

INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES:
A STUDY OF A CLERGY MEMBER'S SENSE-MAKING BEHAVIOR IN
PREPARING THE SUNDAY SERMON

by

Daniel R. Roland

Emporia, Kansas

November 2007

A Dissertation

Presented to

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment

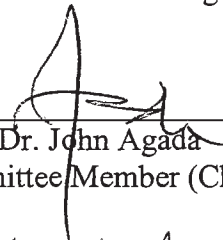
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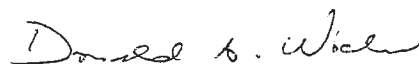
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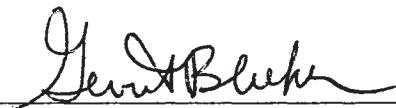
Dr. John Agada
Committee Member (Chair)



Dr. Herbert Achleitner
Committee Member



Dr. Donald Wicks,
Kent State University
Committee Member



Dr. Gerrit Bleeker
Dean of the School of Graduate
Studies and Research

PROPOSAL ACCEPTANCE FORM

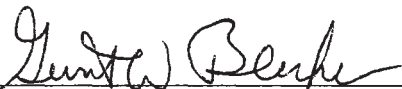
Name of Student Daniel Reece Roland

Title of Dissertation Relating Faith to the Modern World: A Study in the Sense-Making Behavior of Clergy in Preparing the Sunday Sermon

Signatures:



Dr. Robert Grover
Dean of the School of Library and Information Management



Dr. Gerrit Bleeker
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research



Dr. John Agada
Committee Member (Chair)



Dr. Herbert Achleitner
Committee Member



Dr. Donald Wicks, Kent State University
Committee Member



Daniel Reece Roland
Doctoral Candidate

Abstract

The research project is a single case study of a clergy member's Sense-Making behavior in the interpretation of Scripture for the weekly Sunday sermon. Dervin's Sense-Making Theory provides the interpretative framework for the qualitative study. Through a series of unstructured and semi-structured interviews, the researcher explored how a clergy member goes about the routine task of sermon preparation. Sermon preparation requires the clergy member to bridge a historical gap of more than sixteen hundred years between contemporary and Biblical times in order to interpret and apply Scripture to contemporary life. The research project findings established links to previous studies in the Sense-Making literature and in the library and information science literature. An agenda for further research is proposed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In any given week, an estimated 20% to 40% of the people who live in the United States attend a religious worship service. (Newport, 2004; Hardaway & Marler, 1998) From the earliest days of the Christian faith, preaching has been a common element of worship services (May & Metzger, 1977, Acts 20:7, p. 1348) and by the fourth century, the sermon was an integral part of what had become a standardized order of worship. (Meagher, O'Brien, & Aherne, 1979, p. 2856) The definition of a sermon is a discourse delivered or preached within the context of a worship service which explains a text of a Bible passage or which instructs on matters of faith and morals. (Meagher, et al., 1979, p. 3261)

Persons who attend Christian worship services expect the pastor to be competent in preaching and in “relating faith to the modern world,” which is defined as “sensitive interpreting and teaching the gospel in contemporary life.” (Schuller, Strommen, & Brekke, 1980, p. 41) This expectation places the pastor in a role likened to that of a special librarian:

In the public arena, the pastor’s most visible image is probably that of the interpreter of sacred text, particularly in the Sunday morning message. Like the special librarian in the corporate setting who deciphers arcane data and synthesizes a multitude of materials in order to present to constituents relevant, decision-oriented information, so too the pastor ‘interprets’ key sources in order to facilitate change. (Tanner, 1992, p. 81)

The arcane data in this case is the Bible. The Bible is a collection of 66 separate books written by hand over the course of hundreds of years, in different original languages. A countless number of individuals have translated, transcribed, and copied it leading to the likelihood of errors, instances of editorial liberty, and mistranslations. The Bible originates in the oral tradition so that the written records came long after the fact. The 66 books of the Bible represent only a portion of the scores of books written in the early days of the church. Many more books exist which claim to be letters of the early church leaders or accounts of the life of Jesus. More than 1600 years ago, church councils selected and canonized the 66 books of the Bible to be of sacred origin.

The current research project sought to discover the information seeking and use behavior of a clergy member as he goes about the weekly task of interpreting Scripture in preparation of a sermon. The Sense-Making theory of Brenda Dervin has proven useful in the study of information seeking and use behavior in routine task completion by members of other professions such as engineering, architecture, and financial auditing. Sense-Making theory served as the interpretative framework for the current study in order to compare the findings with previous studies. The study utilized an in-depth single-case study methodology to explore the information resources, routines, belief systems, and contextual situations of the informant and their effect on the sermon preparation process.

The Research Questions

The primary question that guided the research project was “What is the information seeking and use behavior of a clergy member regarding the interpretation of Scripture for preparing a weekly sermon?” The research project sought to answer this question by focusing on three particular aspects of the sermon preparation process:

1. The selection of a Biblical text from which to preach.
2. The role of the informant's contextual situation in the decisions made regarding the interpretive contents and overall direction of the sermon.
3. The goals that the informant hoped to accomplish with the sermon.

Research Question 1: How Does a Clergy Member Go About Choosing a Scripture Text or Topic From Which to Prepare the Sunday Sermon?

A special librarian receives a request or an assignment to conduct an information search on a particular topic and then present the findings to a client or employer. The clergy member, however, is free to choose the information to research, interpret, and present in the form of a sermon. Such an arrangement places the clergy member in a position of considerable power and influence over those who hear the sermon. The current research project sought to discover how the clergy member dealt with the opportunities and responsibilities of this situation in terms of the scripture texts or topics selected for the sermon.

Research Question 2: What are the Factors That Affect How a Clergy Member Interprets Scripture?

A key challenge for the professional librarian is to determine the essential information that a client is seeking. Depending on the complexity of the information request, the librarian engages the client in a reference interview in order to assist the client in clearly articulating the exact information sought rather than presuming to know or interpret what the client needs. The professional librarian strives to be neutral in this process and to minimize the influence of personal values and beliefs. The goal is to avoid

making a decision on behalf of the client in order to let the client decide the exact nature and attributes of the final information product.

By contrast, the clergy member decides what the worship service audience will hear in the sermon. Even if a clergy member is receptive to suggestions from church members to preach a sermon on a particular text or topic, the sermon is still the clergy member's interpretation of the text or topic. As will be presented in more detail below, each sermon is a unique interpretation even when clergy members are from the same denomination, have comparable levels of education, and are preaching on the same text from the Bible. The current research project sought to discover how the various attributes of the informant's life context affect the process by which he interprets Scripture in the sermon preparation process.

Research Question 3: What Goals Does a Clergy Member Hope to Accomplish With the Sunday Sermon?

As is true in the library and other service-oriented professions, the sermon delivery situation is an opportunity for the clergy member to inform and/or to educate the sermon audience. A librarian may choose to give a patron an answer to a reference question or may choose to use the opportunity to teach the patron how to find the answer in an attempt to improve the patron's information literacy. In the former case, the patron must accept or reject the answer given based on accepting the authority and competence of the librarian. In the latter case, the patron receives the means to find an answer that is personally correct.

Likewise, the sermon can be a simple reinforcement of the particular positions and doctrines of the Christian faith in general or a denomination in particular so that the

sermon tells the audience what to believe. The sermon can be an examination of a particular issue from different perspectives so that members of the sermon audience are encouraged to come to their own conclusions and to articulate what they believe to be true for themselves. These are but two of many different possible goals that a clergy member might have for a sermon. The current research project sought to discover the goals of the clergy member in the sermon preparation and delivery process.

The Purpose and the Need for the Study

The purpose of the research project was to discover and describe the process by which a single clergy member interprets Scripture in the preparation of his Sunday sermons. Towards this end, the research project sought to identify particular decisions made regarding the selection of Scripture text, topic, illustrations, other interpretations, and overall goals for the sermon. The research project then sought to explore in depth what effect the unique situation and circumstances of the life context of the clergy member has on these decisions. The goal of the research project is to generate a greater understanding of the process by which clergy members assist people make sense of the knowledge recorded within Scripture.

Dervin has written that:

Knowledge is the sense made at a particular point in time-space by someone.

Sometimes, it gets shared and codified; sometimes a number of people agree upon it; sometimes it enters into a formalized discourse and gets published; sometimes it gets tested in other times and spaces and takes on the status of facts.

Sometimes, it gets imprimatured and becomes unjust law; sometimes it takes on

the status of dogma. Sometimes it involves reconceptualizing a world. (1998, p. 36)

The current research project defines a sermon as a knowledge product created by a clergy member to meet the perceived needs of those who attend worship services. Clergy members select and study a Scripture text, then prepare and deliver a sermon that interprets the Scripture in order to achieve particular goals that the clergy member has for the congregation. Sermons, therefore, are shared knowledge products. A number of people may agree with this knowledge; the sermon might be published in print or electronic format; one or more of those who hear it might test it so that the knowledge takes on the status of fact; the sermon may become unjust law or dogma. Sermons are prevalent and influential knowledge products in society and therefore deserving of attention from the library and information science field.

Comparing four sermons prepared by United Methodist clergy for Easter Sunday, April 15, 2001 illustrates the complex nature of the research problem. The sampled data presented below controls for variables of denominational affiliation, sermon topic, and date of delivery. One might expect that sermons prepared for and delivered on the most important day of the year in the Christian faith would be very similar, focused as they are on the story of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead. However, the sampling yields four very different sermons.

One sermon focused on questions regarding the stone used to seal the tomb of Jesus as distracting from the central theme of the story. (Anderson, 2001) Rather than being caught up in the practical questions of how the stone was rolled away and how a

dead body lived again, the clergy member challenged his audience to ask the essential question of what an empty tomb meant to them individually.

Another sermon delivered on the same day by another United Methodist clergy member focused on the difference between resurrection and resuscitation and informed the audience that the story was a legend and not to be taken literally. (Schreve, 2001) However, a third United Methodist clergy member proclaimed on the same day that something “cosmic in dimension” (i.e., the literal raising from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth) happened on the first Easter. (Thompson, 2001) A fourth sermon delivered on April 15, 2001 by yet another United Methodist clergy member made a connection between Easter Sunday and the usual deadline for filing income taxes in the U.S. by speaking from the paraphrase that nothing is certain in life but death, taxes, and resurrection. (Olmstead, 2001)

The lack of similarity beyond denominational affiliation, Scripture text, and topic in these sermons imply that the preparation and development of a sermon is a highly individual process for each clergy member. What factors in the life-context of each of these clergy members might explain the differences in the interpretation of each of these sermons? What would the clergy members identify as the goal of their particular Easter sermon? What did they hope to accomplish with the examples they used and the points they made? The current research project sought to discover the uniqueness of the Scripture interpretation and sermon preparation process through an in-depth study of a single clergy member in terms of experience, education, belief, and assumptions as factors, which influence the goals, contents, and process by which the clergy member prepares his sermon.

Background Information for the Study

The Community

A community in the Midwest region of the country served as the study locale. The community has a population of more than 26,000 people and is home to a public university with an enrollment of more than 6,000 students. The latest statistics from the United States Census Bureau indicate that the median age of community members is 28 years and that the community is 78% White and 22% Hispanic. More than 50% of the population has some college education. The median household income is slightly less than \$31,000 per year and the number of families living below the poverty level exceeds 12%. The employment rate is nearly 67%, including 61% of women over the age of 16 years. The unemployment rate is less than 5%. Manufacturing, education, and retail trade are the leading sources of employment, respectively. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)

The local Chamber of Commerce lists 47 churches and places of worship located within the city limits, which equates to approximately one church for every 565 persons. The community has at least five churches that serve the Hispanic community and three churches are primarily African-American in membership.

The Informant and His Congregation

The informant for the study is a White male and is between 50 and 60 years of age. He was born and raised in the Midwest. At 12 years of age, he and his family joined and became quite active in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Early in his high school years, the informant decided that he would like to pursue the path to becoming a priest in the Lutheran church. The informant graduated from a Lutheran Church –

Missouri Synod seminary. He was ordained and served one congregation in that denomination for 13 years before switching denominations to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He has nearly 30 years of experience in local church ministry, has served congregations in three different states in the Midwest, and indicates that his current congregation will most likely be the last one that he serves before retirement.

The congregation served by the informant organized in 1884 and for calendar year 2005, the membership numbered 369 and the average Sunday morning worship attendance was 79. The ethnic composition of the congregation is more than 99% White. In calendar year 2005, the congregation made nearly \$200,000 in capital improvements to their building facility, which doubled the total annual disbursements from previous years. (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America , 1999-2006)

The Denominational Context of the Informant

In 1986, The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Lutheran Church in America, merged to become the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The denomination traces its roots to the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. (Roots of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, n. d.) It has nearly 5,000,000 members and more than 10,000 congregations throughout the country. The denomination has more than 17,000 clergy members, nearly 80% of which are White men, 18% are women, and 3% are people of color. (ELCA Quick Facts, 2005)

Because the informant for this study received his seminary education and began his ministry in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), it is important to note the differences between this denomination and the ELCA. The official website of the LCMS

articulates the main differences between the two denominations. The LCMS differentiates itself from the ELCA by taking definitive positions on the following issues:

1. The LCMS considers the Bible to be without error “in all that it says” while the ELCA believes that Scripture is not always accurate on such matters as science and history.
2. The LCMS does not ordain women for ministry, the ELCA does.
3. The LCMS unequivocally rejects homosexuality, while the ELCA does not have an official position. (What Are the Main Differences ... , 2007)

The official website of the ELCA also includes a FAQ on differences between the two denominations, but mentions only the differences in the interpretation of Scripture as the cause for a split into two separate denominations more than thirty years ago. (Frequently Asked Questions ... , n. d.)

