p. 189)

Groome notes that in a Christian community, dialogue can go far beyond sharing between individuals in an atmosphere of trust, humility and confidence. In a Christian community, dialogue also occurs between individuals and God as we reflect upon and share our Christian beliefs and experiences.

The Story to which Groome refers is the story of God's revelation in Scripture, plus the faith traditions which express that. Thus he acknowledges that the essential truth with which need to interact is the Bible and the God who inspired it. God is still very active in our world and our lives, requiring us to be continually reflecting upon our faith development and our biblical understanding of our circumstances. "Now the crucified and risen Jesus Christ stands as God's unbreakable promise that God is always with us," writes Groome, "continuing to make God's will known, inviting and empowering us ... God is still active in our history, and we are constantly called upon to respond and participate in that activity." (1980, pp. 192-3).

Groome also recognizes that all of us have been shaped by a Christian tradition, too. Whether through our families or church experiences, our understanding of Christian faith has been shaped by others. The curriculum of our Christian traditions, formal and informal, has shaped our understanding of faith.

The Vision, for Groome, is the Kingdom of God, God's vision for creation.

> I intend the metaphor Vision to be a comprehensive representation of the lived response which the Christian Story invites and of the promise God makes in that Story.... From us it invites a lived response that is faithful to the reign of God. As we respond we help to make the Kingdom of God present already. Meanwhile, God's promise of the completed Kingdom comes to us as a sure hope. Thus the call and hope through which we are to live our lives is the Vision of God's Kingdom. (1980, p. 193).

The Vision and the Story are intimately connected. "The Vision is our response to and God's promise in the Story, and the Story is the unfolding of the Vision" (1980, p. 193). These two aspects of Christian faith find expression, albeit imperfectly, in lived Christian community. He suggests that within the Christian community, through dialogue, we grow in our understanding and faith development as we interact with other Christians. He suggests, "within the community, and in a context of intentional religious education, the educator has the responsibility of ensuring that the Story is encountered and its Vision proposed" (1980, p. 193). I would suggest that, within the many facets and ministries of a congregation's life together, the pastor-educator has the responsibility of ensuring the Story is encountered and the Vision proposed.

In practical terms, Groome sees five "movements" in a shared Christian praxis approach. While he considers these in the particular context of religious education, they may be broadened to relate to a variety of congregational possibilities for education, from worship services to counseling sessions, from sermons to leadership activities:

1. Present action. The participants are invited to "name their present action" in response to a topic. People are encouraged to think about what a topic means for them at the present time. For example, in a class context, people may be asked, "What does communion mean in your life?" Homiletics texts encourage pastors to engage their congregants in the sermon by making connections with their lived experiences (Garrison, 1954; Perry and Sell, 1983; Buttrick, 1989; Miller, 1995). Worship, while focused on God, also needs to relate in form and content to the world of the worshippers (Warren, 1995). In a board or committee meeting, members may be encouraged to reflect on what the church means to them at this moment.

2. Critical reflection. People are invited to reflect on why they do what they do or why they believe what they believe, and what the consequences of their beliefs might be. For example, in a class a teacher might ask, "How did you feel at your first Communion? How has the meaning of Communion for you changed since then? What role do you want Communion to play in your life?" Through a sermon, a pastor may challenge congregants to understand their current values, opinions and knowledge and the consequences of their beliefs. In worship, congregants may be encouraged to reflect on their faith development and consider how they want to grow. In a meeting, board or committee members may be encouraged to share their ideas and feelings about the church, reflect on why they think as they do, and to consider the possible outcomes of their understandings for the community.

3. Story and Vision. The leader makes present to the group the Christian Story concerning the topic and the faith response it invites. For example, in the class on communion, the teacher can explore biblical teaching and traditional understandings of what communion means and the role it can have in our lives. Through a sermon, a pastor can share biblical insights on an issue and explore the implications of these truths for persons' lived experiences. In worship, a leader can help worshippers understand worship more fully through formal instruction or through example, and help congregants apply these concepts to their lives. In a meeting, a leader can instruct members about the nature of the church and help them discover the practical implications of biblical and traditional principles for their decision-making process.

4. Dialectic between Story and stories. Participants are invited to appropriate the Christian Story to their lives in a dialectic with their own personal stories. For example the teacher may ask, "If you lie in bed tonight and think about what we talked about communion (mass/Eucharist) today, what will you remember most? How is your understanding of communion different because of our discussion?" At the conclusion of the sermon, the pastor may invite congregants to reflect on how their understandings, assumptions, or attitudes have been challenged. In the context of worship, the leader may encourage participants to see God in a new light and have a deeper appreciation of worship. In the meeting, the leader may help members answer questions like, "How does this understanding of the church change how you see our congregation? How does it affect our decision-making? How do you understand your role in the congregation?"

5. Dialectic between Vision and visions. There is an opportunity to choose a personal faith response for the future. In the class, the teacher may ask, "During the next communion service, how can you make it more meaningful?" The pastor may provide specific challenges to people to apply their new understanding to their lives in a way that will change their lived experience. Through worship, the leader may help worshippers explore ways to broaden their understandings of the nature and purpose of private worship in their lives. In the meeting, the leader may encourage participants to wrestle with how they can embody principles associated with a renewed understanding of biblical concepts of being "the people of God."

Pastoral Praxis

The pastor-educator's role in this model of shared Christian praxis is not as "expert," but as facilitator of a process. It is the pastor-educator who can help people reflect on their present action and understand their personal stories and visions. The pastor-educator can bring biblical and theological understandings (Story and Vision) to light. And the pastor-educator can then provide an invitation and opportunity for people to explore how Christian faith speaks to their circumstances. The pastor-educator can encourage people to make a personal faith response.

I have tried consciously to use Groome's concept of shared Christian praxis in my own ministry. As I have designed worship services, prepared sermons, taught classes, counseled with individuals, and worked with boards and committees I have played with these ideas. I have not held slavishly to a Groome's five movements. A structured "five-step" approach is imply not practical in many church contexts. However the issues he raises have encouraged me to be sensitive to individuals, their unique faith journeys, their different life experiences, their disparate church experiences, and their varied biblical knowledge and understandings. I have been sensitive that I need to help these unique people encounter and experience the eternal God in personally relevant and meaningful ways. My observations have included:

I have appreciated the "shared" nature of this approach. What a praxis approach emphasizes is that the experiences, hopes, and dreams of all persons are worthwhile. It values the insights of all participants. I have found that others have appreciated the opportunity to be genuinely heard. I have noted that sometimes the experiences of other group members have been particularly helpful and instructive to other members in the group. I have found that I have become a co-learner as well as a leader in the congregation. This approach has helped our congregation grow as a community where we (including myself) can learn from one another and grow in our faith together. I have been challenged to involve lay persons more in many aspects of the church life.

In my interviews, the increasing nature of "shared" ministry and "shared" leadership was very evident.

> To be a pastor, really, it does involve leadership, but not leadership over and above; it's leadership among and with ... My role becomes more an emphasis on partnership, planning, and decision-making together, sharing leadership ... I guess I would describe it as being disciples together. If we want something to happen we need to be willing, whether we're clergy or lay, to put the energy in to make that happen. And that it's not all to be -- all the responsibility isn't to be placed on "the clergy person." I think there is an opening up now. And as long as pastors can move to the position where they really do espouse and take advantage of the gift of shared leadership some great things will happen. Because I think churches now are much more mission-oriented, and I think that there is a deep spiritual hunger out in the world that needs to be met - not with prescription or proscription, but with a sense of exploring together. So I guess it will be a continuing sense of openness, partnership and sharing in leadership rather than being "the leaders."

> When I came out (of college) there was a very authoritarian role (for pastors) that was kind of there. And over the past years I think that has dropped away. One of the most effective pastors I ever saw ... was a guy that was a fumbling bumbler. He had the most successful congregation of ones I'd seen in a long time and so I said, "How can this be? He bumbles. He fumbles. He can't keep a schedule. He doesn't know where he is at." What he did is he relied on the people and he confessed his faults to the people. The congregation was strong because they were making up for his weaknesses. And he allowed them to do it. And I came to realize, "Yeah, I guess if I allow people to be who they are this can be the strongest organization alive. But if I just allow them to be what I want them be it's going to be an autocratic, no good organization."

Second, I have appreciated the intentionality of Groome's approach. As I discussed above, I have not allowed the five "movements" to become a straightjacket. "There is nothing sacred about the number five," Groome comments, "and other educators may find it helpful to adjust, combine, or increase the movements" (1980, p. 208). This approach has encouraged me, however, to ensure I authentically listen to members of my congregation. It has challenged me to present biblical and theological truth clearly and relevantly. And it has made me more intentional in providing opportunity for personal response.

Third, shared Christian praxis has changed the way I approach ministry. Through my seminary education and the early years of my ministry, consciously or subconsciously, I felt that, as pastor, I had to be the key resource person for the church. I would be the visionary leader who would create an overall plan and design the specific components. I would be the one to whom, if anyone had a problem, they could come. I would be the only one who could do certain tasks: preaching, leading communion, counseling, and visiting those who were ill. Shared Christian praxis has helped me appreciate more clearly the ministry of all believers in the congregation.

The pastors I interviewed echoed the same sentiments. As in the comments cited above, these pastors increasingly recognized the importance of working with lay persons. When I asked pastors to identify how pastoral ministry changed in recent years, all commented on an emerging, new pastor-laity relationship:

> I think pastoral ministry has changed a lot. I think it's been the empowerment of the laity. And it most fascinating to me to look at my colleagues who are perhaps a generation before me in theological colleges who see this as a threat and a demeaning of their position in the community and in the church. I see it as a triumph. I think that it empowers the church so that pastoral ministry is now much more partnership and the leadership that is involved in partnership -- which I think is exciting. That's where the church ought to be heading.

One pastor commented on how he perceived his approach to lay ministry in contrast with other models he saw in his denomination:

> We've got a lot, right now, of second-career pastors, and I think that's detrimental to us in many respects, because they have set ideas on what they think ministry is all about. They come out of business, and they -- sometimes -- I see a lot of them coming out and they're a lot more authoritarian and power conscious than they should be. They have seen the clergy in a certain role and they gravitate toward that role and its probably wrong ...
>
> There's an old traditional German model of the "Herr Pastor" - you know, "Vat shall ve do, Pastor?" But that -- no. I think it's working together, working as a team. But in our churches we're not good at building teams right now. That's what I want to do. That's my style. And I want us all to act like a team, to feel like a team, to feel like a

> family. But we don't graduate anyone out of seminary with a sense of building a team. We graduate people out of seminary as Lone Rangers who have answers.

I asked this pastor if he believed the difficulties these colleagues were facing were caused by expectations from lay persons or by models or ideas held by the pastors themselves. The pastor answered:

> The problem is with clergy. Absolutely. If we could get rid of all of the clergy in our church we would probably have a pretty good church. The problem is with the pastors. Probably it's self-defense. To give benefit of the doubt and to give credit to the best instruction and everything. People don't do that because they want to, inherently. They do that because they're scared. Pastors are scared. What happens if ... You know. They're scared.

As Loren Mead reflects on coming changes within congregations, he argues that pastors must develop a praxis approach to ministry which values lay leadership and lay involvement. He argues that in most churches a strong "clericalism" exists in which pastors have inordinate influence in decision-making. Even in congregationally-led churches, Mead argues that denominational structures (which encourage clergy to attend meetings annually while lay representatives may rotate) and church board structures (where board/committee members are routinely rotated) contribute to weak lay leadership and substantial power for pastors (1994, pp. 94-100).

Pastors, Mead argues, have to become facilitators of lay leadership. Rather than acting out of a need to control their ministries or to secure their own positions, pastors need to be able to support the ministry of lay people and equip lay persons to be actively involved in ministry. Pastors have to be flexible and creative managers, coping with change (Mead 1991, p. 54). This necessitates a deeper appreciation of a congregation as a Christian community. This requires us as pastors radically to reevaluate how we lead our congregations. We are encouraged to think about our praxis as well as our practice.

Moving forward ...

One pastor commented:

> If I'm going to continue doing what I'm doing in a church that is growing and developing, I have to become far better at transferring the gifts and skills that I have to other people. And I have to become -- the hard part for me -- is to do less and less of things that I like -- that I do well -- that are there. I have been stretched, challenged, and hurt by a statement that states (if I remember it) that to the ability to which I can release ministry to others, to that level I have helped people grow. In other words if I can't do that, then I'm not going to help them. I become in the way.

This pastor, like each of those I interviewed, discovered that praxis -- shared leadership -- was essential. But praxis, in practice, is also challenging. The role of pastor, in particular, may be redefined. It may change.

The next chapter considers how we can actually incorporate shared Christian praxis into our ministries through "action research." Action research encourages pastors to reflect, collaboratively with their congregations, on the educational development of individuals and the congregation. It will also suggest how pastors can develop an essential, meaningful role within their congregations.

