



A Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP CONSULTING GROUPS

A Program Description



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Introduction

Leadership, while not the primary vocational calling of pastors in the Lutheran theological tradition, is an extremely important pastoral function. It is one that, if carried out in an effective and integrative manner, can lend great support and stability to the pastor's primary calling (the ministry of preaching and teaching the Gospel, and administering the sacraments according to the Gospel), to the person chosen to carry out that calling, and to the congregation to which one is called. Good pastoral leadership does this by fostering thinking and behavior that effectively and faithfully turns attention away from both the personal and interpersonal issues and agendas of the pastoral leader and of those whom s/he is called to serve, in order to focus attention on the Gospel and the meaning of the gospel for the church and for the world, which is the primary vocation of the pastor and the congregation.

Rationale

Very few of the pastors serving in our congregations today have received specific education and training in the field of pastoral leadership. (While a goodly number of pastors have participated in the Synod's "Healthy Congregations" emphasis, this program has focused primarily on the congregation and not specifically and in depth on the leadership of the pastor as such.) Fewer yet have reflected deliberately upon how the task of pastoral leadership fits theologically within the pastoral office; and even fewer have a grasp of the distinctive way in which the Lutheran theological tradition understands pastoral leadership in relation, generally, to the Office of the Ministry, and, more specifically, to the Pastoral Office. The Virginia Synod has attempted to address this concern through the establishment and development of pastoral leadership consulting groups. Under the direction of appropriately credentialed group leaders with specific education and experience in Bowen Family Systems Theory, and its application to the Office of Ministry, clergy will have an opportunity to participate in a Basic and/or Advanced Consulting Group with other colleagues.

Purpose and Goal

The purpose of the Synod's "Pastoral Leadership Consulting Groups" is to deepen participants' theological and behavioral understanding of, and capacity for, leadership as it pertains to the pastoral office. Their goal is to educate and nurture participants in the development and growth of their understanding of, and capacity for, effective pastoral leadership.

The theological foundation for these groups is rooted in Luther's theological tradition. Their predominant theoretical and practical basis in the social sciences is Bowen Family Systems Theory, with particular attention being paid to the work of Edwin H. Friedman and his integration of Bowen theory and practice into the life and work of clergy and congregations.

Objectives

1. To develop and cultivate a theological foundation for participants' pastoral leadership by exploring the relationship between Lutheran Pastoral Theology (specifically The Theology of the Pastoral Office) and the task of pastoral leadership.
2. To develop participants' understanding of Bowen theory and its foundational concepts as this pertains to pastoral leadership.
3. To explore and reflect upon the basics of faithful/effective pastoral leadership within a congregational system.
4. To explore the relationship between differentiated leadership and developmental maturity.
5. To foster the integration of Lutheran Pastoral Theology and Bowen Family Systems Theory into participants' self-understanding and their practice of pastoral leadership.
6. To encourage and enable participants to grow and mature personally and vocationally as faithful and effective pastoral leaders.

Strategies:

The above goal and objectives are to be achieved through the development of consulting groups made up of seven to eight pastors, under the guidance of a qualified facilitator who has both expertise and experience in Bowen Family Systems Theory and its application to the pastoral leadership of congregations.

Each group will meet for nine three-hour sessions during an approximate twelve (12) to fifteen (15) month period.

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