Sense-Making Theory as the Interpretive Framework

In the last 30 years, the field of library and information management has moved towards a new research paradigm. The new paradigm seeks to replace the traditional research perspective that defines information as having constant meaning and absolute nature independent of the information seeker. The new understanding of information is as something constructed by the information seeker from a unique situation of need. The traditional research perspective attempts to discover information user behavior that applies across multiple physical situations. The new research paradigm recognizes that information users operate from unique situations in time or situational moments. The traditional research perspective focuses on how information users intersect with information systems. The new research paradigm focuses on information user behavior

both within and without information systems to examine behavior outside of system constraints. (Dervin, 1986)

Dervin's Sense-Making theory is one of several interpretive frameworks used by the field of library and information management to conduct research in the new paradigm. The fundamental principle of Sense-Making theory is that gaps exist in the planes of time and space between people, their moments in history, and geographical locations. These gaps are a constant condition of what it means to be human. (Dervin 1991) Each human being moves through his or her life on a unique path of time and space and experiences the world as no other person has done before or ever will again. Every individual who hears a sermon on any given Sunday will hear, see, feel, understand, accept, or reject it in a unique and different way from every other person. Similarly, each week every individual clergy member prepares a sermon in a unique way because each clergy member is at a different time and place with each experience of sermon preparation.

The Sense-Making metaphor presented in Figure 1 illustrates the challenge facing the clergy member. With each sermon, a gap confronts the clergy member between his moment in history and the moment of those persons who lived in Biblical times, who created the stories passed from generation to generation for many hundreds of years before the stories were put to pen and paper. Because the clergy member is unable to communicate with those persons for clarification of original meaning and actual events, the clergy member must decide how to interpret the Scriptures in a world that is radically different from that of Biblical times. While all clergy members face the same historical

gap between Biblical and contemporary times, each clergy member faces the gap from a unique situation constructed of individual experiences, education, and beliefs.

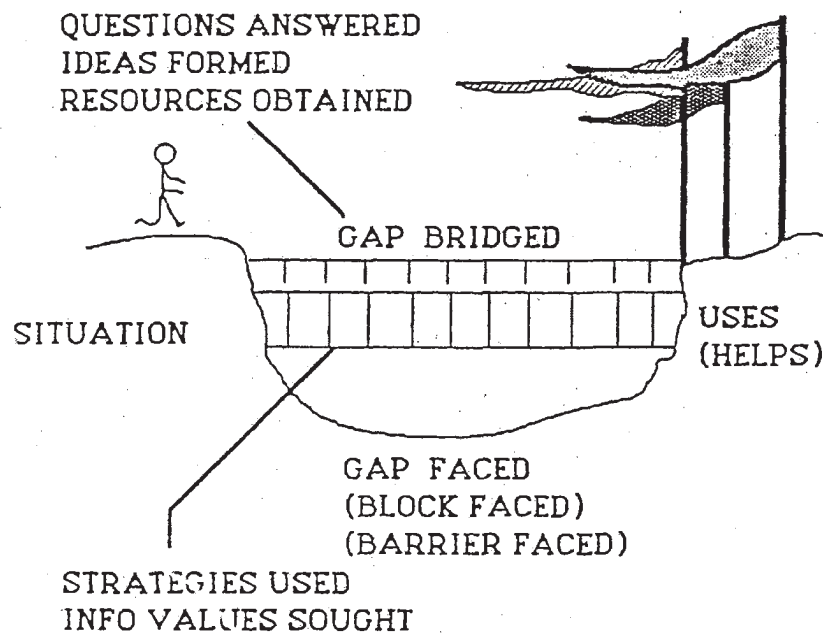


Figure 1. *The Sense-Making metaphor* (Dervin, 1992, p. 68).

Sense-Making theory defines an information need as a situation in which “the individual’s internal sense has run out” (Dervin & Nilan, 1986, p. 21) and a need for new sense has emerged. In this situation, the individual faces a gap or a “stop” in knowledge and must engage in particular forms of behavior such as observing, thinking, creating ideas, comparing, contrasting, rejecting, talking, agreeing, and disagreeing. These behaviors are the building materials used to construct a bridge across the gap so that the individual can continue on the journey with the knowledge necessary to keep moving in the chosen direction. (Dervin, 1991, p. 64)

The Sense-Making method focuses on the behavior of individuals as they encounter a gap, how they use information to create a bridge to cross the gap, and then continue on their journey. The nature of the gap or stop categorizes the situation. The individual may not be able to proceed until deciding between two or more choices. The individual may be taking a path of another's choosing. Movement may stop because the individual cannot see the path or it is completely blocked. There may be concern for how many others are also on the path or who will follow the path chosen by the individual. (Dervin, 1986, p. 21) Next, the Sense-Making method focuses on the aids or helps used to make a decision, bridge the gap, or otherwise get back on the chosen path for one's journey. Such aids and helps tend to fall into categories of getting ideas, finding direction, gaining skills, getting started, getting connected, getting support, and reaching the goal. (Dervin, 1986)

Sense-Making theory considers information seeking and use behavior within the context of the phenomenological horizon of the individual's world. The individual has arrived at the current moment from a particular past. Past and present behavior of the individual, other individuals, and social institutions all affect the path toward the future.

Sense-Making theory holds that institutional and individual a priori instruction, socialization, and hegemony influences thinking and the potential to create ideas, but such traditions may not be enough to bridge every gap that individuals encounter in their journey through time and space. (Dervin, 1999) This premise is vital to the current research project in that clergy members must function and travel through life in a mode that requires drawing on individual knowledge, experience and decision making abilities, as well as a belief in things unseen and unproven, which requires faith. Full ordination as

a clergy member in a particular denomination usually follows only upon completion of an extensive seminary education, a probationary period of socialization with fellow clergy, and demonstration of acceptance of denominational hegemony. The ordination ceremony includes a public affirmation of faith in the existence of a divine entity, life after death, and a spiritual dimension to life.

The maintaining of faith is a challenge for even the most devoted of clergy members. The informant for the current study maintains a daily devotional discipline, as do many clergy in order to maintain a desired sense of spirituality and faith. The current study sought to discover what effect faith has on information seeking and use behavior. Wicks (1999) observed that when a clergy member's theology intersects with preaching, the likely result is a closed information system. This means that the clergy tend to limit the use of information resources to those which are in line with their theological system, presumably to keep themselves strong in their faith, to shore themselves up in times of potential doubt. (p. 211)

A final premise of Sense-Making theory that will inform the current research project holds that knowledge or information is essentially mappings of reality generated in a particular time and space and formalized by a particular power system. (Dervin, 1999) This premise speaks to Wicks' (1999) findings of the influence of the seminary education and indoctrination that prepares clergy for becoming ordained members of a particular denomination. However, as demonstrated above, even when clergy members are from the same denomination, speaking on the same topic and at the same point in time a certain lack of uniformity exists in the interpretation of Scripture.

In summary, the current research project utilized the interpretive framework of Sense-Making theory in order to discover the gaps or stops that the clergy member encountered in interpreting Scripture for the sermon preparation process. These gaps include initiating the process with the decision to preach from a particular text or topic; the content of the sermons were considered, then included or discarded; the desired goal for the sermon; and how the contextual situation of the clergy member potentially affects each Sense-Making step in the process. Through listening to the live and recorded delivery of the sermons and in-depth interviews, the researcher identified and classified the behavior in which the informant engaged when faced with a situation needing new sense. Analysis of the data yielded opportunities to explore with the informant instances in which seminary education, age, experience, denominational socialization, and doctrinal hegemony may have affected his Sense-Making behavior. Instances of resistance to the theological world in the consideration of new interpretations received similar attention.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

LIS Studies of the Information Seeking and Use Behavior of Clergy Members

Past studies in the library and information management field concerning clergy members have primarily focused on what clergy members read and how frequently they use libraries. There is little in the professional literature in the way of answers to the question of how clergy members interpret Scripture or the process by which they prepare the Sunday sermon. The few studies conducted stopped short of exploring the effect of what clergy members read on how they interpret Scripture or the contents of the Sunday sermon.

Traditional LIS Studies That Focus on the Information System

One of the earliest studies in the LIS literature sought to categorize the reading habits and interests of clergy members according to how much of their content was of a religious nature. (Lancour, 1944) The study asked clergy members for the titles of the last four books they had read, and all magazines and periodicals they read on a regular basis. The study found that 26% of the titles and 30% of the total books read by clergy members were of a religious nature and that 15% were fiction. Religion, fiction, and biography were the most common categories of clergy reading. The study found that the *Christian Century*, *Reader's Digest*, *Harpers*, and the *Atlantic Monthly* were the most common periodical titles read by clergy, but failed to provide any explanation for these particular reading habits, let alone any connection as to how their reading habits might affect how clergy interpret Scripture or prepare sermons.

Huseman's (1970) study was based on the presumption that clergy members should read daily papers and news magazines in order to facilitate social awareness. "It is essential that a pastor be fully aware of the world to which he makes the proclamation. Only then, can his message be relevant. When it ceases to be relevant, it ceases to be effective." (Huseman, 1970, p. 4) However, rather than focusing on possible connections between clergy member reading habits and sermon relevance and effectiveness, the study focused on the selection and use of books and periodicals by clergy. (Huseman, p. 5) The study found that the majority of the informants

1. Spent an average of 23 hours per week reading.
2. Read an average of nearly 12 books per year.
3. Read more than three books per year on theological subjects.
4. Read more than two books per year on non-theological subjects.
5. Reported using public libraries to access books and periodicals. (Huseman 1970, pp. 7, 10)

The study took the traditional LIS position that information use is always good because it allows the user access to established expertise (Dervin, 1999, p. 739) rather than also considering that information use might also be a hinderance or might generate negative outcomes, including barricades in the process of using one's sense to interpret and understand experiences in the world.

Yet another study assumed a link between a clergy member's use of available information resources and their ability to "minister effectively and with compassion, intelligence, and understanding to people from all walks of life." (Porcella, 1973, p. 6) However, this study also did not focus on sermons or other labors of ministry for

evidence of a relationship between information seeking and ministerial effectiveness. Instead, the study hypothesized that a significant link exists between the doctrinal position of the clergy members and their information seeking and use behavior. The researcher expected to find that clergy with a conservative doctrinal position

1. Limited their information seeking and use to those resources, which focused on Biblical interpretation and exposition.
2. Relied on their personal libraries.
3. Had limited exposure to information on social issues and mass media.

The study expected clergy with a liberal doctrinal position to

1. Rely more on books, journals, magazines, newspapers, television and motion pictures covering a broad spectrum of knowledge.
2. Make regular use of libraries. (Porcella, 1973, pp. 13-14)

Porcella did find a strong correlation between doctrinal position and information seeking and use behavior. Conservative informants tended to limit their reading to the Bible, to books directly related to the Bible, and to devotional materials. Liberal informants displayed stronger interest in information materials of current significance and professional concerns with varying interest in Biblical materials. (Porcella, 1973, p. 98)

The most significant conclusion of Porcella's study for the current research was the suggestion of a correlation between frequency of accessing available information resources and ministerial effectiveness. Porcella found that 82% of conservative clergy reported light to extremely light use of libraries, and that 88% of conservative clergy reported gathering low or no information on social issues. (Porcella, 1973. pp. 72, 86) However, the majority of moderate and liberal clergy in the study reported only light to

moderate use of libraries. (Porcella, 1973, p. 72) While 76% of liberal clergy reported gathering medium to high levels of information on social issues, (Porcella, 1973, p. 86) the study did not link its findings to particular levels of what he considered effective ministry.

LIS Studies That Focus on the Person

Recent studies in the LIS literature focus on clergy members as information resources within the communities they serve. These studies move beyond previous studies focusing on where clergy members access information to focus rather on the extent to which they operate as information professionals, why and how they gather information, and how clergy then disseminate information. (Tanner, 1992, p. 9)

One such study by Tanner focused on the sermon in terms of how clergy disseminate information. The study chose to categorize and quantify sermon topics rather than to explore the factors that affect the topic selection, Scripture interpretation, and the sermon preparation process. The study categorized and quantified information sources used in the sermon preparation process, but did not explore the utilization of certain sources and the neglect of others. However, the study did find that the personality and character of clergy members play a significant role in the nature of the information communicated from the pulpit. The informants for the study demonstrated “a high degree of personal involvement with both their topics and their information sources.” (Tanner, 1992, p. 269) The study reported that several of the informants articulated an ability to preach only on issues with which they were personally struggling and that the second most frequently used information source for sermon preparation was personal experience.