CHAPTER NINE

Research and Pastor-educators[1]

How do pastors practice praxis? How can a cooperative approach to ministry bring about real spiritual development and movement toward faith maturity in a congregation? In this chapter I will explore "action research" as one practical approach to ministry which may help pastors incorporate a shared Christian praxis approach into their work. Action research is simply one strategy pastors may choose to employ as the seek to incorporate an educational vision into their ministry. I have appreciated action research as a framework through which I am able to shape, in cooperative dialogue with my congregation, an exciting role for myself as a creative change agent within my church.

Earlier I suggested that educational potential is latent in the myriad of questions, issues, concerns, and problems dealing with children, youth, adults, curriculum, and resources which pastors deal with on an ongoing basis. Sometimes our ways of dealing with these challenges appear to be successful and we feel satisfied we have improved our ministry. Other times, the difficulties seem overwhelming. Problems seem monumental; issues seem so complicated; questions seem unanswerable.

Action research is an approach to ministry which encourages me to plan, act, observe, and reflect as part of a collaborative cycle. Its goal is explicitly to improve my practices, in collaboration with people in my church. Action research is an approach that explicitly seeks to enact the "praxis" approach described in the previous chapter. As pastor, I am facilitator of a collaborative process that endeavors to improve the ministries of the congregation.

Action Research as "Research in Action"

"Research" is not a popular word among many pastors! It evokes images of long questionnaires which few of us have time to complete. Skeptics among us think of piles of data with little value except as "scientific" proof texts for a colleague's degree program. Research implies theory (often simplified) we often consider irrelevant to the daily (very complex) lived relationships and practice of pastoral ministry.

But we can think of research in other ways. As pastors we conduct "research" all the time. As we plan our programs we reflect (through critical reflection and prayer) upon the educational and spiritual needs of our congregants -- research. We study to prepare our materials -- research. If we have concerns about specific people in our congregations, we try to discover underlying problems -- research. In coordinating and leading various ministries we read and discuss the ideas and experiences of others -- research. It is easy to think of innumerable other examples of "on-the-job" research in everyday practice. We are researchers. We have to be. It is an essential part of our role.

And, of course, as pastors we are in "action" all the time. Our lives are filled with action -- action with congregants, action with colleagues, action with members of the broader community. Our "action," however often becomes predictably routine. As we gain experience in ministry we may fall into patterns of doing things that are simply "habits." We may find it easy to do things in a certain way just because that is how we have always done them. We may critically reflect on our actions and reflect upon creative possibilities for new ways of doing things only once in a long while. It so easy to keep things the same. We may not be completely satisfied with things as they are. We may resent feeling "trapped" by tradition. But change is even more uncomfortable. The risks seems too large. The "status quo" seems the path of least resistance.

Action research has the potential to expand our possibilities, to escape the straight-jacket of the "status quo." Action research intentionally challenges us to integrate our research with our action, to bring theory and practice together.

In actual practice this does not mean that we simply employ a research methodology (like surveys, questionnaires, etc.), but rather that we approach our role with an attitude of reflection, with a

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[1] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in Religious education.

commitment to action (trying new things), with a willingness to observe and analyze results, and with a desire to continue planning and trying again. It is a commitment to continual improvement of our churches and our own personal practice. And, through action research we can become creative change agents in our churches and our communities.

What is "Action Research?"

"Action research" was developed in the 1940's by Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist concerned about the "theory-practice gap" that appeared to exist between theories about society and actual social practices. Lewin's concern was to "democratize" decision-making for change by involving factory workers in decision-making (Lewin, 1946). In education, action research was proposed as an approach by which teachers could improve their own practices by becoming researchers in their own classrooms. Early on, action research gave rise to a "teacher as researcher" movement, advocated by (among others) Stephen Corey, dean of Columbia University Teachers College (Corey, 1953). More recently, action research has become popular among critical theorists who see possibilities for social action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

Action research, as Lewin described it, does insist upon action: "There could be no research without action, and no action without research" (in Sumara and Carson, 1997, vii). Action research explicitly links theory and practice. Action researchers insist that theory provide specific, practical plans which can be implemented, and demand that action be critically reflected upon from theoretical perspectives. As a methodology for practitioners, then, this approach requires us to be continually reading and reflecting on theoretical frameworks and to be critically aware of our professional practice. Action research is seen as a continuing program of change and reform. Action research is also seen as intentionally collaborative. Researchers are encouraged to dialogue with others about theoretical and practical issues.

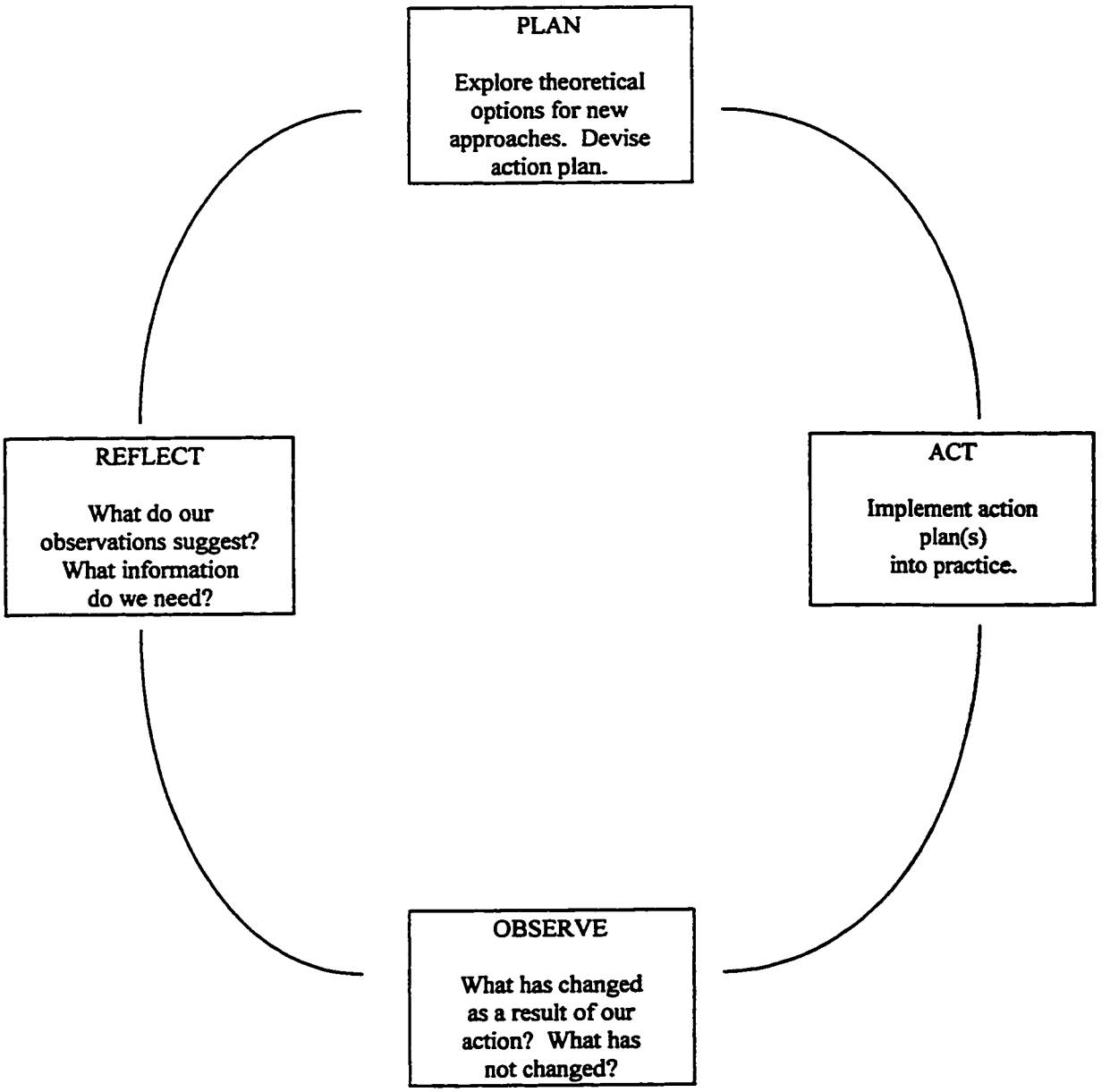
In a congregational context, action research can be envisioned as a similar cycle in which a practitioner (a pastor like myself, for instance) is encouraged to read widely and think theoretically about issues, such as educational concerns, in the congregation. I am also urged to observe carefully and reflect critically upon the educational practices and activities in my congregational context. I am encouraged to involve others in reflecting -- both upon theory and our practice. Then we would, collaboratively, attempt to bring theory and practice together. Drawing upon our theoretical knowledge, and our observations and reflections, we would dialogue, collaboratively devise a plan, implement it, and observe the results. We would then revise our plan, implement the revisions, and observe again. We would engage in a continual cycle of intentional change and reform which might be expected to improve our educational ministry as we integrate new theoretical ideas and as we adapt to a changing context.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) define action research as a cycle or spiral involving four phases. Contextualized to a church setting, these would be:

Planning - Pastors and staff/congregants/lay leaders/colleagues/community members observe "what are" the realities of their situation and begin to ask "what ought to be?"
Acting - pastors and co-participants implement a plan they have developed.
Observing - as they act, the participants carefully observe and collect data.
Reflecting - the participants systematically reflect upon what is happening, develop revised action plans based upon what they are learning from their planning, acting, and observing.

These four phases become part of a spiral in which revised plans are enacted, observed and reflected upon. Through this ongoing process -- planning, acting, observing, reflecting, re-planning, re-acting, re-observing, re-reflecting, and so forth -- systematic, reflective, collaborative changes occur. Figure 2 is a diagram of the action research spiral.

Figure 2: An Action Research Spiral



The objectives of this action research spiral are to improve our practice, our understandings of our ministry, and the situations in which we work. Action research encourages us to reflect carefully on what we are doing, why we are doing it, and what our objectives or goals are. We seek to make improvements through genuine dialogue with others, authentically listening to their voices, and valuing their contributions. Action research, then, becomes a collaboratively transformative process through which pastoral ministry can be improved. It is also an approach through which we, as pastors can redefine our ministry. And we can reflect upon and grow in our understandings of ourselves as individuals, as Christians, and as pastors.

How is Action Research Different from what We Do Already?

Many of us operate with a casual "plan-act-sense-replan" approach to our everyday lives which looks remarkably similar to action research. As pastors we often "think about" what we are doing, what new plans we can make in our churches, and we evaluate our activities. We often talk with people in our churches. Especially in churches in the "believers' church" tradition, democratic decision-making is highly valued and institutionalized.

The attraction, for me, of action research is that it does closely resemble our common sense. Action research does not challenge me to re-orient my entire approach to things. Rather, it builds upon my natural predispositions.

However, action research is much more systematic and intentionally reflective than our everyday way of doing things. Action research insists that we observe critically the world around us. This reflection is a more systematic, deeper exploration of our context than we normally undertake, akin to Groome's critical reflection discussed earlier. We need to carefully and intentionally enact changes, and closely monitor the results. Observation can take a variety of forms including field notes (or log), journals, interviews and discussions, questionnaires, video or audio tape recording, or case study descriptions (McNiff, 1988 and Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). And we need to reflect deliberately, systematically and comprehensively upon the consequences of change. This action is explicitly and intentionally collaborative.

Action research can thus be thought of as a common sense approach to pastoral ministry, undertaken with a more rigorous, more reflective mindset. It is a systematic, collaborative approach with the explicit goal of improving the quality of action. Action research is deliberately negotiated, intentionally orchestrated, carefully reflected upon, change.

Action Research as a Practical Approach to Ministry

Action research is a wonderfully practical concept. For pastors, action research provides a practical way for us to understand and deal with real life issues in churches and communities. This is not abstract research. Action research has been described as a "hermeneutics of practice" (Carson, 1992). In other words, we try to understand the background and meaning behind our actions. We seek to uncover the reasons behind and underlying motives for events, attitudes, traditions, beliefs, and practices in our congregations. Action research provides us with a mindset that sensitizes us to real issues in <u>our</u> churches. It helps us to see and better understand <u>our</u> own problems. "Action research is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched," emphasize Altrichter et al (1993, p. 6). As pastors we take responsibility for coordinating the process of improving <u>our</u> practice, <u>our</u> self-understanding, and <u>our</u> ministries in <u>our</u> context.

Action research gives us encouragement, through dialogue, to explore solutions, try out new ideas, observe the results, and reflect on new approaches. As a continuous spiral, action research suggests that change is an ongoing process. We never "arrive at" perfect practice. In a changing world this helps me appreciate that I need to be flexible and open-minded. In a sense I never "arrive" at a perfect understanding of pastoral ministry. Rather my understanding is continually renewed as I respond to new situations. It is renegotiated on an ongoing basis by my congregation and myself. And it is constantly

improved as I grow in my faith maturity and my understanding of pastoral ministry. This seems both practical and realistic.