(Tanner, p. 318) The current research project pays attention to similar instances in the sermons of the informant.

Wicks (1999) conducted the most recent LIS study of clergy members and explored the intersection of clergy work role and work world and the combined effect on clergy information seeking and use. The study identified three particular work roles of preacher, administrator, and caregiver and three work worlds of theology, denomination, and congregation (Wicks). Within this matrix, there are certain intersections in which the work role is highly dependent upon or defined by the intersecting work world. For example, the preacher work role is highly dependent upon or defined by the denominational affiliation of the clergy member and the theological doctrine typically associated with the denomination. A person attending a worship service in a congregation of a particular denomination expects the preacher to deliver a sermon that reflects the theological position of the denomination. It is highly unlikely that a clergy member in a denomination known for its conservative theology and positions on social issues will deliver a sermon advocating liberal policies or progressive theology. Other intersections within the matrix would indicate a low dependence upon the work world to define the work role. For example, how the clergy member functions in the administrator work role is far less predicated on denominational affiliation or theological position.

Wicks' study proposed that when the work role and the work world were highly dependent upon each other, the clergy member would operate in a closed information system. In a closed information system, "the individual restricts her or his information-seeking to a limited number of communication contacts." (Wicks, 1999, p. 209) However, when the work role and work world were less dependent upon each other, the

clergy member would operate in a more open information system and utilize a greater variety of information resources. The study defined an open information system as “a pattern of information-seeking where the individual is not restricted to his or her own world(s) while handling information.” (Wicks, 1999, p. 205)

Only the theological position of the informant affected information seeking and use across all three roles (Wicks, 1999, p. 211) and only the administrative role similarly affected all work worlds. (Wicks, p. 205) The informants in the study used a more closed information system when their work role intersected with their theological world, meaning that the informants tended to stay within their theological world when selecting information resources, especially for the preaching role. (Wicks, p. 211) The study found that the preaching role provided the greatest motivation for using libraries, (Wicks, p. 215) but it did not explore potential relationships between information sources used and interpretation of Scripture and the preparation of the sermon.

The Sense-Making literature

Sense-Making Studies of Routine Task Completion

The Sense-Making literature includes studies of Sense-Making behavior in relation to routine task completion by members of various professions. The current researcher determined to compare the findings from these studies with the Sense-Making behavior of the informant in the routine task of sermon preparation. One such study focused on how independent auditors relate the information received from companies to the task of ensuring “that internal controls in the company are in place and adequate, and that established company policies are being followed, and no frauds are taking place.” (Cheuk, 1998, section Auditors' work roles and tasks) Through in-depth interviews,

auditors were encouraged to share real-life descriptions of how they complete audit assignments. A five-stage, multi-directional, non-sequential model was developed. The current study used Cheuk's methodology and model to inform the research project.

In the first stage, the company initiates the task by assigning a company to the auditor with the expectation of a written report on the management effectiveness of the company and suggested areas for improvement. (Cheuk, 1998, Section: Stage 1: task initiating situation) The current research project sought to explore how a clergy member goes about initiating the sermon preparation process in terms of selecting a scripture text and sermon topic on a weekly basis.

In the second stage, the auditor formulates the situation by asking questions in regards to the nature of the client's business, the market condition of the client's business, and the areas of the business or account on which to focus. (Cheuk, 1998, Section: Stage 2: focus formulating situation) The current research project paid attention to examples by which a clergy member articulated a similar process of asking questions of the scripture text and sermon topic.

In the third stage, ideas form and the stage progresses through different sub-stages of assuming, confirming, and/or rejecting ideas. The auditor gathers information for a particular focus area in order to generate ideas. Information gathering may be by trial and error, but the more experienced auditor is able to determine which information source to use. The auditor accepts information at face value in this sub-stage and confirms it in the next. The need to minimize wrong ideas requires confirmation of information. Multiple sources exist for confirmation such as printed vs. verbal data, original sources, and authoritative sources. (Cheuk, 1998, Section: Stage 3: ideas forming situation)

Cheuk found that when the auditors had formalized and confirmed their ideas, there was a fourth stage for finalizing ideas before presenting the final report to the employer and the client. The auditors asked themselves what their manager and company management would think of this idea or comment. (Cheuk, 1998, Section: Stage 4: ideas finalizing situation) The clergy member in the current research project articulated a similar consideration of what the congregation would think of the sermon.

In the final stage, the auditors pass on their ideas in the form of a written report to their manager and client. The informants in Cheuk's study articulated an understanding of effective information delivery determined by an understanding of the target audience, an anticipation of the questions that the target audience had in mind, and providing accurate, clear, and precise answers to them in their report. (Cheuk, 1998, Section: Stage 5: passing on ideas situation) The current research project paid attention to examples by which the clergy member made decisions regarding the scripture text or sermon topic based on an understanding of the congregation, the questions that they have, and how best to convey information in accurate, clear, and precise terms in the form of a sermon.

A follow-up study by Cheuk and Dervin expanded the number of professions to add architects and engineers to auditors as informants. The 24 respondents in the study identified more than 600 "Sense-Making instances," (Cheuk and Dervin, 1999, Section: Data analysis: Sense-Making instances as units of analysis, para. 1) which were then analyzed for types of information-seeking situations and kinds of information behavior used. The study found that members of these three professions shared seven information seeking situation types of which they had similar perceptions of the situation, asked similar questions about the situation and sought similar helps to address the situation. The

findings of the current research project presented in Chapter 4 indicate a similarity in the information behavior of the informant.

Sense-Making and the Study of Personal Conflict with Church Doctrine

At least one study has used the Sense-Making methodology to study how people responded to situations “in which they found their life experiences and choices in conflict with their understanding of Church teaching or practice.” (Coco, 1999, Methodological rationale, para. 3) The study is significant for the current research because it did not focus on how individuals did a job, but rather on how they made sense of church doctrine in their personal lives. The result of the study is “a deep, materially anchored, procedurally connected, and at the same time interpretively rich account of situation facing.” (Coco, 1999, Approaches to analysis, para. 1)

The focus of the current research project is similar in that it centers on how the informant goes about the job of preparing a sermon, while also going deeper to explore how the informant makes sense of scripture and church doctrine. This is a significant difference from many Sense-Making studies. For example, there is no suggestion in Cheuk’s study that her auditor and architect informants may have had issues with the fundamental practices of financial auditing or structural design, respectively. If the numbers on the audit sheet do not balance, then the auditor simply keeps at work gathering more information and checking the numbers until they do balance or the auditor finds an explanation for the imbalance. The auditor’s actions may have consequences for others if rules have been broken and fraud has occurred, but such consequences are not the fault of the auditor. The potential effect of a clergy members’ sermon is much harder to determine. One can only imagine the impact of the Easter

sermons mentioned above in which the clergy member declared that the resurrection is merely legend. The current research project explored the degree to which consideration of the potential impact of the sermon has on the Sense-Making behavior of the clergy member in the sermon construction process.

Coco identified new gap situation categories, which could inform a future research agenda. Coco identified a gap situation in which the informants “had given up subjecting themselves to a tradition whose procedures they felt lacked vigor or any potential to become life-giving.” (Coco, 1999, Approaches to analysis, para. 3) She labeled this gap situation as *effete*. A second situation identified a variation on the Sense-Making category of waiting for a change in circumstances, but with a heightened sense of tension, which Coco labeled as “tight-rope” (Coco, 1999, Approaches to analysis, para. 3) because the informant is very conscious of the possibility of falling from position within the system or organization.

In summary, this review of the literature indicates that the current research project fills a gap in the literature concerning the Sense-Making behavior of the clergy profession. The current study extends beyond previous studies that stopped at identifying the reading interests and information behavior of clergy by examining the nature of and the means by which a clergy member uses information to interpret Scripture for preparing a sermon.

Chapter 3

Methodology

A Qualitative Approach

The current research project sought to understand the information seeking and use behavior of a single clergy member in the interpretation of Scripture for the sermon preparation process. The first and third research questions define the parameters of the process beginning with the choice for a particular scripture text or topic and concluding with the goals that the clergy member hopes to accomplish with the sermon. The second research question seeks to discover the contextual factors that affect decisions regarding sermon content.

The research project utilized a particular methodology to achieve a greater depth of exploration than can be gained by quantifying the reading material and habits of numerous clergy members or by counting the frequency by which clergy members access libraries or other information resources. The data captured both the unique as well as the routine aspects of nuance and context of the sermon preparation task on a week-by-week basis. In order to understand the sermon preparation process more completely, it was necessary to adopt a research approach that created a holistic picture of the informant's thoughts, feelings, and actions in his natural environment. (Creswell, 1998, p. 15)

Single Case Study Method

The study utilizes the qualitative approach in a case study method as recommended for research projects that

1. Focus on developing an in-depth analysis of a particular system bounded in time and place.

2. Will consider multiple sources of data.
3. Will analyze the data in the form of description, themes, and assertions (Creswell, 1998, p. 65).
4. Will emphasize the uniqueness of the case, but not in the sense of how it is different from other cases so much as to deeply understand the elements and their relationships within the context of the particular case itself. (Stake, 1995, p. 8)

As noted previously, the preparation of every sermon is unique to every clergy member even when clergy members belong to the same denomination and are speaking to the same scriptural text and topic. The uniqueness of sermon preparation emanates from the contextual situation of each clergy member, which affects the information seeking behavior of the clergy member. The information-seeking context for Cheuk and Dervin's informants was the organization receiving an audit or requesting a design. The time-space gap was between the informants and the clients and the informants could seek information from the clients in real time. By contrast, clergy members face a gap of more than 1600 years and are unable to communicate directly with the authors of scripture and church doctrine. The task of constructing a sermon that makes sense of scripture and church doctrine in light of current issues is therefore more subjective than the financial audit or architectural design.

The context of the information seeking behavior for the current study is not a client's organization, but the informant himself. The focus of the research was not so much on how the informant sought the necessary information from within an organization in order to complete a task, but rather how the informant interpreted a static

source of information in order to prepare a sermon. The study, therefore, called for an in depth exploration during one unique period in the life journey of the informant.

The Limitations of the Research Methodology

Because the research project has but a single informant, all findings of the research are limited in conclusions that can be drawn and inferences made. While the findings may provide a model and insights to guide future research of other clergy members, the findings are not generalizable to the clergy profession. The study identifies consistent patterns of Sense-Making behavior with the single informant of this study. The researcher hopes to continue the study with a larger sample of clergy members from different denominations using the same methodology in order to discover if these patterns are consistent across the clergy profession.

The Selection of the Informant

In January 2007, the researcher began attending worship services within the community. He selected denominations with which he did not have prior experience or knowledge. Following the worship service, the researcher introduced himself to the clergy member and briefly explained the research project and asked if he might send the clergy member an email message with more detailed information. The researcher visited two congregations within the community and each clergy member agreed to the follow-up email message. One clergy member quickly replied that he did not have the time to participate in the study. The other replied that he was curious to know more so the researcher arranged to meet with this clergy member over lunch in early February 2007.

During the course of the luncheon meeting, the researcher explained the research project in more detail and shared elements of his personal history with the clergy

member, who also shared elements of his personal history. The researcher sensed that the clergy member understood the nature of the research project and that he would be a conscientious and dedicated participant. The clergy member expressed a belief in the validity of the project subject matter and a willingness to participate. The researcher then articulated a possible timeline for the research project and the required procedural steps before the project would begin. The meeting ended with the researcher agreeing to be in touch with the clergy member as the research project progressed toward the data collection stage.

The Researcher as Instrument

The researcher is an ordained clergy member of the United Methodist Church (UMC). During his last year of college, he left the Church of the Nazarene in which he was raised, and worked for congregations in the Presbyterian Church while in seminary. After 11 years in local church ministry, the researcher earned a Master of Library Science degree in order to pursue a career in librarianship.

The researcher is the oldest son of a retired clergy member and followed his father's footsteps into the clergy profession. At a very early age, approximately five years old, the researcher can remember feelings of conviction that he would be a clergy member as an adult. The researcher never seriously considered an alternate career until after becoming a clergy member. While a junior in high school, the researcher's father changed denominations from the conservative Church of the Nazarene to the more moderate United Methodist Church. The researcher continued his membership in the Church of the Nazarene and earned his undergraduate degree from a liberal arts college within the denomination. During his senior year of college, however, he chose to leave

the Church of the Nazarene for the United Methodist Church and then earned his Master of Divinity degree from a UMC seminary. The researcher was ordained as an elder and full-member of the Kansas East Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1986. He served two rural parishes over the course of 11 years.

Like the informant, the researcher knows from experience the stress involved in leaving the religious denomination of one's upbringing both from the perspective of a family member and from the perspective of an ordained clergy member making the change. The change entailed casting doubt on a value system once thought unquestionable. The members of one's newly adopted community engaged in behavior the researcher grew up considering sinful (e.g., the consumption of alcohol). Strained relationships with members of the former community are likely and the clergy member often starts over at "the bottom of the ladder" in terms of status within the new denomination.

The researcher has also experienced the realization that one does not easily transition from a perspective that interprets scripture literally and sees particular issues in terms of right or wrong to a new perspective that is more reasoned and tolerant. From his experience, the researcher understands that the transition from a conservative to moderate or liberal theological perspective does not happen quickly and may indeed take a lifetime to accomplish.

This insider status of the researcher created an environment for a strong rapport with the informant and added a greater depth to the study than might be expected with a researcher who is not a clergy member. There are several instances in the reported findings in which the researcher's knowledge of Scripture and theology led to questions,

which prompted incisive reflections and detailed articulation by the informant, which enhanced the descriptions and authenticity of the findings.

The Data Collection Process

The research project used a systematic process for data collection. The researcher attended three worship services conducted by the informant on three Sundays in April and May 2007. He took field notes and made audio recordings of the sermons using a hand-held micro-cassette recorder. The researcher used a separate micro-cassette tape for each sermon and noted the date on the label of each tape. The researcher would sit towards the back of the church sanctuary and near a loudspeaker in order to obtain a quality recording of the sermon.

The Sermon Text

At the conclusion of each worship service, the researcher would wait to be the last person out of the sanctuary in order to have a few moments with the informant during which he confirmed the meeting time for the following day. At this time, the informant would provide the researcher with the printed copy of his sermon text. On each Sunday afternoon during the data collection period, the researcher would retype the sermon text in order to have it in electronic format and then would compare the typed text against the audio recording. The researcher would check for the insertion of additional material or the deletion of material from the printed text in the sermon delivery. The transcripts noted the insertion of additional of material in the delivery of the sermon.

The researcher saved the electronic text of the sermon as a separate word-processing file, which became the starting point of preparation for the semi-structured interview the next day. The researcher spent each Sunday afternoon reviewing the audio

recording and printed transcript of the sermon in order to prepare questions to ask at particular points in the review of the sermon with the informant. The next chapter contains a report of the particular questions asked and the motivation for asking them.

Interviews

The researcher met the informant in his office in order to conduct first an unstructured interview, followed by a semi-structured interview. The length of these sessions ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 hours. During the unstructured interview, the informant recalled and recounted the process by which he had developed the sermon delivered during the worship service the day before. The researcher did not ask any questions during this time. During the first such interview the researcher did make some notes on a paper pad but ceased doing so in subsequent interviews out of concern for how his note taking might affect the free flow of the informant's reflection. The researcher used a hand-held micro-cassette recorder and a separate tape to record each interview.

Following the unstructured interview, the researcher and the informant would listen to the audio recording of the sermon from the previous day. One micro-cassette recorder played the audio tape of the sermon, which the researcher would turn off in order to ask a question or when the informant wanted to make a comment. A second micro-cassette recorder ran throughout the semi-structured interview in order to capture the moments in listening to the sermon recording when the researcher asked questions or when the informant made comments.

The researcher typically came to the semi-structured interviews with a printed transcript of the sermon and three to five questions prepared in advance to ask at particular moments when listening to the audio recording. The researcher placed the

questions in the transcript at the point in the sermon where he wanted to stop the tape and ask the particular question relating to a passage of the sermon. These questions usually led to additional questions based on the responses given by the informant. The informant would occasionally stop the audio recording to comment on a particular point, to explain his reasoning behind particular contents of the sermon or to articulate what he had tried to say.

Following each interview session, the researcher would transcribe the recordings into word processing documents. The researcher would then spend time during the rest of the week reflecting on the data gathered and prepare follow up questions for the next interview session.

The researcher had hoped to complete the data collection process over three consecutive weeks. However, due to a medical emergency in the informant's family, an interruption of one week occurred and the period consisted of four weeks. The interruption came at the request of the informant. Due to the medical emergency, the informant knew that he would not be able to follow his regular routine of sermon preparation so that the data collected from the unstructured interview would be of questionable value. Instead, the third interview session was an extended semi-structured interview held later in the week and based on follow up questions generated by the first two interview sessions. The data collection returned to the routine of the Sunday worship service and Monday interview session the following week. The fifth and final interview session consisted of a second extended and semi-structured follow up interview two weeks after the third sermon data collection.

The analysis of the data

The analysis of the research data progressed through the following stages:

1. Transcription of the audio recordings of interviews with the informant into word processing files.
2. Reading the transcripts files in chronological order in order to discover and trace the development and progression of emerging concepts and themes within the data.
3. The development of data codes from the words of the informant and applying the codes to organize the data for deeper analysis.
4. Using data analysis software to query the data and measure the prevalence of concepts and themes throughout the data.
5. The application of data codes from previous Sense-Making studies to test for similarities and differences within the current research project.

The researcher transcribed the interviews throughout the data collection process. After transcribing the final interview, the researcher printed all of the interview transcripts and arranged them in chronological order in a notebook. He read the transcripts and made notes regarding concepts and themes that emerged from the data. The chronology of concepts and themes that reappeared throughout the course of the interviews were identified and traced.

Coding the Texts

The researcher used the informant's own words to create codes for the concepts and themes that emerged from the data. The following is a sample of the concepts and themes, which were used to code the data:

- Start with the lectionary readings
- Do the research
- Let the Word speak
- Scripture interprets Scripture
- The Holy Spirit leads
- American evangelicalism
- Authority of Scripture
- Seminary
- Lutheran

Later in the analysis process, the researcher grouped the separate codes within larger categories listed below. The separate codes developed from the informant's own words were organized within multiple larger categories in order to facilitate multiple perspectives of the data.

- The Informant's Context
- The Informant's Theology
- Sense-Making and sermon preparation
- Research Question 1
- Research Question 2
- Research Question 3

Data Analysis Software

The researcher utilized the software package NVivo 7 by QSR International in order to analyze the interview transcripts generated during the data collection process. The software uses an internal database system that allowed the researcher to import the interview transcripts as text files, give each text file a separate label identifying the type and date of the interview, and then arrange the transcripts files in separate sets of unstructured reflection interviews, semi-structured sermon review interviews, and semi-structured follow up interviews. This data arrangement scheme allowed the researcher to query the data as an aggregate or separate set of files.

The software package does not automate the coding process as the researcher must highlight data text and assign it to the appropriate code. Such a feature is desirable for the sake of time, but the researcher considers the necessity to code the data manually a requirement for quality control in the research process. The software allows the researcher to query all of the data for a particular code and receives a report of findings specifying where the queried text appears in each transcript. With a simple mouse-click, the software links to the appropriate text and coding is as simple then as highlighting the text and dragging it within the software to the appropriate code name.

Book of Concord

Several times during the interviews, the informant referred to the *Book of Concord*. This historical book is a collection of writings that represent the Lutheran interpretation of Scripture and articulates the various points of Lutheran theology. The researcher considered it important to become familiar with the Book of Concord in order to understand the context of the informant's references to this information source. An

electronic version of the Book of Concord is freely available on the Internet (www.bookofconcord.org), which the researcher downloaded and entered into the NVivo program. This resource allowed the researcher to conduct queries based on the various concepts that emerged from the interview transcripts. This process provided the researcher with a greater understanding of the prevalence of Lutheran theology in the sermons and interviews of the informant.

Research Questions

The table below specifies the number of transcript lines attributed to the informant that coded for each research question and the percentage that those lines represent of the total number of transcript lines attributed to the informant.

Table 1

Transcript Lines Attributed to the Informant Pertaining to the Research Questions

Research Question Number	Number of Informant Transcript Lines	Percentage of Total Informant Lines Coded to Research Question
1	193	12.31%
2	649	41.39%
3	167	10.65%

The highest percentage of the transcripts coded for the second research question regarding factors that affect how the informant interprets Scripture. The researcher reviewed the transcript sections that coded for the second research question received in

greater depth and coded for the specific factors that emerged from the data: seminary education, denominational affiliation, theological doctrine, social justice position, and differentiation from American evangelicalism. The researcher conducted queries of the entire data set utilizing multiple variations of these terms to ensure comprehensive coding of the data.

The dominant factor that emerged from a closer analysis of the data coded for the second research question was the theological doctrine of the informant. The concepts that emerged from the data coded for theological position fell into the three categories of humanity, law and grace, and God. The researcher utilized the index from the Book of Concord for specific references to these concepts. This process informed the construction of queries of the entire data set for data not previously coded. Data selections coded for humanity were the most prevalent, and more analysis of the data yielded codes for sinful/broken, in need of salvation, redeemed, and saved by God's grace.

A separate coding scheme focused on the transcripts from the three unstructured interviews in which the informant recalled and reflected on the preparation process for each of the three sermons. The researcher used Cheuk's (1998) codes for the information seeking and use behavior of auditors, architects, and engineers to search for differences and similarities between their behavior and those of the clergy informant. Significant similarities between the information seeking and use behavior of the informant of the current study and the informants of Cheuk's studies emerged from the data. See Chapter 5 for more detailed discussion.

Finally, through the repeated reading and reflecting on the data, the elements of a model for sermon preparation began to emerge. During the course of the interviews, the

informant clearly articulated several steps in his routine for sermon preparation. However, the data required closer analysis in order to tease out the various nuances and subtle meanings of several of the steps. The informant articulated the need to let the Word speak and that the Holy Spirit gives guidance as two steps in the sermon preparation process. The concepts that emerged from a closer examination of the data and which helped to clarify these steps for the researcher are that Scripture interprets Scripture and that the sermon is the living Word of God. A more detailed discussion of these concepts follows in Chapter 5.

One additional and significant data set that emerged, but does not easily fit any of the previously presented coding schemes, is the informant's personal struggle with the issue of homosexuality. The issue presented the researcher with an excellent example of a significant Sense-Making gap for the informant. The researcher coded the data sections dealing with the issue as "Trying to make sense of homosexuality."

Anonymity

The researcher carefully edited the transcripts of recorded interviews in order to protect the anonymity of the informant by omitting all personal names including the names of colleagues, professors, church leaders, cities, states, and places of employment that were mentioned in the course of the interviews. There are no references to the informant by name in any of the interview transcripts. Special care was taken in the audio recordings made of sermons delivered by the informant so that only the sermon itself was recorded and no mention of congregational announcements are recorded which might jeopardize the anonymity of the informant.

Confidentiality

The researcher digitized the analog recordings of the sermons and interviews for storage on digital media in order to utilize password protection of all of the recordings and allow access to the data for future research. The data from the research project is stored on the personal computer of the researcher. Two backup copies of the data exist on separate external memory devices belonging to the researcher. Access to all copies of the data is password protected. The researcher demagnetized and erased the micro-cassettes of the analog recordings of the interviews after transcription and analysis.

Credibility of the Study

The methodology and process of the research project insure a high level of credibility. The efforts taken to ensure credibility of the study include:

1. The collection of data sets based on the actual sermons and informant reflections on the factors and contexts that affected his interpretation of Scripture in the sermon preparation process.
2. Selection of an appropriate method to match the nature of the research questions being investigated.
3. Establishing multiple connections between the current study and existing bodies of knowledge.
4. Transparency in the accounts of how the informant for the study was selected and how the data were collected.
5. Checking the data and the researcher's interpretation of the data with the informant.
6. Systematic data collection and record keeping.

7. Systematic analysis of the data.
8. Establishing and maintaining a clear distinction between the data and its interpretation.
9. The insider status of the researcher.

Chapter 4

Reporting the Data

Data Collection Process for the April 15, 2007 Sermon

The researcher attended the worship service of April 15, 2007 at the church of the local congregation served by the informant. This was the third time that the researcher had attended worship services with the congregation. He was, therefore, no longer a stranger to the other persons in attendance or to the routines of the worship service. While reading the weekly church bulletin prior to the start of the service, the researcher learned earlier in the week the informant had undergone a medical procedure requiring hospitalization. Following the worship service, the researcher visited with the informant to inquire about postponing the data collection due to health concerns. The informant expressed confidence that he could proceed with the data collection timeline.

The printed text of the sermon was received and transcribed into a word processing document by the researcher, and the file was saved as Informant Sermon 1 041507 to denote that this was the first sermon in the data collection process and the date on which it was delivered. The researcher then compared the sermon text against the audio recording of the sermon made during the worship service. During the sermon delivery, the informant inserted material not included in the printed text at the beginning and about halfway through the sermon. The additional material was inserted into the sermon text at the appropriate points along with the questions that were prepared for the semi-structured interview, and the file was saved as Informant Sermon 1 041507 Review to denote the differences from the original sermon text.

The sermon began with an illustration from the informant's college days when he was a member of the pep band, and the remainder of the sermon spoke to the theme that music has power. The researcher was aware from previous observations that the informant sings in the local community choir. This prior knowledge along with what the informant shared through the sermon led the researcher to wonder about the importance of music in the life of the informant. The researcher prepared five questions, listed below, for the semi-structured interview scheduled for the next day.

Data from the Unstructured Reflection on the April 15, 2007 Sermon

The researcher met with the informant in the latter's office the morning of April 16, 2007. He reviewed the interview procedure with the informant, activated the tape recorder, and asked the informant to recall and recount as much as possible of how he had gone about the task of preparing the sermon for Sunday, April 15, 2007.