Action research deals with our questions and our problems, not someone else's. "Action research starts from practical questions arising from everyday ... work ..." (Altrichter et al, 1993, p. 6). One frustration in my pastoral ministry is how often we are subtly encouraged to look at what has worked in other contexts and take that as our model. But, invariably what works elsewhere does not work in my context. The questions and problems in my community are different; the approaches that will work are different. The personalities involved are different. I need an approach to ministry that acknowledges that my ministry setting is a unique, complex set of relationships, structures, and traditions. I need an approach that sees me as a unique individual with gifts, skills and limitations. The pastors I interviewed echoed these sentiments:

> I find I don't go to conferences of even read much anymore, because they're always -- like -- trying to sell you on the latest way to do it. They don't know my church. They don't know me. So how can they tell me how to do it? I find I learn more by talking with my board and working things through that way. Sometimes I feel guilty though. Like I'm not a good pastor because we don't do it the "right way."
>
> We are a unique church. So what is supposed to work doesn't work. And what's not supposed to work does work. So what does that say to me? You've got to understand your own church and work with it. This church has shaped me -- and I have probably shaped it -- so we fit together really well. I'm not sure I could go anywhere else right now.

Action research appeals to me because it recognizes my context is unique. And it encourages me to understand and work with my congregation.

Action research starts now. Action research is not a complex methodology which requires great amounts of specialized technical expertise. It is more a state-of-mind in which we intentionally reflect, plan, act, and observe. Thus action research requires more of a mindset than a set of technical skills. It requires qualities of character (wisdom, insight, discernment, humility, flexibility, teachability, creativity) rather than a repertoire of abilities. Therefore, with careful attention to our attitudes, we can begin to use action research immediately. Through dialogue we can begin the planning process, we can implement an action, we can observe and reflect upon the results.

Action research has been proposed as "a living practice" (Sumara and Carson, 1997) through which teachers use this cycle of planning-action-observation-reflection as something that is inextricably tied to who they are as teachers, to how they relate to their colleagues and their students. Action research, then, is not something teachers do as another activity they add to already over-busy lives. Rather it is a way of approaching teaching so that teachers find themselves engaging in this research on an ongoing basis. It becomes part of who they are. Sumara and Carson suggest that action research, as an approach to teaching, not only improves a teacher's teaching, it also improves the teacher as a teacher, and the teacher as a person.

We can translate this into an approach which can be used to improve pastoral practice. Action research explicitly aims to bring theory and practice together as living practice. By proposing action research as a practical approach for pastors, I am not suggesting that we add one more thing to do in the midst of over-busy schedules. Rather I am implying that we might consider a new approach to the work we already do. I am proposing that, through this approach, we might find practical ways to "live" our ministries: we bring our concern for theory and practice together in a cycle of active planning and doing that helps us develop an authentic, reflective living practice which transforms both our ministries and our self-identity as pastors.

Because action research has the explicit goal of "action," as pastors in action research, we are not involved simply in passive observation and data collection. Our end result should not be a pile of data and the nagging question: "So what?" Action research is action-oriented. We become active participants in a process which helps us understand our contexts, act in new ways, and reflect on the results of our

activities. Because of action research, things ought to change -- immediately. And we change and grow in the process, too. We learn about ourselves and grow as Christians and as educators through the process as well.

Action research is community building. Dialogue -- telling and listening -- builds Christian community. Action research insists that sort of dialogue occur. Only through authentic disclosing of ourselves -- our understandings of the present, our memories of the past and our visions for the future -- can plans be made and changes enacted. And through this honest communication we get to know one another better. We can care for one another more effectively. Community is created. Christian faith is enacted.

For leaders who prefer a "top down" leadership style, action research is clearly problematic! But for those of us who recognize that the role of pastor is being redefined both in the community at large and within the local church community, emphasizing more and more the role of all believers in ministry, action research makes sense. Through this approach, many people become genuine co-participants in decision-making and leadership. This is not a hierarchical approach, but one which is intentionally inclusive and empowering. It is not research "done to" people, it is research by leaders and congregations on our own work together, in authentic cooperation and dialogue. We work together. We learn together. We affirm one another's giftedness and experience. We grow together as a community of faith.

Action Research Helps me Improve my Educational Practice

As I try to "live" this action research cycle of planning-acting-observing-reflecting, I have seen my practice change. In a sense I "do" the same activities I have always done. But I am more intentionally collaborative, more deliberately active, more systematically observant and more critically reflective. I am (in a good sense) more critical.

I have discovered only one other example in the literature of a pastor trying to employ action research as "living practice." Michael West, an Anglican clergyman, writes of his experience as a facilitator of change, working with a team of lay priests and deacons. He was involved with a formal program of Local Non-stipendiary Ministers (LNSMs), in which gifted lay persons performed many, traditionally professional pastoral, functions. West reflects on changes that occurred in his own thought and practice:

> The whole process has perhaps inevitably become something of a voyage of discovery for me. Initially as a Christian minister and subsequently also as a researcher my association with LNSM has led me to reflect on every aspect of my professional work and the knowledge that underpins it. As a parish priest, working alongside two LNSM ministers I have had to redefine my own role in the parish in which I work, moving from 'minister' to 'team leader.' This process has not been without pain. I had been developing the skills associated with building and leading teams over many years and was committed to collaboration. However, moving from an 'individual' ministry to a 'shared' ministry has involved other changes. Firstly it has demanded of me a fundamental shift in the pattern of my working day, moving the location of my work away from its traditional home in the vicarage and its study to a newly constituted shared area of work we have designated the 'parish office, 'the very title of which symbolizes the greater emphasis on administration which is a practical consequence of collaboration. And perhaps inevitably, it has raised issues of my own professional status and role in the parish and it has done so in the context of such a practical question as whether or not a visit to a parishioner at home or in hospital from an LNSM priest is equal to that of the Vicar or "does the Vicar need to call as well?" And similarly, "who should do the weddings, funerals and baptisms of 'church' people or well-known local parishioners?" It would be easy to allow LNSMs to become second-class priests in the parish in which they work, but enabling them to operate on an equal footing brings the occasional allegation that I don't 'care enough'

> to come myself, or am not 'concerned enough' to do the service myself, from those less familiar with the concept of LNSM. This is still painful. Also, working with people who were once 'parishioners' and are now clergy, who are more effective than I am in various aspects of ministry and are the focus of various parish activities that no longer center around me, is a constant salutary reminder that collaboration is not just engagement with the mind but is also a powerful engagement with the emotions!
>
> As researcher I also began to work with the theoretical perspectives that challenge traditional church belief systems and demand an engagement between theology on the one hand and those disciplines on the other hand that each make a contribution towards theories of learning and meaning making ... (1993, pp. 365-366)

This reflection reveals many of the ways in which we grow personally through action research. First, "living" with an action research approach helps us reflect on our role. West's honest thoughts are significant. He is excited, on the one hand, to live his pastoral practice in a collaborative way. But he also notes the many difficulties with integrating his beliefs into his practice -- both external difficulties, and internal, personal struggles. Change is complicated! Complicity is very apparent! West notes many unexpected and unintended repercussions of his changing role and the introduction of these lay priests. Significantly, however, there is a sense throughout West's discussion that these changes are part of a constant self-improvement which is creating positive changes for his pastoral identity. He is growing into a new role which is stretching him, personally in new ways.

Also apparent in West's discussion is his concern to integrate theory with practice. Action research gives him the opportunity to "live" his ideas through careful planning, acting, observation and reflection.

The results of these changes at the time of West's writing are an overall improvement of ministry in the parish. Certainly he highlights that many problems still exist and need to be worked through the ongoing planning-acting-observing-reflecting cycle. But gifted lay people are involved in meaningful ministry. Parishioners and communities are benefiting from gifted persons providing more and varied ministries. The overall effect is undeniably positive.

My Experience with Action Research

The essential aims of action research are to improve and to involve (Carr and Kemmis 1986, p. 165). Action research is an approach intended to improve practice, to improve our understanding of our practice, and thus to improve the settings in which we minister. It is also an approach which intentionally involves people in the planning-acting-reflecting process, so that those affected by change become involved in the process. These goals appealed to me as a pastor trying intentionally to incorporate education into more aspects of my ministry, and trying to be active in reshaping my pastoral role as a co-worker with members of my congregation.

I have tried to enact action research by working more closely with my boards and committees in collaboration, reflection, planning, and evaluation. I have become more intentional in my journalizing. I have encouraged more constructive feedback from people in the congregation. I have been more inclusive and explicit about our planning process as a church, in order to involve more people and to encourage them to monitor and evaluate the changes we enact.

Action research is helping me understand my practice more fully. I am finding myself dialoguing at a deeper level with people in my congregation, pastoral colleagues, and others outside the church. I am also finding myself being much more intentional -- and much more inclusive -- about congregational planning, developing specific plans, and putting them into practice. I am in the ongoing process of observing, reflecting, re-planning, and re-acting. What I have discovered is that I am growing in my knowledge of my church and its people; I am learning more about my role as a Christian educator; and I am developing a more detailed understanding of who I am, personally.

I have found myself looking critically at habits I have developed -- what I am "really" doing in my educational work -- and I have been challenged to think creatively I am discovering that through critical reason, critical memory, and creative imagination, new possibilities are emerging.

As I try to incorporate action research as a "living practice," I am very aware of complicity -- change creates complexity! But I am also excited to see possibilities. Action research is a way of creatively working with change to envision -- and enact -- exciting futures.

The congregation is changing, too. More people are actively involved in leadership -- planning and enacting ministry -- than previously. More changes are taking place than previously. While change is often threatening, because so many people are involved in the discussion and planning process, we have found more people excited about new possibilities than previously. Where people can be involved in shaping the changes that will occur, they seem very supportive.

Strong lay leaders with vision are emerging. Because lay members have been encouraged and given permission to take leadership, new leaders are emerging who are able to use their abilities and gifts in the congregation. These people often have creative ideas. We have begun exploring new opportunities and possibilities because these ideas are encouraged to be contributed, are valued, and -- very often -- enacted.

My role is becoming something resembling the "missionary pastor" (Callahan) or "pastoral consultant" (Woods). My role is becoming one of facilitating dialogue, planning, action, and reflection in the context of genuine collaboration. Through these processes I have opportunity to educate people. I have the opportunity to encourage people to reflect upon and grow in their own faith development. I have the opportunity to help people explore the meaning and nature of Christian community. I have the opportunity to help people grow in their leadership skills and abilities.

My role, as pastor, is changing. In some ways I am moving more "into-the-background" as the facilitator of a process rather than the leader of an organization. I find that, personally, I have to find new criteria upon which to evaluate myself. I am less "up-front" than I used to be. I am no longer the teacher or preacher. I am no longer the only one who visits. I am no longer "in control." There are times when I feel frustrated. Things do not happen as quickly or efficiently as they should. The "best" decision (in my opinion) is not always made. I am no longer front-and-center all the time. In my journal I noted:

> This is hard. I feel like I don't know whether I'm "worth it" or not. I was trained to be a professional preacher, a professional church administrator, a professional visitor, even a professional pray-er. Now I 'm seeing other people who can do those things just as well as I! Today I feel like - what good am I?

Later on I mused.

> Perhaps we need to rethink what it is we educate pastors to do. Rather than preparing us to preach, pray, visit, lead, etc., etc., what about subtly changing the focus to preparing us to be those who help prepare lay-preachers, lay-teachers, lay-visitors, lay-leaders, lay-whatever? What shifting from educating pastors to do it, to educating pastors in adult ed - to educate them how to help other do it?

As I reflect on my journalizing, I sense that if our pastoral expectations were different -- if we sensed our role as "pastoral consultants" -- or criteria for self-evaluation would be very different. We would measure our worth more in our ability to release others into ministry than our ability to perform ministry functions ourselves.

Moving forward ...

As I discussed action research with pastors and the lay people in my church, I discovered that no-one had ever been introduced to the concept. However as I discussed action research, all agreed it had potential for improving ministry. Pastors commented:

> I know I need to be more inclusive. I know I need to get people actively involved. But it is scary, isn't it? It is so easy to stay in control. But if I am going to continue -- if my church is going to grow -- it has to happen.
>
> I like the idea of being inclusive. And I like the idea of action. I like the idea of not going with the "outside expert." The hard part is getting lay-people who really want to be involved. My experience is that a lot of people say the do, but when it comes right down to it, they only want to do what they want to do.

Lay people in my church commented on the process we have enacted:

> It's neat to really be involved.
>
> I like the discussion and stuff. But sometimes it takes a long time to make decisions, doesn't it. But I guess that's good, because when we do make a decision, people are usually behind it.