The informant spoke uninterrupted for slightly more than fifteen minutes and articulated the following process for initiating and completing the sermon preparation task:

1. "As always, I start off with the readings that are appointed to be read on that particular [Sunday]." (Appendix A, Lines 6-7)
2. "One of those [readings] was the Gospel which includes Thomas and the 'Doubting Thomas' aspect which I have probably preached on almost every year of my ministry and I thought, 'I need something fresher than that.'" (Appendix A, Lines 7-9)

3. “The reading from the book of Revelation was a possibility, although it was, in my opinion, not the deepest or richest source for the day.” (Appendix A, Lines 10-11)
4. “It was about this time that all the news about Don Imus broke, which seemed kind of a reflection on how our society has become very much coarser and very much meaner than basically it has been. With that as a reflection point, I began to think particularly about the Psalm for the day, which was Psalm 150.” (Appendix A, Lines 11-15)
5. “It emphasizes how all things, how everything ends up, everything that has breath, praise the Lord. This is one of the things that I think if we truly live our faith, that becomes one of the main functions of our lives, not just in word and deed and song and whatever, but it is that we praise God with all that we are, with our whole being. Then I began reflecting on how important music is in that shaping of our lives and our praise, particularly in our liturgy, music is a very important factor in the liturgy of the church and the historic liturgy.” (Appendix A, Lines 18-24)
6. “I began to rumble those things around in my mind as to how they tie together. As the week advanced, I began to reflect, too, that this might be helpful to the congregation because we have just entered into using a brand new hymnal. It requires some adjustment for our congregation to get acquainted with some of the new hymns in the new hymnal and, also, some of the new liturgy in the hymnal.’ (Appendix A, Lines 25, 29-32)

7. "I did think that a sermon on music and its importance in the worship life of the church is important. Then, to emphasize more importantly, how music is kind of a leading factor in social change. When I think back to my days in seminary and standing around singing "We Shall Overcome" and some of the Civil Rights songs and so forth; that it was really kind of a cutting edge of the changes that were made in the Civil Rights Movement. The music became a positive influence for change. So now, my concern is that we have a lot in music that is a negative influence. It has become mean and demeaning to racial groups, to homosexuals, to women and all kinds of ways in which music, if it truly is the cutting edge, it is cutting the wrong edge and leading our whole society down to a coarser, more violent, and meaner way. So, the sermon begins to take shape around the recognition that music does have an influence on our lives." (Appendix A, Lines 42-53)
8. "So, the sermon began to shape up as a reflection, hopefully leading people into the idea of how music is a powerful influence and that because it is a powerful influence, we need to see what it is that is making that influence in our lives. Not that we need to be singing hymns all the time or listening to Christian radio all the time or whatever, partly because I can't stand most Christian radio. Anyway, it doesn't mean that it has to be classical or the great music or whatever, but to understand that we are letting something influence the way we think and the way we act and all of those things. That begins where we form the shape of the sermon and the power that is exhibited in the

praise of God, particularly as expressed in the Psalm for the day, Psalm 150, I think is good.” (Appendix A, Lines 66-74)

The researcher will argue in the next chapter that the informant followed the same stages of Sense-Making behavior in the task of sermon preparation, as did the architects, auditors, and engineers of Cheuk’s (1998) studies in the completion of tasks unique to their profession. Viewed through the perspective of Sense-Making theory, the informant articulated encountering information situations of task initiation (Step 1); focus forming (Steps 2-5) (i.e., idea assuming, rejecting, and confirming); idea finalizing (Steps 6-7); and idea sharing (Step 8).

Furthermore, the researcher will argue in the next chapter that the findings of the first unstructured interview speak directly to the research questions. The informant articulated in steps 1-4 the selection of the Scripture text and sermon theme. Steps 4 and 7 speak to the second research question of contextual situations that affect the preparation of the sermon. Finally, the informant articulates his goals for the sermon in step 8.

Data from the Semi-Structured Review of the April 15, 2007 Sermon

Following the conclusion of the unstructured interview, the researcher and the informant listened to the audio recording of the April 15, 2007 sermon. The researcher had prepared five questions to ask at various points in the listening of the sermon. The questions appear below within the contextual details of the sermon text at the time and the reasoning of the researcher for asking the question.

The sermon began with a lengthy illustration from the informant’s college days detailing how a new school fight song was able to transform a mediocre college

basketball team into an unstoppable force that upset one of the top-ranked teams in the state. Following the illustration, the researcher stopped the audio tape to ask:

1. “Given that earlier in the week you were in the hospital having this heart procedure done, I was especially interested in what the topic of your sermon would be. Obviously, music is very important for you. You mentioned playing in the college band, and I know that you sing in the community chorus as well. So is there any connection between the medical procedure that you had earlier in the week and your choice to preach on the power of music? Did music and singing sustain you in any way in the past week and in a particular way that might have translated into this sermon?” (Appendix D, Lines 29-36)

The question was given sufficient introduction to establish the reason for which it was being asked, that is, was there a connection between the recent events in the life of the informant and the decision to prepare a sermon on this particular topic.

The informant articulated an answer indicating that music “plays an important role” in his life and that when facing a major medical procedure “music lifts my spirits.” Furthermore,

I mentioned to you yesterday that it was kind of a downer when I found out that I was going to have to go through that procedure. Because I had thought that everything was going quite well with my heart and to find out that I would have to go through this thing for a day or two was kind of a downer. But the anticipation of and the joy of Easter and the double services and all the music certainly had a lifting and confidence building kind of thing. (Appendix D, Lines 47-52)

The informant then related how he expressed this confidence to his parishioners when they asked about the impending procedure the day after Easter. “I would just say that they could wish me well and that I was confident. And even if things do not go well, I am still confident because that is where the resurrection hope and the resurrection assurance comes in that we can live and die confidently.” (Appendix D, Lines 54-57)

This answer prompted the follow up question “So this is really a culmination of a lifetime journey?” To which the informant replied, “In a way it is” and then proceeded to recount to the researcher the closing experience of the Good Friday service and to quote from memory a verse from the closing song that expressed his feelings about life and death: “Be Thou my consolation, my shield when I must die. Remind me of thy passion when my last hour draws nigh. Mine eyes shall then behold thee, upon thy cross shall dwell. My heart, my faith, enfold thee. Who dies thus, dies well.” (Appendix D, Lines 65-68)

A few moments later, the informant stopped the tape recording to clarify that he had misspoke regarding the Don Imus story and that he had meant to say that he was afraid that a few years from now people will look back on the incident and ask “what was the big deal?” (Appendix D, Lines 82-88) The researcher had intended to stop the tape very shortly after that particular point and so decided to go ahead with the next prepared question:

2. “You say that music has the power to influence who we are and you express concern about music that glorifies denigrating and humiliating attitudes.

Could you spell out for me in more detail what sounds to be a pretty detailed

philosophy regarding music and how it relates to our reason for existence?”

(Appendix D, Lines 101-104)

The informant replied that the background for the statements was from classical Christian theology and the question as to the chief purpose of humanity, the reason for humanity's creation in the first place, and that is to give praise to God. The informant went on to say that as this idea developed across time that the praise of God came to be understood not as an end in itself, but a goal in itself, which is a reflection of the stated goal for the sermon. (Appendix D, Lines 106-114)

The researcher stopped the tape of the recorded sermon a third time following the insertion of material not included in the original sermon text:

Now, I am not saying that the only way is to only listen to Christian music or classical music. I am not saying that at all. I am not saying that it is not possible to glorify God with many popular forms of music such as rap or hip hop, whether it is soft rock or hard rock or the music that happened to be popular back in the days when I grew up. (Appendix D, Lines 120-124)

The researcher observed that this was not a part of the original text. The informant replied:

It occurred to me while I was talking that this was something else and also because you get that feeling of not wanting people to make an assumption. Because most people here know that I am inclined towards classical music than toward other forms of music, but I try not to be narrow minded about that because I really do not feel that that is the only grand expression, but I find that for me that it is that classical expression. The other thing is to get the idea that obviously

young people are not going to do this, going around with hymns buzzing in their head all the time. There is still good music in terms of music that they listen to, but certainly not all of it. Just like there is country and western, an awful lot of that is not really a positive kind of thing. So it occurred to me that I do not want people to think that only church music is the only kind of music that praises God because there is the creativity that is reflected in human making of music that is also a part of praising God in one's being. (Appendix D, Lines 134-145)

The researcher then commented that in the conservative denomination of his childhood, the assertion that all genres of music can give God praise would have generated a negative reaction. He then asked the informant if the statement was a result of a personal struggle with his own conservative background. The researcher asked the question from the assumption that a conservative denomination such as the LC-MS would frown upon many forms of popular music, and the researcher had searched the LC-MS website prior to the interview looking for evidence of an official position.

The informant replied that the “basic Lutheran attitude is that all things can possibly have that potential for praising God so that there is not something inherently evil in guitars and drums.” He then went on to explain that a force for change during the Protestant Reformation was the use of familiar bar tunes put to the words of Christian hymns. This was a way to give church music back to the people and to teach “people who were illiterate the basic principles of salvation by the grace of God.” (Appendix D, Lines 159-160, 169-170)

The researcher stopped the tape-recording of the sermon a fourth time at the point in which the informant was speaking to the reading from the Book of Revelation. In his

sermon, the informant notes that many preachers choose not to preach from it and that even Martin Luther questioned whether the Book of Revelation even belonged in the Bible. The informant speaks to “a lot of mischief that has been caused in the Church by some interpretations of this rather enigmatic writing.” He then goes on to explain that the purpose of the book was as an order for worship and for giving proper praise to God. (Appendix D, Lines 226-243)

The researcher commented that he never preached from the Book of Revelation in his 11 years in the ministry and that his New Testament professor in seminary did not address it at all in class. “But it sounds like you have given it a lot of thought and study?” The informant responded:

The challenge, particularly in this country is that there are so many preachers, television evangelists, and whatever seem to tremendously misuse the Book of Revelation or, for that matter, any of the apocalyptic literature: Daniel, Revelation, or even the apocalyptic parts of the Gospels. All of these kinds of misuses are trying to apply a saying to a contemporary situation. ... There is this tendency to energize Christian pathos with interpretation and I think that is really a fad and really a gross misuse of Scripture. (Appendix D, Lines 251-264)

The concern for the misuse of Scripture is a theme introduced here that recurs throughout the data collection process.

At the end of the recording, the researcher asked the informant if he had particular goals in mind while preparing this sermon. The informant’s answer was “to make people more aware of what they listen to and sing on their own.” (Appendix D, Line 374-375)

which repeated what he had offered in the unstructured interview as the goal of the sermon.

The Data Collection Process for the April 22, 2007 Sermon

The researcher attended the worship service of Sunday, April 22, 2007. While sitting in the sanctuary waiting for the service to begin, the researcher overheard others in the congregation talking about the spouse of the informant being in a metropolitan hospital following a medical emergency. The researcher was rather surprised to find that a substitute clergy member was not leading the worship service that day. Following the worship service the informant explained that his wife was in stable condition but would remain in the hospital for observation. He was going back to the hospital that afternoon and did not know when he would be available for an interview that week.

On Wednesday of that week, the researcher called the church office to learn that the pastor's spouse would have surgery on Friday, but that the pastor was in town for the day and that he would like to meet in order to keep the research project on track. The researcher arrived at the church office late in the afternoon, and the second round of unstructured and semi-structured interviews took place on Wednesday evening, April 25, 2007.

Prior to the second round of interviews, the researcher had repeated the process of the previous week. The researcher transcribed the printed sermon text and saved it in electronic format. He then compared the original text with the audio recording, adding and noting additional materials inserted during the sermon delivery. The researcher prepared interview questions and saved the file with a different name to denote the

sermon review format. A new step to the data collection process included the creation of follow up questions resulting from the data collected in the previous round.

Data from the Unstructured Reflection on the April 22, 2007 Sermon

The informant spoke uninterrupted for less than ten minutes and articulated the following steps taken in performing the task of preparing a sermon for Sunday, April 22, 2007:

1. “When I looked at the lessons from the Lectionary this time...” (Appendix B, Line 7)
2. “For some reason, ... and I am not really sure what the reason is, but the conversion of St. Paul kind of jumped out as providing a theme for the day.” (Appendix B, Lines 13-15)
3. “I know that the airwaves and a lot of the TV evangelism and so forth revolve around a type of conversion that is somewhat at odds with a Lutheran concept of what Scripture teaches as far as conversion. So that then sent me to the Book of Concord and the Lutheran Confessions to find out and refurbish my memory on what the Lutheran Confessions do say on conversion.” (Appendix B, Lines 28-32)
4. “So I did a little study in the Book of Concord tracing down the various places in which conversion is dealt with and found some material and some things that I think we need to think about as to what conversion is.” (Appendix B, Lines 36-38)
5. “I also remembered from some readings in the Church Fathers ... the story of Polycarp and how he was martyred after 86 years as a Christian [and

how] he maintained his confession of faith to the end. So I thought he was a pretty good example of somebody who had been a Christian all of his life. You probably could not point to the day of his conversion because likely it was in his infancy when his family brought him to Christ ... his conversion was with his baptism and his being brought up in a Christian family.” (Appendix B, Lines 44-54)

6. “That’s the background of where this sermon began and coming together to talk about conversion itself. Conversion in the Lutheran confession, and how something that a lot of Lutherans don’t think about and some of the leading Lutheran dogmaticians did not think about and that is the importance of showing the fruits of one’s conversion ... Conversion is reflected in the way that we live.” (Appendix B, Lines 57-60, 67)

A sequential pattern of Sense-Making behavior similar to that of the first round of data collection is evident. The informant began the unstructured interview articulating a task initiation situation (Step 1); a focus forming situation (Step 2); an idea assuming situation (Step 3); an idea confirming situation (Steps 4 and 5); and an idea finalizing situation (Step 6).