One person asked me: "Bruce, how do you feel about it?" I responded: "Depending on the day, it's great! My greatest challenge has been readjusting my expectations as a pastor -- who I am, what my role is, what I'm doing." I have found that my role is emerging as the facilitator of a process. I am not **the** leader in the congregation. Rather I am a leader among leaders. However I do still have strong leadership role. My role is to keep the action research process moving forward. I can be a creative participant, encouraging people to see new possibilities, providing insights that enlarge the space of the possible, nurturing ideas into fruition, and ensuring that action plans are accomplished. I can be the resource person who helps other leaders develop the vision and skills necessary to be effective participants in the process.

My role as pastor is becoming one that genuinely seeks to involve lay-people in the educational, ministerial tasks of the church. Contrary to some discussions of lay-empowerment, this does not make my role, as pastor, redundant. I am not working myself out of a job. Rather, I find myself creatively engaged in an exciting, expanding role as visionary leader of an ongoing commitment to improve congregational life and ministry. I find myself working to further nurture and develop lay leaders in the congregation. My role is changing; it is not disappearing.

For me, action research and a praxis approach to congregational life are helping me reshape my role as pastor. Amid the confusing, often contradictory voices pulling me in different directions, I am finding focus. I am defining my primary task as creating an educational context in which the collegial community suggested by shared Christian praxis, becomes enacted through intentional action research.

The next chapter considers how education for pastoral ministry can encourage pastors to think in educational, praxis terms.

CHAPTER TEN

Educating Pastor-educators

Through the preceding chapters I have noted (a) that most pastors recognize there is a strong educational component to their ministries, (b) few pastors have any educational background that has encouraged them to think in educational terms, and (c) while pastors and lay-leaders resonate with a shared Christian praxis/action research approach to ministry, none have been instructed in such an approach. Pastors have "learned-on-the-job" that education is a major component of their work. They have discovered through experience many educational possibilities. However this was not something they had been led to expect in their educational preparation for ministry. Consequently, concepts like curriculum, praxis, and action research -- which may be of considerable help to pastors as they seek to improve their pastoral practice -- have not been discussed.

This chapter will explore possibilities for nurturing an educational, shared praxis approach to ministry in the pre-ministry education and continuing education of pastors. I suggest that, if pastoral ministry is indeed at a point where the pastoral role is being redefined, pastors need tools to redefine and reshape their pastoral role, in constructive, creative dialogue with colleagues and congregants. I believe concepts such as those discussed in the Section II -- the nature of education, educational possibilities, curriculum, praxis, and action research -- ought to be considered in pastoral education programs. This chapter will consider the curricula of institutions in western Canada, and insights from faculty and other pastors on educational issues in pastoral education.

The Nature of Pastoral Education

How do pastors learn to be pastor-educators? The obvious answer would be in Bible colleges, theological colleges, and seminaries -- the institutions that specialize in theological and pastoral education. The real answer, from my interviews, is that pastors actually learn about the educational nature of their ministries through experience in local congregations. In response to my questions about what has been helpful for forming one's personal identity as a pastor, one pastor responded: "Where I've really learned to be a pastor is by being a pastor in the community, in the community of the congregation, working with others." Not one of the pastors I interviewed -- all of whom appreciated the strongly educational nature of their ministries -- indicated that their seminary preparation encouraged them to think educationally. It was something they learned on the job.

In recent years, seminary programs are being critiqued and attacked more vociferously than ever before. Linda Cannell, who has worked on staff in local churches, as a denominational and independent consultant, and currently is on faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, observes:

> Theological schools in Canada ... are in transition and, in some instances, crisis. When appropriately separate from the church, the theological community can be a conscience for the church -- it can dialogue with the church about the way it thinks and acts. On the other hand, the church may need to interact with the schools about the nature and outcomes of the educational experiences provided for students. Church-school dialogue is difficult. Some faculty in theological institutions are concerned that the church tends to borrow its ways of operating from semi-compatible institutional forms and has yet to think carefully about its theological identity and the implications of this identity on its priorities, its organizational structures, its mission in this culture, and so on. Church leaders are concerned that theological schools are burdened with archaic curriculum, not producing what the church needs, out of touch with contemporary culture -- in a word, irrelevant. (Cannell, 1997c, p. 4).

She notes that many church leaders -- from denominational executives to pastors to lay leaders -- are challenging the value of seminary programs.

My aim is not to offer a detailed critique of existing programs. My intent is to highlight ways in which pastors perceive they could be have been better prepared or educated for the realities of pastoral ministry, particularly cooperative educational ministries. I will also consider the continuing education experiences pastors consider most helpful. I will focus on two levels of education: pre-ministry training (normally at the Master of Divinity level) and continuing education.

Pre-ministry Education

In a book provocatively titled, What They Didn't Teach You in Seminary, four doctors and two former pastors (who are now counselors) aim to provide "realistic" and "practical solutions" to the daily challenges pastors face:

> Are you struggling with how to handle the personal and pastoral demands of pastoring? If so, it's probably because that is the one aspect of ministry that was not addressed in your seminary classes ... but sure needed to be! As a minister you are expected to meet the needs of others while also juggling job pressures and your own needs. With What They Didn't Teach You in Seminary you will learn how to successfully balance the demands of home with those of ministry, allowing you to secure health and wholeness in life. (Meier et al, 1993, back cover)

The authors address a variety of issues including personal finances, family and church relationships, moral struggles, self-care, and a pastor's job description. The fact that a book with such a title was published suggests the authors felt that pastoral education programs were inadequate. The fact that, as I discussed the book with my colleagues, each of them resonated with the issues the book discussed, suggests they sensed it addressed key issues as well.

From my interviews key themes which came out addressed issues related to both the formal and informal curriculum taught in theological colleges.

Formal curriculum

A holistic perspective on ministry

As Osmer (1990) noted, the disciplines of pastoral theology and Christian education appear to exist as two distinct areas of knowledge in most theological colleges. I considered the programs and course offerings at twelve theological colleges and seminaries in western Canada. At four colleges, Christian education courses were either not even offered at all or a limited number were available (in each case, on a "demand" or alternate year basis) but not required. In these colleges no other "education" courses were offered. At six colleges, persons in the Master of Divinity (pastoral ministry) program were required to take one, three credit-hour, course on the educational ministry of the local church. At two seminaries, students were required to take nine credit-hours of Christian education. In each case the education courses were taught by specialized "Christian education" professors. Four seminaries offered graduate degrees specifically in Christian education (including both seminaries requiring nine hours of education courses in their pastoral M.Div.).

Most pastors indicated that in their seminary experiences were similar to present structures. There were "pastoral ministry" and "Christian education" tracks, either as distinct degree programs or as specializations within a Master of Divinity (or equivalent). If a student was in one track he/she did not take more than one course in other areas. The consequence was that "pastors" assumed they would not be involved in Christian education. Much to their surprise, they found they were heavily involved in educational ministries at all levels. Here is an excerpt from an interview I had with one pastor:

Q: What is your role in Christian education in your church?

A: ... (I am) I suppose, you could say, the resident expert simply because nobody else here has taken classes in Christian education.

Q: You have taken classes ...?

A: (Emphatically) Yes! (Pause) Limited. (Another pause) Took some in college; most of what I've had has been through seminars and workshops. In the seminary training that I took they had tracks for pastoral ministry, Christian education ministry, and I wasn't in a Christian ed. track so I probably only took one course. I don't really remember. I attempt to read one new Christian ed. book each year to keep me current with what's happening. But that's my own personal thing.

Another pastor commented on the way pastoral/education leadership was structured in the denomination:

> (A separation between education and pastoral ministry) is true in the way we train people. In (our) church we tend to train - well, we have ordained people and we have diaconal people. And the diaconal ministers are supposed to be the educators. And the ordained people are supposed to be the pastoral ministers. But to work in the pastorate you have to bring those two together or you don't do well. I think when I look at my colleagues who do really well in the pastorate, they are the ones who learn how to integrate those.

What these pastors are expressing is a concern for a separation of aspects of ministry in colleges which, in their experience, does not exist within local churches.

Pastors emphasized the importance of this integration between Christian education and pastoral ministry:

> My Christian education course was taught by a wonderful professor who had worked in three large churches as a Minister of Christian Education. She knew her stuff. It would have been great if I became a Minister of CE! But I didn't! For me, as a pastor, it was useless. She didn't have a clue about how to be a pastor and teach as a pastor - know what I mean?
>
> The guy who taught my courses taught us theory, with no context. I don't think he ever was a pastor -- or a teacher. (Laughter) He couldn't teach! I shouldn't say that. But it's true. It was all theory. We read the books. He lectured from the books. But it never touched the real world. "God help us when we get out of here," I thought!
>
> The best CE class I had was when the professor was away (probably at an academic conference) and a pastor shared his experience. It wasn't sophisticated. But he shared openly and honestly -- "this is what it's all about, guys." I remember him talking about balancing pastoral ministry and educational ministry. That was the best class.

One of the common frustrations with seminary education is the perception that seminaries often, uncritically, adopt particular models of ministry which may or may not be relevant for churches. For example, one pastor perceived a move towards a "church growth" model of ministry which emphasizes adult small group ministries (in which small groups theoretically offer opportunities for fellowship, pastoral care and education). This emphasis, however, in this pastor's experience, devalued formal educational programs.

> I think some (local church pastors) have bought in on church growth principles to the point where they have felt that education is passé and that small groups are going to do the educating for them. There is an idea that equates small cell group ministries with the education thing and not realizing that the only way it will do that is if it's specifically designed with that end purpose. But most small groups aren't. They are designed for a particular task or they are designed for fellowship strongly -- support groups -- areas like that. But not many of them provide education. The other hobby horse I have on that, too, is that is an effective way to exclude children from education. I don't know of any church any place that I have read of that runs a cell group for children.

The plea is for an integration of the best emphases of different models.

Seminaries, increasingly, appear to be moving towards "specialist" programs in their pre-ministry training. "General" Master of Divinity programs are being replaced by specializations in counseling, education, church leadership, cross-cultural ministries, preaching, and ethnic ministries. The challenge is that most churches cannot afford specialized staff. They need generalists. One pastor I spoke with commented:

> In our church we are producing pastors who are so narrow - they're youth pastors, or children's pastors, or counselors, or social work pastors, or preaching pastors. They don't want to do anything else. They can't do anything else. But the reality in the parish is that you got to do it all. We're not doing the churches -- or the guys in seminary -- any favors letting them get so narrow.

Education for the real world

One pastor turned our interview around and asked me: "Does your associate (a part-time youth pastor) have Bible school?" I replied that he did have some. The pastor went on to describe his experiences with three associate staff. The two who had been nurtured and encouraged within the local church -- and had limited ministry education -- had had wonderful ministries for extended periods of time. The one who had come with all the academic credentials, but limited church experience, had been a disaster.

All the pastors I interviewed emphasized that while seminaries and theological colleges did a reasonable job of educating pastors in disciplines like biblical studies and systematic theology, none adequately prepared students for pastoral ministry. When I asked one pastor, "What do you think are the strengths of seminaries today?" With laughter the pastor responded, "I don't think there are any!" On further reflection the pastor commented:

> I think seminaries' strengths right now is that they can teach you doctrine. But I don't think that seminaries right now can teach you how to <u>do</u> theology because you can't <u>do</u> theology in an ivory tower. And so ... basically what they can do is give you a framework, but it's a theoretical framework and it hasn't been tested. And I just think that the whole framework of theological education is backwards. I would make it more like a medical residency in which you studied in the local church ...

When asked for helpful comments for seminaries, one pastor responded:

> I would put in a much stronger educational component. And I would put in a much stronger pastoral care component. In fact I would want to strengthen everything that has to do with pastoral ministry because our theological colleges still haven't figured out what it means to train pastors. They don't get it. They train theologians. They're

> too academic. They're still in a box. Now some are really moving out of that box... I also have this bent toward lay education. And our theological colleges are really still geared to training professionals in the church. And we need to be working more at offering learning opportunities for everybody.

One pastor (who had lay ministry experience before going to college) commented: "There wasn't nearly enough practical emphasis: in fact I would feel impoverished now if that was all I had." One pastor reminisced:

> When I graduated, I looked at other people graduating with me and I thought, "Oh my gosh, I hope you survive!" That was my first fear. And I could tell who wouldn't. And the people who wouldn't were the ones who didn't have the practical experience, the educational background I had, and just the integrative experience I had. I had a lot of experience before I went to theological college. This is just a funny story. But it's an example. I remember one session on marriages and preparing for marriages. And one of the students asked the instructor (who'd been a theological professor for many years), "What do you do if there's a protest a wedding? What do you do if people stand up and say, 'I think there is a lawful impediment?'" Well he didn't have an answer. He'd never had that happen. So I put up my hand and said, "Well it's happened to me. Do you want me share my experience?" (laughter) And he said, "Yes, yes, share your experience." So I told them how I handled it. It's that kind of thing - how do we bring our faith to bear - and it's not just our theology - it's our faith and our spirituality - how do we bring that to bear on our life and work? And how do we deal with bumps and grinds and realities of the pastorate? I mean theological colleges are too theoretical.