In this second round of data collection, the informant articulated more clearly in Step 1 that he chooses the Scripture texts for his sermons from the Lectionary readings. Steps 3, 4, and 5 spoke to contemporary and historical contextual situations that affected the theme and content of the sermon. The informant’s goal for the sermon, to get Lutherans to think about conversion, specifically that conversion is reflected in the way one lives, was articulated in the sixth and final step of the recollection.

Data from the Semi-Structured Review of the April 22, 2007 Sermon

Following the second unstructured interview, the researcher and the informant listened to the audio recording of the second sermon together. The researcher had prepared six questions ahead of time. The conversation generated several impromptu follow up questions.

Early in the sermon, the informant made the statement “The word that is translated ‘conversion’ is pretty rare in the New Testament.” (Appendix E, Line 41-42) The researcher stopped the tape to clarify that the informant had received several years of college and seminary education in the Biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew. The researcher then asked, “How much does studying the Biblical languages figure into your [sermon] preparation?” The informant answered, “It depends on the text itself. There are sometimes texts that I preach on that I may not go back to the original languages at all. In some instances, you sense that there is going to be something that you will find in the original text that is not necessarily reflected in the translation.” (Appendix E, Line 55-58)

A short while later in the sermon the informant recounted stories of the conversion experiences of historical figures in the Church. The researcher stopped the tape to ask, “In a similar way to the question about Biblical languages, it sounds like church history is also something you enjoy reading quite a bit, and how much does that provide a context for you for sermon preparation?” To which the informant answered:

Probably a great deal; that was my area of concentration in college and seminary, history first of all and then church history. Yeah, it probably does. I really had not thought of that a lot, but it probably plays a pretty sizeable role in my thinking

about things and how concepts come about and how they have changed over the years in Christian history. (Appendix E, Lines 102-106)

The informant also articulated being stronger in church history than in Biblical languages.

The third question brought to the interview by the researcher was of a theological nature. It facilitated an opportunity to gain insight into the informant's theological world and the influence of this world on the informant's interpretation of Scripture and doctrine. At this point in the sermon, the informant had just described the dramatic conversion story of the Apostle Paul.

RESEARCHER: I was really struck by this statement that Paul's conversion was so dramatic because he had such a dramatic distance to go before his life could be brought to Jesus. Yet, my thought is that Paul was not the stereotypical sinner that we usually think of in dramatic conversions. He was not a drunkard, not an adulterer, not a gambler. Really, my impression, and correct me if I am wrong, is that he was a church person. He was very righteous. And so when you mentioned earlier the pietistic heritage of Lutheranism or of any denomination, I would think that Saul was a pretty pietistic person and it was his religion, his faith that led him to be a persecutor. He thought he was doing the right thing. (Appendix E, Lines 130-138)

INFORMANT: Well, what would make the old Saul a pretty poor Lutheran was that he was very law oriented. He played by the rules. See, that has no place in Lutheranism. In Lutheran theology, it is, if you want to call it the law of love, that is possible, but we are not big on rules. There are different responses to different

situations, that require a Christian intuition of what we are being called to do, not a solid and set rule that you can go by. It may even sound like I am talking Situation Ethics, which was a big term back when I was going to school. But it really isn't that. It is the recognition that the law does not cover every situation and you cannot have a hard and fast rule or even the Ten Commandments for every potential thing. This is, you know, where Jesus struggled with the Pharisees over and over again: the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law. What's the spirit of the law? And that is where Christianity comes in, in that Christ introduced us to the grace of God and to the guidance of the Spirit in our response to the Gospel and not by a set of rules to go by. (Appendix E, Lines 140-152)

The informant introduced the concept of law and gospel in the semi-structured follow up interview just moments before. He clarified and expanded upon it here. The concept is a primary component of the informant's theological world.

The researcher and informant listened to a part of the sermon in which the latter spoke about Polycarp as an example of someone who probably did not have a dramatic conversion experience. The informant had related the story of Polycarp, at least in part, because "he had a bone to pick with the attitude" of some people "who say that if you can't name the hour and day you accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, well then, you're not really a Christian." (Appendix E, Lines 193, 125-127)

The researcher stopped the audio tape to ask, "Maybe this is as good a time as any to ask what the word "Evangelical" means for you? You have said a couple of times how it has sort of been hijacked by very conservative, fundamentalist kind of theology in America." (Appendix E, 210-213) To which the informant replies:

Well, the word “evangelical” means “gospel.” The evangel is the gospel or the good news “evangelion”; the Greek which is transliterated over to “evangelical. . . . That is what I mean by evangelical is gospel centered, whereas American evangelicalism is pretty much legalistic centered, centered on the rules and we have let them get away with hijacking the name “evangelical.” You see a guy like [name of a popular preacher on television] preaching on TV, and he calls himself evangelical or he even talks about the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, well he is glorious, but I think he preaches a little different gospel than my understanding of what the gospel is. His gospel seems to be pretty much “line up according to the rules” and make yourself worthy. Whereas, that is not my theology, but it is God who accepts us in the first place not because we are worthy, but sheerly out of his grace. Then he’s got something to work with in our response to the gospel.

(Appendix E, Lines 217-231)

At this point in the interview, the informant also articulated the historical significance of the word “evangelical” for the Lutheran tradition that goes back to the days of the Reformation. The researcher will argue in the next chapter that this tension around the word “evangelical” and the theological differences between the various institutions which lay claim to the word is an important contextual factor affecting how the informant goes about the task of preparing a sermon.

Finally, the researcher came to the semi-structured sermon review interview with a question about catechism, the process by which adolescent children are educated in Lutheran doctrine, as it related to the Lutheran idea of conversion. The motivation of the researcher was to explore how the informant’s prior knowledge of the understanding and

experience of conversion by those in the audience might have affected the development of the sermon contents. The researcher asked, “What role does the catechism class play for most folks in your church in the conversion experience of the people in your church?”

The informant answered:

It makes them knowledgeable about what their baptism was about and it prepares them to declare for themselves what their baptism sponsors declared for them in the first place. It is a personal way of saying, “I believe.” ... And, but, still knowing that faith is different from knowledge. And for some of them, well, it is a bridge point between the simplistic childlike faith into a little bit of theology and understanding a little bit more, with the idea of preparation for adulthood.

(Appendix E, Lines 250-257)

The researcher focused the interview on the difference between faith and knowledge with the impromptu question:

You made a statement about faith being different than knowledge, and I agree, so I was thinking about that time in our life when perhaps or in the life of a member of your church, when they have that, I will say the ‘aha’ experience that ‘I do believe this’ and it is not just something I have been taught, but I believe it. And maybe that ‘it’ is that God loves me so much more than I have ever experienced or understood before so that then in some ways that is something someone can say ‘this is the moment that I knew that I understood and I knew that I believed.’

(Appendix E, Lines 327-333)

The informant replied that Lutherans “know a period in their life when things changed and they began to have a deeper sense of God’s presence and will in their lives.” The

informant then used his passion for music to articulate “the Lutheran perspective on what life is about” by reading a verse from a contemporary hymn, which portrays God speaking to humanity:

I was there to hear your borning cry. I’ll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized to see your life unfold. I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well; in a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell. When you heard the wonder of the Word, I was there to cheer you on; you were raised to praise the living Lord, to whom you now belong. If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one, I’ll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun.” (Appendix E, Lines 336-337, 339, 347-353)

Data from a Semi-Structured Follow Up Interview on April 25, 2007

Following the second semi-structured sermon review interview, the researcher left the tape recorder running in order to ask two follow up questions to the data collected the previous week:

1. “You mentioned that you got a late start last week, you did not get started thinking about the sermon until Wednesday, and I was just wondering what your normal or desirable kind of schedule is?”

The informant articulated a routine for sermon preparation that begins on Monday with a reading of the Scripture lessons for the coming Sunday “and then kind of mulling that over” for a couple of days. He decides upon a sermon theme by the middle of the week and consults various resources. The informant writes the sermon text on Thursday and Friday. (Appendix G, Lines 2-4, 8)

The answer generated three impromptu follow up questions:

1. a.) “Because I know you have not been able to keep that schedule, do you have any thoughts or comments, especially regarding the last couple of weeks? How has all that has been happening affected the information you looked for, the whole thought process, anything at all?”

In his answer to this question, the informant introduced the concept of the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the sermon preparation process:

One of the things about writing a sermon is that sermons do not always come together in the same way. Some of them just flow and some of them you just slave and work at. And probably the main factor is how the Holy Spirit happens to be speaking to you at that particular week.” (Appendix G, Lines 23-26)

1. b.) “So given that statement is there a process for you or a ritual for you in which you somehow invite the Holy Spirit? I mean a quieting where you are trying to make that possible for yourself?”

The informant answered:

I would not necessarily describe it as a ritual, but I do a process of reflecting. It starts with the lesson, by reading the three lessons. Then as you read the lessons to develop somewhat in a prayerful way, ‘Okay, what is this about?’ From there on it is a matter of trying to let the Word of God speak first and then how that Word of God speaks to me in my life and how I see it speak in terms of the church and society.” (Appendix G, Lines 34-38)

This notion of letting the Word of God speak leads to the introduction of the concept of the Word of God as a living thing, which creates an atmosphere of uncertainty in the

sermon preparation process because “you never quite know where you are going to be going.” (Appendix G, Line 43)

The informant then articulated the occurrence of times when he sensed “Oh, I really don’t want to go there” and of struggling with the Holy Spirit because he does not consider himself a “bold, brash preacher.” At the same time, he articulated having “a strong sense that justice ... needs to be brought forward in the church from time to time” which necessarily requires him to overcome his hesitancy “to go there.” (Appendix G, Lines 44-48)

1. c.) “Can I ask you to tell me a little bit more about what is going through your mind when you are having that question ‘Do I really want to go there?’ What would be holding you back from going there?”

The informant answered:

Well, the reaction of the community or the congregation. They do not necessarily want to hear what their shortcomings are and that is the dynamic that works in the Lutheran theology of law and gospel; we need to be confronted with our little sins and our big sins.” (Appendix G, Lines 55-58)

The informant then went on to list the more notable figures in the 500 year history in the Lutheran tradition of speaking to power beginning with Martin Luther and his confrontation with the Church of Rome up to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his stand against the Nazi party in Germany.

This sequence of questions flowed nicely into the second question that the researcher had prepared for this semi-structured interview:

2. “Last week you mentioned about the power of music for change and you talked about the Civil Rights era and when you were in seminary and I did not know if you were just referring to those times in general or some particular involvement in the Civil Rights movement that might provide some context?”

The informant articulated that he “was not deeply involved in that” even though he once joined a group of fellow college students to picket the appearance of a racist presidential candidate. However, the informant goes on to articulate something more than just a cursory involvement with and awareness of the need for the continuing struggle for civil rights:

I mean most of us were involved in small ways in promoting the civil rights effort and in trying to, particularly within the Lutheran Churches, to promote that idea. Lutherans certainly were as much involved in prejudice probably as anyone else and out of sheer ignorance because we are primarily a White church, White middle-class group. So there was some need for witness and for education with regard to the need for civil rights.” (Appendix G, Lines 82-90)

Data from the Semi-Structured Follow Up Interview of May 3, 2007

Because the informant’s spouse was scheduled to have major surgery two days after the second round of interviews, there was a high degree of uncertainty as to whether the informant would be in the pulpit on the following Sunday morning. The researcher and informant agreed that the data collection process should skip Sunday, April 29, but if everything went well to possibly conduct a follow up interview later the next week and then use the sermon of May 6, 2007 as the third and possibly final sermon preparation process for the data collection. This third round of data collection consisted of a semi-

structured interview held in the informant's office on Thursday, May 3, 2007. The researcher came to the interview with several questions that had arisen in the analysis of the data collected to date and needed further clarification. The interview process generated additional impromptu questions.

The researcher began the interview by asking the informant to clarify his use of the Lectionary in the selection of Scripture texts for the sermon preparation process. The informant had mentioned in the first semi-structured sermon review interview "I almost always preach on the readings" and "I do not stray from the appointed readings very often." (Appendix D, Lines 323-328) The researcher sought to understand the informant's motivation in the use of the Lectionary.

RESEARCHER: You have said that you rarely ever depart from the weekly readings of the Lectionary as the focus for your sermons. Could you please expand upon that in terms of how that discipline or routine developed?

(Appendix H, Lines 1-3)

INFORMANT: Well, it was something that was taught in seminary. There are certain advantages to using the Lectionary readings because they cover a pretty broad band of Christian experience, Christian faith and life, and how it can be lived. The themes in them suggest a lot of different facets of what it means to be a Christian. ... And, it lends itself toward the church year. I think the church year is a wonderful device that over the centuries the church has developed to outline the life of Christ in the first half of the year and then make application during the Pentecost season to the life of the individual and to the life of the congregation. At least for me these themes work very, very well. I think the importance of being

grounded in the Gospel, in the life of Christ, and then augmented by the other two readings, ordinarily from the Old Testament and one of the Epistles. It just seems so logical and a good pattern so that you do not get stuck on your own personal axes to grind. That does not mean that they protect you from doing that, but if you really follow the text, as I try to do. I know that I interject my own prejudices and feelings in some of the things I say, but that is one way of grounding yourself in such a way that prevents to a certain degree where you are just grinding your own axe in the sermon. (Appendix H, Lines 5-26)

The researcher will argue in the next chapter that this use of the Lectionary by the informant speaks to both the first and third research questions. The use of the Lectionary establishes a well-defined parameter for the selection of Scripture texts and the link between the Lectionary and the liturgical church calendar establishes a potential parameter for the goal of a sermon as a vehicle for speaking to the “different facets of what it means to be a Christian.”

Secondly, the researcher sought to explore the context of the informant’s seminary education by asking how he felt that a seminary education prepared him for the weekly task of preparing sermons.

INFORMANT: Seminary education enabled me to think a little bit outside the box in terms of broadening my view of Scripture. I am by no means a fundamentalist, but my love for Scripture and for what I feel that God does through Holy Scripture has been greatly increased by seminary education. I went into seminary pretty sure with a very, well maybe not a fundamentalist view, but something very close; that if the Bible is the Word of God then it must indeed be

accurate in every facet and in every view. Now, I think I could say that Scripture is true, but it may not be scientifically accurate, may not always even be historically accurate, although it is interesting how frequently it is a little more historically accurate than a lot of people have viewed it in the past. I think, what I would say is, what I have found in Scripture and has been helped through seminary education is how absolutely true Scripture is without necessarily being factually accurate in every respect, how absolutely true Scripture is. (Appendix H, Lines 52-63)

The researcher pushed for greater clarity by asking, “Would it be fair to say that you entered seminary perhaps seeing the Bible as more literal than you do now?” The informant replied, “Yes that would be it.” (Appendix H, Lines 66-70)

A third point of clarification sought by the researcher was on the concept of the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the sermon preparation process. The informant raised this concept the previous week.

RESEARCHER: Last week, you spoke to your belief about the role of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation. You talked about letting the Word of God speak to you. Could you expand on this a little bit more, especially in terms of how you know it is the Holy Spirit or the Word of God that is speaking to you?

INFORMANT: (chuckles) That is a tricky question, because we know some people who have been way off the mark, who nevertheless claim that the Holy Spirit led them in this direction or that direction. One of the things that I feel is the principle when you are dealing with Scripture is that Scripture does interpret itself. You cannot take one passage and run with it in such a way that is contrary

to the spirit of the rest of Scripture. ... One of the principles of Scripture and the teachings of Christ is that the Holy Spirit will never allow you to run away from is the principle of love. What is best for the neighbor, for that other person, that is the very spirit of love that brings that forth. (Appendix H, Lines 74-88)

The informant introduced a new concept at this point: Scripture interprets Scripture. The researcher discusses this concept in more detail in the next chapter as a key component of the informant's Sense-Making behavior.

The researcher responded with an impromptu follow up question in an effort to make sure that he understood what the informant meant: "When you say that Scripture interprets itself, could you tell me what that process is in your mind, how that works? I want to make sure that I understand."

INFORMANT: I am going to try to do it by example because I am not sure that I can do it by logical, straight forward thinking in that way. But, say that for instance, that someone [were to preach from an Old Testament lesson which tells how] ... God led the people of Israel into Canaan and told them to just decimate everybody there and not leave a living person. [So that the point of the sermon is] that this is God's command to us to go into the Middle East or whatever and make that into a God-fearing land and do with it as God told the Israelites to do and we have got all this trouble because they did not do what God told them, they did not completely eliminate all the inhabitants. I think that Scripture would indicate that something as blatant as that is not what Jesus commanded his disciples to do when he said to "Go and make disciples of all nations." Because there it is by invitation, helping all people to understand this new covenant of God's grace and

of God's love. And that the illustration I used is not a reflection of God's grace or God's love or of God's intent for humanity. (Appendix H, Lines 100-112)

The researcher pushed for further clarification noting that there are within the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, differing interpretations created by the different agendas of the various religious/political alliances of priestly, prophetic, judicial, and royal interest groups. The researcher asked if it would be better to say that the Scripture that tells the story of Jesus, the four books of the Gospel, interprets Scripture, whether "the Gospel is the bar" which interprets the rest of Scripture?

INFORMANT: Yeah, in some respects, I would say the Gospel is the bar for me and in dealing with the Scripture you are always dealing with the Gospel because the Gospel ... only is what is ultimately the power of God for salvation. The law has only that function of driving us to see the futility of what we can do for ourselves and to drive us to understand the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

(Appendix H, Lines 132-139)

The researcher was guilty here, to some degree, of naming the informant's world rather than allowing the informant to name his world for himself. The line of questioning continued to determine that if indeed the Gospel portions of the Bible are the bar by which other Scripture is interpreted, then is the weekly Gospel reading from the Lectionary the normal text from which the informant prepares the sermon? The informant indicated that he prepared his sermon from the weekly Gospel lesson approximately 90% of the time. (Appendix H, Lines 145-157)

The researcher sought to explore if the informant utilized any continuing education, professional development events or retreats in order to renew or enhance his

sermon preparation resources: “What do you do in your academic discipline and in your spiritual life to keep vigilant ... how do you maintain or keep in shape, I guess, spiritually?”

INFORMANT: Well, there is a certain amount of exercise that is required and sermons begin, I guess, with prayer and with a discipline that says ‘I am subject to the word of God and this is what I will preach based on a particular text for the day.’ It becomes important to do the research that says ‘what did this text say?’ What does it, what do you maintain is an honest way of bringing this forward to the present time? Because many of the texts deal with human nature, which really does not change, we are still in the matters of sin and grace. Sermon structure is still based along the idea of reaching a goal, which is spiritual development of all of us, of the church. (Appendix H, Lines 185-196)

The informant did not speak to continuing education or professional development within this answer, but he had previously mentioned a plan to attend a continuing education event when we were first scheduling the data collection process. He cancelled his plans to attend this event due to the unforeseen health concerns with his spouse.

Finally, the researcher sought to follow up on the informant’s concern for how the congregation might react to certain sermon contents as introduced in the second round of data collection. To what degree does consideration for congregational reaction affect the sermon preparation process especially in terms of goals that the informant might have for the sermon?

The researcher asked, “When you think about how your sermon is going to be received on Sunday morning, what do you think is the biggest challenge that you have to

overcome in terms of the congregation?” The informant asked for an elaboration on the question so that the researcher then asked, “What would be in your mind in terms of how thoroughly you have to explain something?”

INFORMANT: Okay, well, I think one of the biggest problems when I think of any congregation [is] that you have people sitting out there who still are coming to church to find out what they have to do for their salvation. Therefore they are approaching the thing from the wrong angle. It is like the question ‘what must I do to be saved?’ It is first of all a belief or trust in God that your salvation is accomplished. So now, as one who has been saved, you know, how does one who has been saved and is in line with God and is living a life reflecting of gratitude to God for that salvation, now where do we go with that life, which becomes much more freer and joyful way of living. People still, and this is true for Lutherans, too, still tend to keep putting themselves under the law and asking ‘what must I do for my salvation?’ rather than recognizing and glorifying God for the fact that they are saved and now since I am, what do I do with it? (Appendix H, Lines 239-260)

This particular data thread of law and gospel has appeared in every round of the data collection process.

The Data Collection Process for the May 6, 2007 Sermon

The researcher attended the worship service of May 6, 2007, and made an audio recording of the sermon in the same manner as the first two rounds of data collection. The researcher and informant agreed upon a meeting time for the next morning and the researcher obtained the printed text of the sermon message. As with the first two rounds

of data collection, the researcher transcribed the audio recording and compared the transcript to the printed text. Several questions were prepared for the semi-structured sermon review interview and as follow up questions arising from the data collected to date.

Data from the Unstructured Reflection on the May 6, 2007 Sermon

The informant spoke uninterrupted for approximately five minutes and articulated the following steps taken in performing the task of preparing a sermon for Sunday, May 6, 2007:

1. “This is one of those sermons that began again with the Lectionary.” (Appendix C, Line 5)
2. “I was not particularly fond of the theme for the Gospel lesson.” (Appendix C, Line 6)
3. “The appeal of the evangelism aspect of the first lesson, the one from Acts, was what caught my eye, particularly because I had just attended a little evangelism event so that added to the fact that that was on my mind.” (Appendix C, Lines 6-8)
4. “I decided to use that first reading as the theme for the day.” (Appendix C, Line 9)
5. “The church has had its periods of expanding its horizons in terms of who is the Gospel really for. We keep going over the fact that God so loved the entire (emphasis) world that he gave his son and that Jesus’ commission was to go and make disciple of all (emphasis) nations. But we still seem to go through the various stages of ‘what does that really mean?’ What does “everybody” mean?” (Appendix C, Lines 15-19)

6. “This congregation has been around for 150 years or whatever, yet we are, (pause) we include various economic levels within the congregation, but the congregation does not reflect the [name of town] community. And how good are we at reaching out to other parts of the community?” (Appendix C, Lines 20-24)
7. “So even within a community like [name of town] reaching out in evangelism becomes difficult because you still have those things that separate us. Sometimes it is color, sometimes it is economic background, and sometimes it is just social, various social things, that tend to divide communities, to divide churches and so forth.” (Appendix C, Lines 26-30)
8. “So with that as a background of what the community situation is and with the background of what I feel the story of Acts tells us, that was where the sermon got started.” (Appendix C, Lines 31-33)

A sequential pattern of Sense-Making behavior similar to that of the first two rounds of data collection is evident. The informant began the unstructured interview articulating a task initiation situation (Step 1); an idea rejecting situation (Step 2); an idea assuming situation (Step 3); an idea finalizing situation (Step 4); an idea confirming situation (Steps 5-7); and an idea sharing situation (Step 8).

In this fourth round of data collection, the informant reaffirmed that he choose the Scripture texts for his sermons from the Lectionary readings. Step 3 spoke to a contemporary contextual situation that affected the Scripture selection decision. Steps 5-7 articulate the questions that the informant asked of the Scripture text and reveal his Sense-Making behavior in relation to the text.

Data from a Semi-Structured Follow Up Interview on May 6, 2007

The researcher began the interview seeking to clarify details regarding the college and seminary education experience of the informant. The researcher was able to ascertain that the informant had been required to take four years of study in Biblical Greek and two years of Biblical Hebrew during college. In seminary, additional training in biblical languages focused on the study of particular books of the Bible. The informant also studied Latin because it was the language of the church and German because it was the language of the Reformation. The researcher sought to clarify the origins of the concept that Scripture interprets Scripture and ascertained that the informant learned this concept in seminary.

The researcher sought to follow up on the statement of the informant from the previous week that his seminary education had enabled him to think “outside of the box” in terms of Scripture. After reminding the informant of the statement, the researcher said, “I was a little intrigued by that because you did attend a Missouri Synod seminary, correct?” The informant replied in the affirmative. “And my impression is that the Missouri Synod emphasizes a literal reading of the Scripture, so” At this point the informant interrupted to say, “That was not true when I went there,” which elicited a surprised reaction from the researcher. (Appendix I, Lines 48-56)

The informant then proceeded to recount what was for him a very troubling time in 1976 when the administration of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod initiated disciplinary action against seminary faculty and clergy members who did not strictly adhere to a literal interpretation of Scripture. His answer did not address his personal struggle with the issue of literal interpretation of Scripture, but rather revealed the

emotional turmoil of living through “just a bizarre, bizarre time,” which occurred after he had graduated from seminary and was serving his first pastorate in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. It was during this experience that the informant made the decision to leave the LCMS.

Data from the Semi-Structured Review of the May 6, 2007 Sermon

The researcher and the informant listened to the audio recording of the sermon from May 6, 2007, which began with an illustration about an adolescent boy at a school dance working up the nerve to approach a particular girl to ask for a dance, all the while looking at his shoes while he spoke. When the young girl said yes, the boy looked up to see that he had asked the girl standing next to the one with whom he really wanted to dance. The point of the illustration was to ask why church people, Lutherans in particular, are so shy when it comes to talking to other people about their faith, to practice evangelism. Perhaps it is the fear of messing up like the young man in the story.

The researcher’s first prepared question was motivated once again by his personal historical context and became a means by which the informant could explain the Lutheran perspective on evangelism and articulate the message he was intending with the sermon. The researcher stopped the tape about one-third of the way through the sermon.