Another pastor commented that people in the church "want more impact in their own faith in the marketplace." Seminaries, this pastor suggested, are not preparing pastors to help people in the congregations integrate faith into their experiences, because the colleges themselves do not help students integrate faith and lived experience.

The challenge for seminaries, according to the pastors I interviewed, would appear to be to nurture a formal curriculum which combines solid doctrinal instruction with meaningful practical experience.

Informal curriculum

Some of the nonacademic, systemic aspects of seminary education were also identified as problematic. Several pastors indicated concerns with hidden curriculum of seminaries including theological bias and learning styles.

Theological bias was one aspect of informal curriculum pastors noted. Historically most denominations have had their own seminaries which prospective pastors were encouraged to attend. However as more non-denominational and inter-denominational theological institutions have developed, pastors are increasingly educated in a variety of settings. Pastors, however, perceive denominational "preferences" for certain institutions and strong suspicion of other schools.

Robert Pazmino, Professor at Andover Newton Theological Seminary, suggests that an evangelical college or theological seminary may have a number of components to their informal curriculum, which -- although not clearly articulated -- strongly influences the character of instruction:

1. Each person in the community should have had a personal experience with Jesus as Lord and Savior.
2. Scholarship, service, discipline, or piety is the highest ideal in Christian ministry.
3. Liberals are to be viewed as enemies of the evangelical faith.

4. Graduates of specific evangelical colleges or institutions are to be revered.
5. A faithful evangelical is a member of the Republican party; a thinking evangelical is a member of the Democratic party.
6. Evangelicals are not communists, social activists, or successful capitalists. Evangelicals are suspect if they are inappropriately aligned politically or economically.
7. Evangelicals are the backbone of middle-class society in the United States.
8. Evangelical faith is the faithful embodiment of historic orthodox Christianity in the modern world.
9. If Jesus were alive today, he would be an evangelical. (Pazmino, 1988, p. 217)

Within their seminary experience, pastors noted a frustration with the selective theologies or models to which they were exposed. Upon graduation, pastors often began reading more widely, in the words of one pastor: "So I wasn't so lop-sided; I had been indoctrinated!"

In my journal, early in my doctoral program at the University of Alberta, I wrote:

> I am reading Elliot Eisner today. This is great stuff. I had never even heard of him before! I thought I had a good grounding in education -- granted, specifically Christian education -- in seminary, but I am discovering there is a whole world I have never even heard of -- even in Christian circles: Thomas Groome, Maria Harris, John Westerhoff. Ah, but they aren't "evangelicals" are they! -- there's the rub!

What I have discovered, studying at a public university, where I have been encouraged to read a variety of writers -- from Roman Catholics to evangelicals, from postmodern writers to traditional educational theorists -- is that my seminary experience had limited my vision. I had only been encouraged to read theorists from a particular theological tradition. I never knew other ideas even existed. The frightening aspect of this was that I had not even been aware of how narrow my education had been!

While many pastors have recognized that there are other ideas to explore in other faith traditions, several pastors choose to limit themselves. In my journal I recall and reflect upon this incident at a denominational ministerial association event:

> At the ministerial picnic today I was sharing with F. about my courses at the U of A. His comment (rather aghast): "What could they possibly teach you there!?!?!?" I am quite sure he thought I had sold my soul to the Devil! Have I? No, I think I am just exploring new ideas, new thoughts, new ways of looking at things. Is that wrong? I don't think so. There are a lot of people out there, though, who would share F.'s view: What could any non-"evangelical" (as they define the term) teach you? Do we have to stay within the "safe" walls of the fort? Are we that scared of the boogie man? Are we that insecure in our faith? Are we that sure we're "right"? Are we that afraid to think new thoughts?!?!

One pastor commented,

> I'd like to have been challenged to think more. You know, like, here's five different ideas. Choose one. Tell me why. How are you going to use that in the parish. And the real kicker -- go to your church and try it. But no-one does that, do they? It's all in a neat little box.

Learning styles are further components of informal curriculum which pastors discussed. Lawrence Richards (1975), in his analysis of seminary training, maintained that the informal curriculum of many college and seminary programs also includes the conceptual structuring of content. He notes that many students are trained to study and master Scripture in an intellectual rather than a personal or relational manner. The emphasis is on Bible information rather than on an emphasis on shaping a

biblically-consistent model of Christian living. Earlier I discussed that Christian education writers are encouraging pastors to see biblical literacy as requiring more than just knowing about the Bible. It requires persons to understand how biblical truth influences how they live their lives. And people actually live by biblical principles. The challenge for pastors is to encourage biblical knowledge and practical application among members of their congregations. One pastor commented on a recent graduate whom the pastor worked with:

> He saw preaching as giving a theology lecture. He stood up there, just like he'd seen his theology professor do it, and he lectured. And people didn't like it. He lasted exactly sixteen months in a church. Now he's selling life insurance or something (laughter). I mean, they're so out of touch! Was it this guy's fault? I don't always think so. No-one ever taught him that faith meets real life. I mean it's all theory. It's facts and stuff like that. No-one in the church wants to memorize facts. They want to know what God is saying to them in their brokenness.

Seminary education, Richards suggests, also tends to encourage individual, competitive learning, not corporate or cooperative educational models. Seminaries are based on traditional academic models where most students are evaluated using typical university grading systems. Consequently, students are encouraged to work individually and competitively. However such an approach to learning does not foster qualities which ought to characterize Christian communities. Christian educators have encouraged pastors to see values such as learning together in a faith community through cooperative learning as essential for faith development in a Christian community. But students do not learn those skills in seminary. Seminaries, according the pastors, I interviewed, promoted competitive academic learning styles similar to those in undergraduate Bible colleges and non-Christian post-secondary institutions. These pastors questioned whether the "academy" model of learning was really appropriate for the preparation of pastors:

> We've got it all wrong. We're not training -- well, we shouldn't be training -- cut-throat academics out to get A's. We should be preparing men who know how to build teams and work together. We should be training team players. But we're not.
>
> I don't think we graduate anyone out of seminary with a sense of building a team; we graduate people out of seminary as Lone Rangers who have answers.
>
> What I would like to see is college somewhere say: "To hell with marks" (and I mean to hell with them!). What might happen? I can see professors shudder! I can also see real pastors -- with a heart for ministry -- coming out.
>
> In churches, however, all pastors emphasized that team-building skills are absolutely essential for pastoral ministry. Well, you know, you've read Thomas Groome. It's about community, learning together, building together. But in theological college it's still, like, you know, everyone for himself (and I mean himself!). It's like ... as I think about it .... one big contradiction teaching about the church as the people of God, as a community of faith and then everyone writes an exam and the professor grades on a curve. I always thought, are these guys for real? Do they see what they're doing? I remember ... I think it was a paper about philosophy of ministry or something ... I kind of thought "My God, I'm learning how to lie!"

These pastors were not expressing an anit-intellectualism. Rather they were emphasizing that biblical scholarship has to integrate with personal experience. Learning needs to complement the context in which pastors minister. In my journal during my seminary program I wrote:

> I talked with G. and M. today about getting together to pray for one another. No-one does that. We're each cloistered in our own carrel or our own apartment, madly writing, madly studying, madly working. About community! About loving one another! About praying for one another! But no-one does it! They were interested. What are we doing? Studying all about God. But we don't care about one another.

Modeling the type of Christian community they teach about is a real challenge for theological colleges and seminaries.

A third aspect of informal curriculum which pastors identified were the nature of the assignments in courses themselves. They perceived that the assignments were mostly irrelevant.

> What we studied and what we did, did not fit. When I graduated I remember looking through my notes and thinking -- this is useless, this is useless, it's not like that at all, where were these guys coming from. It was different in the parish.

> I have so many nice theological papers stuck away in some file somewhere. I suppose I could still find them. But they don't make much difference now do they?

In my journal I noted a conversation with a recent seminary graduate.

> I was mentioning to R. the differences I noted between grad school at university and "grad school" at seminary. I remember my professors at seminary telling us, "This is graduate school, now!" What they meant by that was that, while in an undergrad course you may have written two papers and two exams, in seminary you would write two papers, two exams, two book reviews, and a couple of reflection papers. In contrast, in university, in grad school, you may only write one paper -- but it had better be one good paper! My university experience, I said, was that grad school meant less quantity, but more quality. My seminary experience was the opposite.
>
> R. agreed. "But one professor told us," he said, "that he purposely gave lots of assignments because in a church you have lots of little assignments -- there's a sermon due every Sunday."
>
> I suppose there's some justification there. But I wonder if it's not an excuse. And I also wonder if it doesn't produce really shallow pastors. Pastors who (a) see sermons as isolated little assignments, rather than parts of something bigger, (b) don't read or reflect at any depth because they're hanging on week by week, and (c) have learned the unfortunate art of cranking out assignment after assignment with little pride or thought.

Subsequent to this conversation I have discussed my experiences -- in seminary and university graduate programs -- with my pastoral colleagues. Four of the five agreed that there experience was similar. Their graduate theological education emphasized more quantity of written work, but did not emphasize high quality. One pastor commented:

> By the time I graduated, I was exhausted! It was like I was machine. Church work is different. You know, it's tiring ... but it's different. A lot of days I go home exhausted, but I feel like I've done something. Back then it was just a waste of time! Yeah, they do tell you, "Get used to it; this is what it's like in the churches." But it's not. (How would some of them know, anyway!). I think theological education has to be a time to lay a lot of foundations and get people to really think. But you can't think if you're spending every night typing away.

Suggesting solutions

I asked the pastors I interviewed for their ideas on how seminaries might be improved. All struggled to find solutions to the problems they identified. The problems, these pastors acknowledged, were in part systemic.

> I think when you have ATS[1] telling you what the criteria for your program is then you're always stuck. Once again, you've got someone who doesn't understand making the decision.

This pastor went on to discuss some of the difficult issues with which seminaries may need to struggle:

> First of all, you've got to decide whether you exist for the academic world or whether you exist for the local church. My feeling would be that the seminary exists for the local church. If it exists for any other reason than the local church then it's a whole other institution. So, if you say, that, first of all, the local church should lead us, then you are saying something about where you have your experts. Where are the experts? Well the experts aren't necessarily sitting in an academic institution when it comes to doing theology. That might be sitting in a local church as a pastor or a lay person who might have more to say on certain kinds of issues. So first of all you have to answer the question, "Who's your accrediting body?" And as far as I'm concerned, when you make the Association of Theological Schools your accrediting body, then you've already outstepped your usefulness to the local church.
>
> Secondly, you decide what's the best way to learn. And in this day and age the best way to learn is -- for most people -- is touch, taste, feel, see, do, learn. So therefore the classroom moves away from an ivory tower into some sort of co-op, practical experience. So, maybe there are some basic doctrinal things you can do within two or three semesters, where you have students in the classroom. Then you move them out into a residency. And I would say a residency of more than a year or two. And you basically work your seminars and the rest of the stuff from that kind of a framework. Therefore you're teaching them to do theology and they're able to test whether or not what the teachers are teaching them have any validity or not in the experiences of what they are doing. So, who do you exist for? How do people learn? Then, what's the best framework to put that in?
>
> The problem is that most of these seminaries are caught in a framework that is self-perpetuating. So if I decide to change that, that means I may be out of a job because I'm the New Testament prof and I may not have anything else I can do. It's just a whole different framework. So, to address the need would be to reframe everything. And the very people who have to address the need are the stakeholders! Thy have the most to lose. I mean even we aren't going to do that in the local church! For a pastor who thinks that things have to change but it may cost us our job or our money, we just won't do it.

The challenge, this pastor suggests, lies at the core of the structures for theological education. The problems are serious. They are also extremely challenging. They have the potential to shake every foundation of contemporary theological education.

Perusing the academic calendars for various institutions in western Canada, and speaking with faculty, highlighted the struggle institutions are facing. The calendars make bold statements about

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[1]The Association of Theological Schools, the international accrediting agency for theological colleges and seminaries.

integrating practical experience and academic learning, but the practical components of their programs typically revolve around a limited "field education" or "parish" practicum. One faculty member commented:

> It's political. The biblical studies guys think the students should get more biblical courses. The theology faculty think they need more theology. I think they need more practical experience. Nobody is willing to give.

Another noted:

> There is a lot of resistance to change -- among faculty -- by the board -- even by the churches. People want a "traditional" program. It takes so long to make any changes. And, of course, there's accreditation!

Faculty acknowledged problems with formal and hidden curriculum. But also struggled to find workable solutions. Different colleges were trying to introduce various new structures aimed at addressing some of the issues.

One challenge, identified by the pastor cited above, is the issue of accreditation. The Association of Theological Schools recently revised its accreditation standards, recognizing that programs may need to take new shapes. The new guidelines appear to allow much more latitude for creative and innovative change (Association of Theological Schools, 1996). However, as one pastor who had seen the reports pointed out, all members of the various committees who were involved in the process of renewing the accreditation guidelines were faculty of theological colleges. Pastors and lay persons do not appear to have been part of the process.

> How can you do that? As far as I am concerned their report has no credibility with anyone outside their own little world. If they want to train professional theologians, that's fine. But if they want to train pastors .. I mean, get real, guys! But that's the report that every seminary has to go by!

Another challenge was the dual role which pastors perceived seminaries and theological colleges to have.

> On the one hand, seminaries are academic institutions. Their professors want to "fit in" with other professors as academics who do research, write books, and all that stuff. On the other hand they train pastors. I'm not sure they can do those two things.
>
> Maybe at some point they just have to decide -- this is what we're all about. Forget ATS. Forget all that stuff.

Wrestling with the dual roles of academic research institution and professional school within seminaries was an issue each pastor felt was important. Significantly, all of them hoped seminaries would move more towards practical preparation for ministry rather than towards academic excellence.

Continuing Education

One of my colleagues, now retired, comments with reluctance: "I never did anything for continuing education since seminary." Another colleague, with a Bachelor of Theology degree, has consistently taken summer courses (for credit) at Regent College in Vancouver, BC. He is not particularly working towards a degree, but finds the courses stimulating. Another colleague recently completed a Doctor of Ministry program. Jokingly (although perhaps seriously), he says he never plans to take another

course in his life. Several of my colleagues read books on a regular basis. Some frankly acknowledge they have not read a book, even to help in sermon preparation, in years.

I explored with the pastors I interviewed what approaches to continuing education they have found particularly helpful. All pastors emphasized that continuing education is best if its practical and collegial:

> I think the D.Min.[2] or some kind of a continuing education degree program is a good model if it's rooted in some sort of practical framework. Because it allows me to get together with other people and talk through issues and also get some input. I mean I think one of the struggles in pastoral ministry is you don't always have time to pick up what the new stuff is. What I'd like to see is learning groups set up amongst pastors. I think ministerials should be set up differently. I'd like to find out what some of the new thinking is theologically, what's going on. And use ministerials almost like one morning seminars a month where we come together and you have someone come in and talk about, " Well this is some of the thinking that's going on in New Testament scholarship." Some of those sorts of things. To give us places in which we can learn. Because learning groups have been the most - collegial groups have been the most valuable learning experiences for me since I left seminary. No question. Beyond conferences. Beyond seminars. It's been learning groups that I have been lucky enough to be a part of or lucked into or something like that.

Doctor of Ministry programs, offered by three seminaries in western Canada, attempt to offer this type of professional educational experience.

All pastors emphasized the practical, collegial nature of continuing education which they have appreciated or in which they would appreciate participating. Pastor commented about their preferred continuing educational experiences:

> I'm not interested in nose to the grindstone, classroom education anymore. I've done that. I think I learned what I could. Or I can continue reading on my own. And I do. And what I really want is some way to get together with other pastors and talk about what's going on in our churches. How we can learn from one another.

> It would be something that would involve people being in the community. Well, first of all, it couldn't just be for clergy. You would have to have clergy and laity working together. You can't just say, OK, here's a bunch of clergy people, now you're going to learn about how to empower laity. Here we are together, as lay-people and clergy, and we're going to learn how to be empowering. Within congregational life, I guess I would do things which would involve bringing groups of people together to explore dynamics of congregational life together. And I would really make it a pragmatic sort of thing where laity and clergy work together. I guess in a sense (our denomination) has done quite a bit with that. I'd be hard pressed to find very many learning instances where it would just be clergy.

These ideas suggest that seminaries or denominations may wish to consider continuing education opportunities beyond formal course offerings in degree programs. Facilitating discussion among pastors -- or among pastors and lay-people -- outside formal course curricula may be a role that seminaries could play.

Two pastors emphasized that their continuing education would not just be among pastors, but would include lay persons. This surprised me. However, these pastors emphasized that clergy needed to

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[2]Doctor of Ministry programs are conceived as professional degrees, and are offered by an increasing number of colleges and seminaries in western Canada.

hear the voices of lay persons. They needed to value the ideas and insights of persons other than pastors. As we discussed the role of pastors within congregations and a vision of pastors as pastor-educators, these pastors emphasized that lay people needed to be part of the process of reshaping pastoral identities.

> You can't just say, "OK, this is who I am now. This is what I'm going to do." People are going to look at you and say, "Oh really?" In our church we work together as a community to say, this is what I can do; let's work together to find what you can do. It's a community thing. I think we need to learn how to work better as community. So we need educational opportunities that allow us to be community.

Interestingly, such an approach is precisely what London and Wiseman, in Pastors at risk, propose to combat the confusion many pastors feel about their role. Under the heading of "Discovering solutions," they write:

> Why not start a one-person campaign to reshape concepts of ministry among opinion shapers in your congregation? Include yourself in this revolutionary exercise. Too often a pastor considers existing expectations to be fixed and static and unmovable, but they can be changed. Since expectations are molded by so many people, it is possible to begin changing them bit-by-bit - among lay leaders, committees, individuals, and church members. (London and Wiseman 1993, 63)

London and Wiseman urge pastors to define ministry for themselves:

> A few pastors have such a foggy view of their work that they call everything ministry; playing ball with their children, mowing the lawn, or visiting a neighbor are worthy activities but not ministry. Other pastors feel confused by a collision of roles and division of labor between pastor and laypeople ... A sweeping gap of what constitutes effective ministry exists between lay and clergy perceptions. That is why a pastor must ultimately define and implement the meaning of ministry for himself in a congregation. To know what one is doing and why solves many questions, clarifies how ministry can be expected to affect individuals in the congregation and provides a comfort zone for those who are threatened by ambiguity ...
>
> To define ministry does not mean it is arbitrarily determined only the pastor's personal preferences, prejudices and perspectives. Rather the conscientious minister's definition will be informed by Scripture, denominational understanding of the doctrine of the church, lay and clergy church leaders, theological training, and colleagues in ministry. (1993, 64)

London and Wiseman emphasize that lay persons in the congregation must be an important part of this process.

Pastors expressed a variety of specific issues which they wished to pursue in continuing education. However the unifying theme was the informal curriculum of how learning ought to take place. Every pastor valued collegial discussion among colleagues, and -- significantly -- with lay persons as well. Significantly, although none of the pastors I talked with was familiar with action research (two, however, were familiar with Thomas Groome's concept of shared Christian praxis), all valued learning approaches which fit neatly into the framework of action research. As I outlined action research, the pastors agreed that these concepts fit well with the educational approaches they tried to create for themselves.

Moving ahead ...

My purpose in this chapter has not been to provide a detailed critique of existing programs. It has noted that Christian education and pastoral theology are treated as distinct disciplines in all seminaries and colleges. And, with only two exceptions, potential pastors are required to few, if any, Christian education courses. Concepts of education, curriculum, praxis and action research are not emphasized in the pastoral curriculum in seminaries or colleges.

This chapter has also highlighted the concerns of the clergy whom I interviewed. They challenged formal and informal aspects of the educational system, arguing for more integration, practical application, and collegial learning opportunities. Without using the word "praxis," they advocated a praxis approach be taught and practiced in seminaries.

The challenge from my research appears to be how this praxis approach can be modeled and nurtured in educational institutions, particularly at the pre-ministry, Master of Divinity level. Alas, more questions than answers arise. How can educational concerns, including praxis approaches, become integrated into Master of Divinity programs? How can the distinction between Christian education and pastoral theology be blurred? In what ways can praxis approaches to education be modeled in seminary environments?

My research suggests that pastors have serious reservations about formal and informal components of seminary curricula. My research also suggests that, among the clergy I interviewed, was a recognition that simple solutions were not immediately obvious. Pastors recognized the ambiguity with which seminaries struggled as academic institutions and professional schools. As I move to my conclusions and suggestions for further research, I will suggest that this is one particular area where more research may be particularly fruitful.

III. POSTSCRIPT

Some natural tears they drop'd, but wip'd them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide;
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

- John Milton, Paradise Lost, XII

As John Milton describes Adam and Eve preparing to leave Eden, he uses images of both trepidation and hope. Adam and Eve cry natural tears, but soon wipe them away. Although the new environment they are entering provides neither the safety nor ease of Eden, a vast world lay before them to explore and experience. They made their "solitary way" into this new world in partnership, hand in hand.

As pastors approach a new millennium, a host of writers encourage us to take note that we live in a new environment, too. As Adam and Eve entered something new and more challenging, so are we. It is a demanding time to pastor. On the one hand there is trepidation -- the world, the role of pastor, the nature of the church many of us grew up with and in which we have been prepared to work -- is changing. We feel alone. In my journal, during a particularly difficult time, I wrote:

> This is the loneliest profession in the world. Who do I go to? Teachers are part of a staff. Doctors and nurses have a staff. Factory workers have colleagues. I have no-one. I have no fellow staff. My colleagues in other churches are so busy in their own little worlds. We seem more in competition than anything else anyway sometimes! I can't go to people in my church. They're the ones driving me nuts! How can I say to them, "I'm frustrated -- with you?" I feel completely isolated. Totally alone.

On the other hand there is hope. As William Willimon intimated earlier, as pastors we live in a time when a new world is before us. The transitions of our time allow us to be part of the process of creatively revisioning and reshaping pastoral ministry. We are leaving one world behind us -- the future can offer us danger or opportunity, threat or hope, disaster or possibility. Hand in hand -- in dialogue with one another and with our congregations -- we can be part of making creative, constructive changes.

The challenge for us as pastors is to be part of the process of redefining pastoral ministry. As society changes, and as churches change, the pastorate is being reshaped. The paradigms are shifting. The challenge we face as pastors is choosing to be actively involved in the process. This research has been part of my pilgrimage of creatively shaping my sense of purpose and priority as a pastor. I have been challenged to rediscover the biblical and historical roots of pastoral ministry. I have read what others are saying about pastoral ministry. I have had the privilege of dialoguing with colleagues from a variety of denominational traditions. And I have worked with lay-people in my own congregation. The process has helped me to sift through the cacophony of voices calling me in different directions, to find a metaphor that gives some purpose, some focus, and some vision to the variety of activities in which I engage. I am developing a sense of my role as pastor in changing times.

One key principle I have learned, however, is that I have in no sense "arrived" at a conclusion. Rather I have stumbled across a process for continually exploring, reevaluating, and refocussing my pastoral work. The root metaphor of pastor-educator and the key approaches of praxis and action research are not so much destinations at which I have arrived as paths along which I travel. As society changes, as my congregation continues to live (or if I were to move to another congregation), as I continue to grow in my theological understanding, and as I mature in my self-understanding, the specific nature of my pastoral ministry may change. The principles I have learned give me resources to continually monitor the changes around me and within me, so that I can minister, as a pastor-educator, effectively.

Recognizing that there is no neat conclusion -- that pastoral ministry, in its specifics -- may not be definable, once and for always, is helpful for me. I now approach ministry recognizing that what I do now may not be what I will be doing in two years, five years, or ten years. And I have some tools for dialoguing with colleagues and congregants to monitor, assess, and adapt to changes that occur in society, the church, and myself. I had not truly appreciated the dynamic nature of pastoral ministry previously.

At the same time, the metaphor of pastor-educator gives me focus through the ongoing cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. I am encouraged to see my dual roles of teacher and shepherd as essentials of my pastoral identity. Remembering this, reflecting on this, wrestling with this, and discussing this encourages me to retain a consistent focus throughout my ongoing, collaborative reevaluation. While the specifics of how I do ministry may change with changing contexts, my fundamental vision and purpose, rooted in the metaphor of teaching shepherd or pastor-educator, remains

constant. Having worked through biblical, historical, and contemporary sources to discover this metaphor for myself has helped me appreciate it and value it.

This research has been a personal journey. I have begun to understand more fully who I am -- as a person and as a pastor -- and fully what role I can effectively play as a pastor within my congregation. I am learning more and more about the dynamic nature of society and church communities and how I can be creative and flexible in my ministry. And I am growing in my ability to work more collaboratively with members of my congregation.

Creative, Dynamic Tension

The pilgrimage of working through this research has helped me recognize that my experience of ministry includes several points of dynamic tension. Rather than seeing pastoral ministry in exclusive categories, I am increasingly recognizing ambiguity -- as creative opportunity. In Chapter One I noted that postmodern writers encourage us to beware of exclusive categories, to resist the impulse to find neat dichotomies. Dynamic tension is needed. Avoiding extremes, we find a middle ground. As I reflect on my reading, research, and personal journey, I am conscious of several issues related to the person and work of pastors that need to be held in this sort of creative, dynamic tension. Particularly as we enter a new era in society and in the church, we may need to keep various ideas in creative dialogue:

1. Theological understanding - congregational expectations - personal self-understanding

As London and Wiseman noted, pastors need to reshape their self-understanding of the pastoral role through self-evaluation, biblical study, and creative dialogue with pastoral colleagues and lay people. Theological concepts emphasizing the priesthood and giftedness of all believers insist that, as a pastor, I reconsider the nature and purpose of the pastoral role, in constructive dialogue with lay persons. Shared Christian praxis encourages me to hear and value the faith experiences of those around us - colleagues and congregants.

"The fundamental paradigm our congregations have to recover is that the primary task of the pastoral leadership is to equip the saints for ministry" argues Marva Dawn (1997, p.91). The challenge for me is to be active in this process through genuine dialogue with theology and lay persons. As various writers have suggested, the pastoral role is being reshaped. The pastors I interviewed understood that they needed to grow and change in their understandings of what it means to be a pastor in changing times. Several expressed concern about colleagues who were struggling to come to grips with pastoral ministry and the changes taking place. These pastors emphasized that pastoral self-identity is an evolving process. Self-identity changes as pastors understand their strengths and gifts more fully. It is shaped by ongoing interaction with specific congregations. It is shaped by interactions with colleagues, books, and experiences. And it is created in dialogue with lay-persons.

London and Wiseman note that pastors need to dialogue with their congregations to develop a paradigm for ministry which works in their specific congregation. Pastors need to develop skills that allow them to understand and cope with change and to work cooperatively with their congregations. In both pre-ministry and continuing education this would involve continuing theological discussion about the person and work of pastors and the person and work of lay persons. It would also involve discussing the possibilities of ideas such as shared Christian praxis and action research as approaches to pastoral-congregational dialogue.

Personally I have tried to be more transparent with my congregation about who I am as a person, what I understand my role as pastor to be, and what my aims and objectives as pastor are. As I have been challenged in my understanding of the pastoral role and in my personal self-understanding, I have shared these insights with people in my congregation. I have valued the feedback I received from my interviews and discussions within my own congregation.

The benefits of this honest, open exchange have been several. First, I have become more self-aware and realistic about my own gifts, abilities, and limitations. This has allowed me to recognize areas

in which I need assistance from the congregation. Second, allowing the congregation to appreciate my strengths -- and my weaknesses -- has allowed them to discover where they need to be active to complement my abilities. Third, this mutual awareness of my possibilities has encouraged a spirited discussion about possibilities for lay involvement in ministry. Fourth, as we have discussed how I -- with my persona and understandings of the role of pastor -- and the congregation -- with their persona and understandings of the role of pastor -- can work creatively together, we are seeing new patterns of ministry emerging which emphasize dialogue, cooperation, and flexibility.

2. Theory - practice

Action research helps me to appreciate that theory and practice ought not be separated. Theory -- paradigms of pastoral practice -- needs to be informed by actual pastoral practice. And pastoral practice benefits from the insights of theory. These two can be intertwined in a circle of action and reflection which will help us improve our pastoral practice.

The pastors I interviewed wrestled with this tension. On the one hand they emphasized that their reading, education, and denominational tradition provided them with ideas or frameworks. On the other hand they emphasized that actual practical experience in ministry also shaped their professional development.

Personally, the pilgrimage of engaging in this research has encouraged me to be more intentional about reflecting upon my reading and practice. Through engaging the principles of shared Christian praxis and action research I have become more conscientious in evaluating my practice, in reading to appreciate new theoretical ideas, and in attempting to integrate theory and practice. In addition, I have been challenged to value the insights and ideas of lay persons and colleagues much more highly. I have developed new forms of practice which allow for and encourage collegial forms of ministry. And I have renewed my thinking about pastoral ministry so that I receive more input from lay-people and I am more intentional and systematic in my observation, reflection, and planning in ministry. My pastoral practice has changed.

I have also recognized that, in my congregation, I have had to contextualize the ideas of writers like Thomas Groome and the principles of theories like action research. These concepts, conceived in a traditional school-based context, do not translate perfectly into a congregational context. I have had to reinterpret the theory in light of my pastoral practice. This has encouraged me to reflect in new ways about the role of pastor and nature of pastoral ministry.

In our church, on an ongoing basis, we are now revisiting and revising how we do education and leadership. I am encouraging our lay-people to recognize that we will never "arrive" at a perfect system that will work from one point in time forward. Rather, as times changes, as people within our congregation change, as the personalities of those of us in leadership change, our approaches need to be flexible and change, too. Approaching this as an exciting, creative dynamic in the life of the congregation has helped us overcome some of the fear and insecurity caused by ongoing change. We can endeavor to be proactive rather than reactive in dealing with issues in our congregation and in our community.

3. Pastoral theology - Christian education

A clear current in this thesis is that pastoral theology and Christian education ought not to be distinct subfields of study. Yet, in seminaries, the two are typically considered distinct, unrelated disciplines. In practice, pastors are intimately involved in educational ministry. Certainly the pastors with whom I worked recognized that education was a strong component to their ministries. Most likely, if Christian educators were to turn my question around and ask, "What is the pastoral role of Christian educators?" they would also identify a strong pastoral component to the role of educators.

As I have tried to demonstrate, such a conclusion is hardly surprising given the intimate connection between pastoral and educational ministry within the Christian tradition, biblically and

historically. However this is not a theme which has been well developed in the literature or in seminary programs.

In pastoral practice, however, my research suggests that strong boundaries between pastoral theology and Christian education may not exist. The pastors I interviewed certainly viewed education as a vital emphasis within pastoral ministry. Personally, as I have endeavored to "live" as a pastor-educator, I have discovered that becoming more sensitive to educational possibilities in the various aspects of my ministry is dramatically changing how I minister. As I help shape our worship experiences, I am more cognizant of the educational potential within the movement of worship, including aspects of informal and formal curriculum. As I preach and teach I am more aware of educational issues from discerning the needs of learners, to learning styles, to lesson planning. As I provide pastoral care, I seek to be more sensitive to opportunities to educate people about how the Christian faith speaks to their experience. And in my administrative foundations I seek to be intentionally educational in my approaches to leadership. Self-consciously I am trying to integrate education into all aspects of my pastoral ministry. As I do so, I am discovering that my ministry is more personally rewarding and appears to be helpfully influencing the spiritual life of my congregation.

The challenge for seminaries, and seminary graduates, then, is to integrate these two fields as they appear to be integrated in practice. At one level, dialogue has to occur between those who conduct research and teach in the disciplines of pastoral theology and Christian education. At another level, seminary curricula must allow for a blurring of disciplinary boundaries. At still another level, ministerial students need to see models of collegial, praxis approaches to education in a variety of disciplines at seminary. And at yet another level, pastors in ministry need encouragement to discover educational possibilities and potential within their ministries. They need ideas for how to make the most of these opportunities through such concepts as praxis and action research.

The metaphor of pastor-educator must be discussed. Its possibilities must be considered. And its implications must be the subject of meaningful dialogue, among pastors -- and also in creative dialogue with lay-persons.

4. Pre-ministry education - continuing education

Questions associated with the nature of pastor education programs are many and complex. Certainly my interviews suggested that formal classroom education, particularly in biblical and theological studies, is essential and valid. However what was also apparent was that education, focusing on observing, reflecting, evaluating, and acting in actual ministry contexts, is also critical. While all Master of Divinity programs I considered had practical components, the pastors I interviewed all felt these were inadequate. In continuing education, pastors felt very strongly that educational opportunities needed to be practical in their focus.

One conclusion that emerges from this research is that pastoral education -- whether pre-ministry or continuing education -- must find creative, meaningful ways to encourage collegial discussion and dialogue including faculty, students, pastors and lay-persons. Educational issues must be discussed. And educational strategies must model authentic Christian community. Certainly at both levels creative ways to involve lay-people are perceived as important.

Part of the problem may be a perceived difference between pre-ministry education and continuing education. Church institutional structures (both denominational systems and educational curricula) are ordered such that a specific program of study "qualifies" a person for ministry. Once that program is completed, the assumption is the pastor is adequately prepared. No further education is required. Continuing education may be an option the pastor chooses. But pastors are free not to pursue any further educational opportunities. Rather than seeing pre-ministry and continuing pastoral education as discrete units, perhaps it might be more helpful to encourage a vision of pastoral education as a continuum -- begun in pre-ministry seminary programs and continuing into ongoing educational opportunities for dialogue and learning. Perhaps we need to encourage lifelong learning among pastors.

This would emphasize that, in a sense, one never "graduates" as a pastor; rather, one continually grows in understanding and practice as the context of ministry and the person of the pastor changes.[1]

Another issue is the tension within seminaries, at both pre-ministry and continuing education levels, between their existence as academic research institutions in disciplines such as biblical studies and theology and their existence as institutions which educate pastors. This is significant both in terms of curricular offerings and in educational approaches. It is significant that in all of the institutions I considered, each had a faculty member (or two) responsible for the practical component of the Master of Divinity program. The majority of faculty had no responsibilities for the supervision of students in actual ministry contexts. Indeed only two seminaries indicated that the faculty member responsible for the practical component routinely supervised students, on site, in ministry. No college had a policy that faculty had to have pastoral experience. This may suggest, then, that as colleges create learning opportunities and curricula for pre-ministry students and pastors in continuing education, they may or may not discern the actual needs of their students and may or may not be in constructive dialogue with the congregations in which their students minister. Certainly there is the need for good education, both at the pre-ministry and continuing education levels in biblical studies and theological disciplines, but this needs to be conducted in concert with pastors and lay members of congregations.

My experiences in graduate education have emphasized the importance of thoughtful reflection and practical application, both at the pre-ministry and continuing education levels. The most useful courses I recall challenged me to think through my ideas and to experiment, in practice, with what I was learning. The least useful courses gave me considerable content knowledge with little encouragement for reflection or opportunity for application. My experience and my research with other pastors suggests that many seminary courses, particularly at the Master of Divinity level, emphasize improving knowledge with little reflection or application to pastoral ministry. In contrast, my experience is graduate work in geography at the University of British Columbia, and, particularly, in education at the University of Alberta, has emphasized reflection, integration, and application. My hope would be that a seminar model of education, with an emphasis on critical reflection and personal application would become increasingly prevalent in all levels of pastoral education.

As I continue to explore the metaphor of pastor-educator, I continue to appreciate the creative tension inherent within that metaphor. The juxtaposition of "pastor" -- a metaphor of compassionate care, wise leadership, and vigilant oversight -- and "educator" -- a metaphor of nurturing spiritual, social, moral, and physical development and growth -- encourages me to appreciate the tremendous diversity of pastoral ministry. I am continually reminded that I need to appreciate that pastoral ministry is tremendously diverse activity. Bringing these two concepts -- of shepherd and teacher -- together encourages me to have a broad vision for my role. It also challenges me to be creative, finding new ways to combine education into my pastoral ministry.

At the same time, a pastor-educator metaphor helps me find focus and direction in ministry. In the early chapters of this thesis I identified voices in the literature who emphasized that pastors are perplexed, confused, and frustrated. These writers suggested that the expectations of pastors, coupled with a poorly developed notion of pastoral ministry, meant that pastors struggled to find meaning and purpose. Changes within both churches and general society were reshaping the nature of pastoral ministry.

Personally, I have found this exploration of the metaphor of pastor-educator profoundly helpful. On a practical level, it has helped me appreciate the purpose behind much of what I do as a pastor. I do most of the same pastoral activities I have always done -- leading worship, preaching and teaching, providing pastoral care and counseling, and giving overall leadership and administrative support -- but I do so with a new vision. The underlying theme between much of my work now is education. I attempt to

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[1]One strong concern among Christian educators is to encourage lifelong learning among church members. They suggest we often take a schooling approach to Christian education; you "graduate" once you reach your teen years (Roehlkepartain 1993, Foster 1994). Perhaps modeling a lifelong learning model of pastoral education would reinforce the need for lifelong Christian faith development among lay Christians.

appreciate the educational potential latent in these many, varied activities. And I try to be more intentional in taking advantage of them.

This metaphor has revolutionized how I do ministry. The concepts of shared Christian praxis and action research have encouraged me to be intentional and systematic in my personal reflection and integration of theory and practice. These notions have also insisted that I enter into meaningful dialogue with colleagues and lay persons in my own congregation. As I have consciously endeavored to involve lay people in the action research process I have been excited to see many of these persons become proactive in leadership in the congregation. In some contexts in our congregation, my role is more of the facilitator of a process in which lay persons provide key leadership. Certainly this has challenged me to appreciate my new role. It has also encouraged me to see lay persons using their gifts and abilities in the church.

At a theoretical level, this research has encouraged me by helping rediscover some of the biblical and historical roots of pastoral ministry. Early in my research I reviewed my notes from courses in pastoral theology from two seminaries. None of the courses created a biblical or historical framework for pastoral ministry. I have appreciated recovering these biblical and historical roots. It has been helpful for me, as I explore the pastor-educator metaphor, to appreciate that I am not proposing s radical, new paradigm. Rather, what I am exploring is a very old paradigm. I have been revisiting a paradigm with a rich biblical and historical tradition. I have begun to appreciate that as a pastor-educator I am following in a long tradition dating back to the earliest Christian communities.

Recommendations for Further Research

This paper has been an exploratory study. Personally, it has raised at least as many questions as it answered. Several directions for further research and study clearly emerge:

1. Pastor-educator Metaphor

I have proposed a metaphor of "pastor-educator" as a helpful context in which pastors might consider their work. Several aspects of this metaphor merit further investigation:

a. Historical research

I examined much biblical and early church literature on the person and work of pastors. However I was not able to an exhaustive study of all early church documents. Although I have some facility in the original languages, I am not proficient in Greek and Latin. My reading was limited to works in translation. Therefore, a more exhaustive investigation of this metaphor in the earliest Christian communities would be a helpful complement to my initial research.

My historical overview of this metaphor through almost two thousand years of church history was scanty at best. Further investigation of this metaphor throughout ecclesiastical history would be fruitful. Osmer (1990) provides a reasonable summary of major reformation theologians' thinking on pastors and their educational visions. Cooke (1976) provides a good introduction to Roman Catholic pastoral theology through the ages. However more comprehensive studies exploring this particular metaphor would be helpful.

b. A larger sample

In my research I explored my own experiences with this metaphor, and, to a lesser extent, the experiences of five of my colleagues. Certainly further research on the experiences of other pastors is essential. The limitations and delimitations of my research suggest that the experiences of integrating

education into pastoral ministry in others' thinking and praxis needs to be explored. The more of this research that can occur, the richer our understanding of the educational nature and potential of pastoral ministry will emerge.

One theme I noted in my research, in contrast to that reported in the literature, is that the pastors I interviewed were much less negative about pastoral ministry than might be anticipated. The literature presents a very bleak view of pastoral ministry. The implication is that all pastors, everywhere, are dispirited, frustrated, and confused. The pastors I interviewed certainly recognized challenges and difficult issues in ministry, but, in general, they enjoyed their work. This suggests that more careful research about the nature of pastor's experiences may be warranted. On the one hand, my colleagues may be anomalies. On the other hand, the literature may focus more on the problems of ministry than on presenting a balanced analysis of pastoral experience.

Research strategies

In this research I proposed action research as one possible strategy pastors may wish to consider to improve their pastoral practice. I have emphasized this one approach because I, personally, have found it very helpful in my ministry. Clearly, however, it is only one strategy among many which pastors may wish to consider. I believe it would be very fruitful for research to consider the possibilities of several other research strategies as they might be applied to pastors and pastoral ministry. Qualitative studies might include:

- ethnographies,
- case studies,
- grounded theory approaches,
- participant-observation studies, and
- phenomenological studies.

The pastors I interviewed had no background in research methodology. Indeed research techniques were not on the curricula of any seminary, except -- to a limited extent -- in Doctor of Ministry programs. Research then in how various research techniques could be made available to pastors would be helpful. Topics which might be of value might include:

- interview techniques,
- questionnaire and survey design,
- observation techniques,
- participant-observation approaches,
- document analysis and literature review strategies,
- data recording approaches, and
- quantitative research methodologies.

Issues such as writing and reporting about research and concerns about validity and reliability might also be helpful topics for discussion.

Seminary curricula

Another area for further research would be the nature of seminary education and the perceptions of pastors and lay-people regarding seminary education. Considerable literature by seminary faculty and the Association of Theological Schools exists. However very little uses seminary graduates, and their experiences, as data. Few studies have been published which seek to explore the experiences of seminary students and their evaluation of the education they received. None, to my knowledge, have explored the concerns and ideas of lay-people.

My research has suggested that this may be a valuable direction for further research. Certainly pastors and lay-people have opinions on the curricular content and curricular form which ought to exist in seminaries. My research also suggests that seminary graduates have to make tremendous adjustments in their thinking as they enter pastoral ministry. Artificial disciplinary boundaries may need to be broken down in seminaries to assist in the transition from seminary to church. Curricular content has to be contextualized to "real world" situations. Some pastors suggested that traditional academic learning styles needed to be "unlearned" in the collegial environment of the congregation.

My interviews suggest that seminaries may wish to explore more actively the experiences and opinions of their graduates. They also may wish to involve lay-people in the evaluation of their program content and methodologies. Most likely this would produce many ideas and challenges. Although on the one hand these may appear as threats to seminaries, they could also be viewed as opportunities for creative and innovative change. Potentially, seminaries may find themselves with stronger support bases. If seminaries were to sincerely and conscientiously seek out the input of pastors and lay-people and integrate these ideas into their formal and informal curricula, they may discover renewed support.

In Conclusion

As I began writing this concluding chapter, I noted these words in my journal:

> I lie awake tonight wondering what it is I want to say. I have raised more questions than answers. I feel like I have sneaked a peek into Pandora's Box ... and the questions just keep coming and coming. What is a pastor? In the course of a day, a week, a year, I am a leader, I am a wounded healer, I am a prophet, I am a midwife, I am a priest, I am a teacher, I am a prophet, I am a shepherd. Yes, in the words I love to hate, "I am all of this and more!' And that's where the fun of it all is! The excitement is in the challenge. The thrill is in never knowing what's next.
>
> But I still believe in my heart of hearts there has to be a center. There has to be a focus. "Jesus saw they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things." The good shepherd teaches. The good shepherd has compassion and teaches. I do believe that is much, much more than leading a class. It certainly is much, much more than preaching. What I am learning, more and more clearly, is that life as a pastor provides me with educational opportunities at every turn. Through my caring, I can teach about God's love and compassion. Through my leading I teach, about God's work in the world. Through worship I teach, about who God is and how we approach him. More profoundly, I am appreciating that who I am teaches, too. I teach God's love and compassion, not just by sharing John 14, but by modeling genuine care and compassion. In a mysteriously disturbing way, people experience God through me. Through my leadership I teach, not just principles of faith, but by demonstrating what being a servant leader -- what being a faith-filled leader -- is all about. In worship, as I worship God -- reverently, honestly, expressively -- I teach others. And as I teach or preach -- forget what I say -- how I say it (and -- even more importantly -- how I live it) teaches people.
>
> I never wanted to be a teacher! Oh, how badly I wanted to break the family tradition! But here I am! Most wretched of creatures! No! Most privileged of creatures. Privileged to teach Life. Real Life. What greater privilege -- what greater honor -- than to have in my hands the gift of Life! And to have to teach it. God help me!

I thank God that, as the world is all before me as a pastor, I go hand in hand with Him.

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- Baptist Union of Western Canada (BUWC) Christian Education Committee (1994 -)
- Edmonton Baptist (BUWC) Ministerial; President (1996 - 1998), Treasurer (1993 - 1998)
- Mentor for two BUWC ordination candidates
- Speaker at Gull Lake Baptist Camp
- Colchester-Pictou Baptist Association, NS, Moderator (1992-1993)
- Colchester Food Bank Association Board, Truro, NS (1990-1993)
- Commencement Speaker, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, Truro, NS (1992)
- Springwater Christian Center Board, Digby, NS (1988-1993)
- BUWC, BC Area, Church Planting and Renewal Committee (1987-1989)
- Co-Founder/Co-Director, UBC Graduate-Faculty Christian Forum (1988-1989)
- Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship (UBC), Small Group Leader (1981-1986)
- IVCF International Friendship Group (UBC), Small Group Leader (1982-1986)

Publications:

"Living " Education: Action Research as a Practical Approach to Congregational Education. Accepted for publication in Religious Education.

'No! Not a Shepherd!' Who Do Pastors See Themselves To Be? The Clergy Journal 74(4) February 1998.

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Crossing Points. A weekly religion column in the central Nova Scotia Daily news. 1991-1993.

Old lies in the new age. Atlantic Baptist. April 1992.

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Campus quirks: a guide to surviving first year at UBC. The Magazine, 1986.

Awards:

Acadia Divinity College:

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University of British Columbia:

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Canadian Association of Geographers Undergraduate Prize
Dr. J. Lewis Robinson Scholarship
Wm. and Ada Isabelle Steel Scholarship
University of British Columbia Scholarship
Norman Mackenzie Alumni Scholarship

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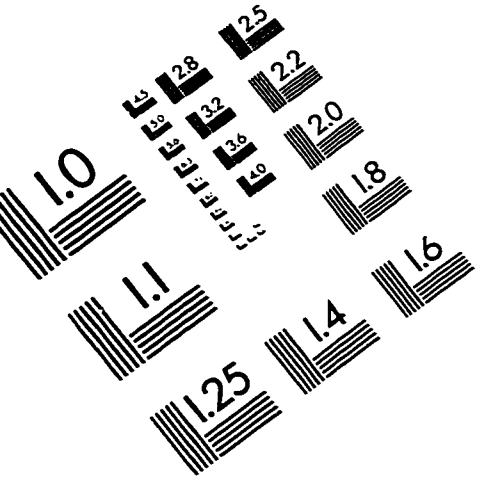

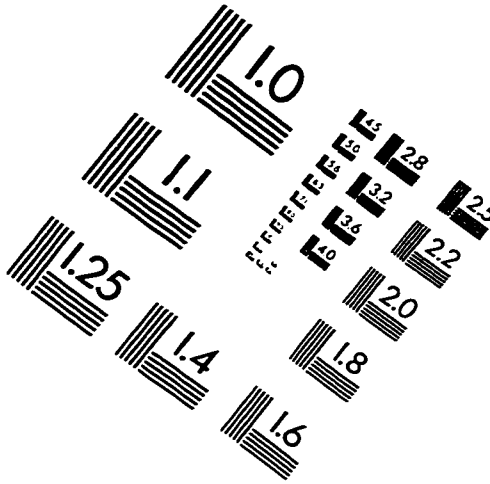

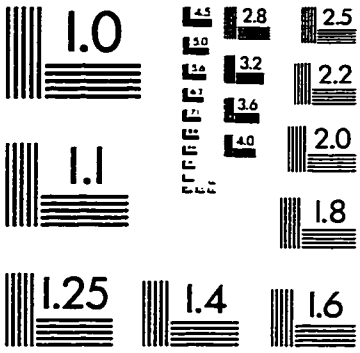

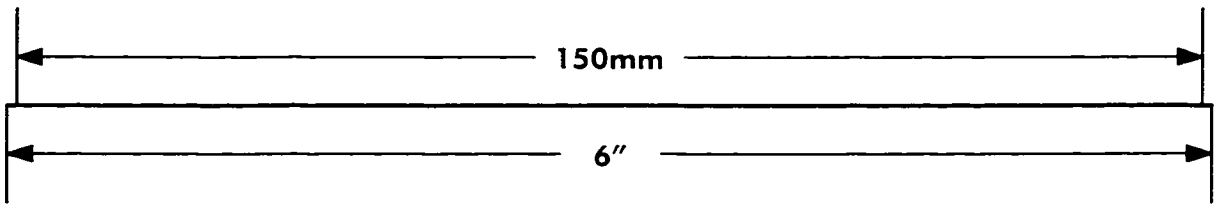

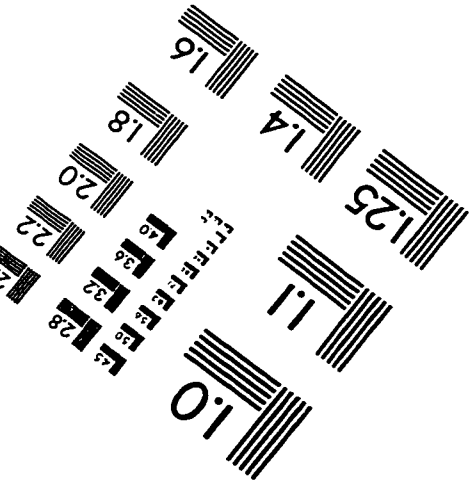

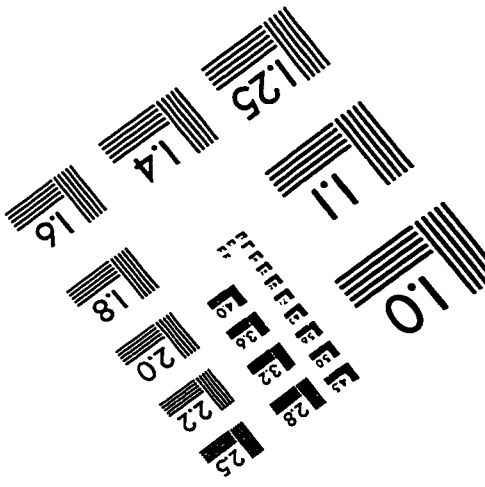

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