RESEARCHER: I have been thinking about this, again in terms of my history and what I have learned about the Lutheran tradition through our interviews. In what we have come to call the “American evangelical” tradition, in which I was raised, evangelism of which you are talking about, of witnessing, is sort of driven in large part by a rather apocalyptic impending sense of ...

INFORMANT: By fear.

RESEARCHER: Yes, exactly. Well, fear, this concern, perhaps an altruistic concern, but a concern that the Lord is coming any day and we have to get everybody saved. And, also, you have mentioned several times this history and tradition of Christendom in which it is assumed that everyone is saved; that everyone is a Christian. You talk about more of a passive kind of role of the Lutheran Christian; it is not a decision theology. All of these things have been going through my head, as I seem to hear you asking, “Why do we Lutherans have a hard time sharing our witness?” So the leading question for me is whether there is a sense of the apocalyptic and the second coming at all in Lutheran theology.

INFORMANT: It is there, but it is not an emphasis. I suppose some of that is a reaction against the extremes of that sort of theology, that apocalyptic sort of thing. The other thing is that it seems to me that if you read the Gospels straight through, you don't catch too much of that sense of urgency or that sense of urgency that is expressed in American evangelicalism in the way in which Christ dealt with it. He invited and he accepted and he seems to have embraced, but you do not find him being quite as, what you would say, grab people by the shirt collar and ask them ‘Are you saved?’ ... I would say that we do have a little bit different approach to evangelism. It is our sense that evangelism is important, but it is more a matter of proclaiming Jesus Christ. It is not that threat of being lost forever, not that that's not there, that's a terrible thing to think about being without God for eternity or to be apart from God for all eternity, but it is not the fire and brimstone sort of thing. It is Christ establishing his church to work in this world for the good

of human kind. Also there is that time when time will end and there will be a judgment, but we are less inclined to judge who will be saved, whether they have toed the line enough, because toeing the line is not exactly the point of our theology. (Appendix F, Lines 29-73)

The researcher then focused on the words of the informant that Jesus invited, accepted and embraced rather than grabbing people by the shirt collar and asked whether that was a form of evangelism, that is, inviting people to their church rather than sharing their faith, that Lutherans are more comfortable with.

INFORMANT: I think that they would be more comfortable in doing that than to sit down and say 'let's have a cup of coffee and I will tell you what Jesus Christ means to me.' That is not real comfortable for Lutherans. ... By the same token, I think that people who are embraced by that love and who sense it in their lives and who live it, still should have a comfort level in at least saying that 'I have found something or something has found me that makes a difference in my life.'

(Appendix F, Lines 106-115)

The informant then went into an explanation that the reluctance of Lutherans to practice evangelism may be because "Lutherans tend to be less judgmental about people, and maybe more accepting" (Appendix F, Lines 117-118). The informant went on to explain that this tendency to be less judgmental and more accepting leads to a culture in which socialism can really work. He mentioned the Scandinavian countries from which many Lutherans in this country migrated and the north central states of this country where they relocated to as being examples where there is a culture that is not limited just to church goers, but where:

There is an acceptance that a lot of people really have a difficult row to hoe; that they are not responsible for the difficulties that they have and that they need some help. Or even when they are responsible they still need some help because that is part of their problem. They create their own problem, but they need some help in that way. And that is one of those things that to me that is amazing. For like I say, for as conservative as Lutherans are that those states that are the most socialistic and certainly the countries that has the most workable forms of socialism, that is where I think part of it comes out of Lutheran theology – or least that has been a factor. (Appendix F, Lines 127-134)

This is the first indication of the concept of social ministry as a significant element in the unique context of the informant.

The tape recording was turned back on and the sermon proceeded to recount one of the most significant events in the history of the early church when non-Jewish persons were first accepted into the fold of what up until then had been a sect of the Jewish faith. The informant explained through the sermon that the early followers of Jesus did not see themselves as separate from the Jewish faith, but rather the fulfillment of the Jewish faith so that it behooved them to be strict in their observation of all the elements of Jewish law including the injunction against fellowship and contact with non-Jews. This was, the sermon informed, the Jewish concept of holiness or being set apart from the rest of the world. (Appendix F, Lines 153-160)

The researcher perceived this point in the sermon to be an opportunity to seek clarification on a data item that kept coming to the surface but never quite emerging in the data collection process. This was the sense of differentiation from or opposition to the

conservative religious element in this country that the informant and researcher had come to refer to as American Evangelicalism.

RESEARCHER: I was struck by your mention here of the “Jewish concept of holiness or being set apart.” I was wondering if this notion of “holiness” rather than “evangelical” might be the better adjective to apply to this theological tradition over here [that we often refer to] and might be a way for the ELCA to reclaim the word evangelical – that is an aside. But definitely within the context of what you were just describing of this Lutheran concern for those who are having problems and where the response is to reach out and help rather than to separate and say “You are unclean.” Over the course of our interviews, the American evangelical part of our Christian tradition has continually come up. So I am wondering if there is some bigger picture issues here or concerns might be a better word between this tradition which you are coming from, of reaching out as opposed to this being set apart, that sort of guides your overall beliefs and theology and creeps into your sermons. Is that a fair question?

INFORMANT: It is a fair question and it really revolves around ... as you ask it, my mind is going in two directions. One is that of Lutheran theology and the other is my own experience. Because when I was at [Name of a social ministry that he administered]

RESEARCHER: What is that? Is that a church?

INFORMANT: No, [Name] was a home for senior citizens and handicapped people in [Name of city] in the [name of neighborhood] area, which was a declining area. In that context and in my service there for 13 years I came across a

lot of people who had a lot of social problems. We had one-third or more of a black population and just in living between and within the different cultures and getting to know people and finding that acceptance of people goes an awfully long way in just forming community and relationships and things like that that are so important in the expression of our faith. A lot of [the residents were] alcoholics, I got to know them, I got to know the AA system quite well and all of the other kinds of social problems. You get involved with people's families. ... A lot of people had mental problems ... a lot of young people with mental problems [were residents] because they qualified for apartments there because they were classified as handicapped, and dealing with some of those kinds of situations some of them where were really quite bizarre. (Appendix F, Lines 163-198)

The informant then related a story about a particular resident, a young man by the name of Fred, whom the informant came to know very well and the story began with a heavy sigh from the informant as he recalled the details. Fred needed medication for mental illness, but without proper medical supervision, he did not maintain a proper medication schedule, and his behavior became so bizarre that he was a danger to others living in the urban housing ministry. The ministry and social workers tried very hard to get help for Fred, but he did not qualify for any services that were available. Eight months after having to leave the urban housing ministry because he was a danger to others, Fred doused a fellow homeless person with gasoline and set him afire. The informant concluded:

You know, Fred did not deserve the fate that he received because of that. The other guy certainly did not. You know, I cannot find Fred as having been

personally responsible for a terrible act that, yes, he committed, but I do not see him as being personally responsible for that. And I do get a little upset when everything is society's fault, but there are things that are (with emphasis) society's fault. We need to provide for folks. And this was in a state, in [name of state], where providing for people was pretty good, but you reach that point where too many people fall through the cracks in our society. For as rich as our society is, we are not very good at providing for folks who really need some help. (Appendix F, Lines 213-222)

The researcher responded that this helped to clarify how very much love of neighbor is the bottom line for the informant. The informant continued a while longer talking about his experiences in this social ministry. The researcher asked if a Clinical Pastoral Experience (CPE) was required for his seminary degree, and the informant indicated that it was a requirement.

The researcher turned the audio recording back on, and the sermon proceeded to explain in detail the significance and controversy of the church accepting people previously considered unacceptable. The informant stopped the tape to speak to this historical cycle within the church of learning, forgetting, and then learning again the "lesson that the Gospel is for all."

The researcher had intended to stop the tape a little later at a point in the sermon in which the informant mentioned various repetitions of this cycle when "the church has been challenged to rethink its position again and again – to struggle with the amazing grace of God" specifically regarding issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation. Because "though it is the nature of the Gospel to reach out; it is our nature to hunker

down, to keep house with those that we already have rather than to reach out to those who are somehow different from us.” (Appendix F, Lines 460-461, 477-479) The motivation of the researcher was to explore the emergence of sexual orientation as an item that had occurred for a second time in the data collection process. However, the informant raised the issue first.

The informant spoke to the struggle within the ELCA “with exactly where does the homosexual fit into the picture?” He went on to explain that while the ELCA was “not having so much of a problem with accepting membership of people who are gay or lesbian. We are certainly having a difficult time deciding whether they are capable of being pastors or not.” (Appendix F, Lines 280-284)

The informant indicated that that he was undecided on the question of ordaining homosexuals to be pastors. The researcher replied, “I had written down here that this sounds like one of those “Do I really want to go there?” moments that you talked about a week or so ago.” To which the informant replied, “Well, I really would like to go there if I were that convinced within myself as to which way to go.” (Appendix F, Lines 296-300)

In advance of this semi-structured interview, the researcher saw this as an opportunity to explore how the informant attempts to use Scripture and church doctrine in a Sense-Making situation addressing a current issue. Therefore, the researcher asked, “So given your method of struggling with the primacy of the Scriptures as a resource for you, can you describe the nature of your struggle with this particular issue? In terms of Scripture, what help are you finding to make sense of that?”

Well, there are not a lot of things in Scripture that talk about homosexuality, what are there, about four references in the New Testament? And not too many more than that in the Old Testament, but they are there and for what purpose? ... I know that some of the traditional interpretations have certainly always been that homosexuality is a great evil and that it was not tolerated within the Jewish community, the Old Testament Jewish community, that seems pretty well established and under the penalty of death. And since Jesus had no comment on it whatsoever and Paul's comments, two of them at least, are subject to interpretation, which I think leaves only one (laughs) so ... you know, where does that leave us? It seems to leave us at a point, you know, how terribly important is that when there is only one reference? And yet it is there. I have that terrible waffling back and forth about that. It also then leads into some of the very neat people whom you have known and do know who are gay and lesbian and who also exhibit great love for their Lord and who potentially seem as if they could be great servants of the church. For our big issue, again, is whether to allow for gay or lesbian clergy. Right now, the church standards are that is not allowed and there have been some folks who have been disciplined for that and some congregations who have been disciplined for that in our circle. And, like I say, I am still torn about my own feelings, my own opinions, and my own intellectual acceptance of that. (Appendix F, Lines 305-331)

RESEARCHER: So given the lack of Scripture references are there resources you are looking at outside of Scripture as you are struggling with this?

INFORMANT: Oh yeah, the church has provided a whole bunch of Biblical studies. The problem with those is that one side expresses their opinion from a Biblical standpoint and it sounds so good and then the other side comes back with their [interpretation]. So that it is enlightening because you learn a lot of stuff about Biblical interpretation, but you don't really come down with a definite answer for yourself as to what the contemporary situation should be. I suppose I sometimes go with the idea that the Gospel is for all and that we are all equal under the Gospel. And yet I find myself with this most uncomfortable kind of split personality. I have no problem with accepting the fact that Christ died for gay persons as well, that is their orientation, and that they are going to be that way and that it is no different from the fact that Christ died for the alcoholic and Christ died for all. And then I come down to would I feel absolutely comfortable in a congregation where I knew that my pastor was married to a person of the same sex and emotionally, I don't know whether I am ready for that or not. So that struggle goes on and I do read those books, I think I have a couple of them up there [motions to the book shelf behind him] and besides a plethora of material that has been produced by seminary professors and stuff like that for the ELCA as we have gone through. (Appendix F, Lines 337-359)

The researcher then spoke to similar struggles around the issue of ordination, specifically with the ordination of women:

I know that in the United Methodist Church we have struggled with and I imagine it is the same in the ELCA, and that is 'Do I want a pastor who is a woman?' And that is something that is becoming less of an issue in the United Methodist

Church, I don't know about the ELCA, but so I say that to think about at least the United Methodist Church we have overcome that emotional issue, it has been 20 or 30 years in the making so ...

INFORMANT: But from the evangelical side of things it would seem that is exactly what they are warning against. You let one in then you get more and more used to it. It is like the lobster in the pot that sort of thing. (Appendix F, Lines 372-381)

The informant then indicates that he thinks the issue is a distraction that keeps the church from what its business ought to be. It is an issue which "in our age we have not been given a clear answer to yet ... and we may struggle with these things, but they are not the ultimate issue. The ultimate issue is our relationship with God through Jesus Christ." (Appendix F, Lines 387-392)

The researcher asked if there was any awareness on the informant's part of "families for whom this issue is much more personal than for others in the congregation and how that might have affected what you chose to say?" The informant indicated an awareness of church members with gay children, but it did not affect what he chose to say, as this was not the central issue of the sermon. (Appendix F, Lines 396-404)

In a similar vein, the researcher observed:

I noticed that in the sermon yesterday that you also bring up the issue of divorce and this issue of accepting persons who are divorced. I thought well, in some ways, that's potentially a larger group of people who could feel like they have had their toes stepped on so I just wondered about that in the context of what you wanted to say, and I know it is acceptance, but...

INFORMANT: Yeah, I don't know, I guess when it comes to divorce, I do not particularly think of how that is received. I guess one of the jobs of the preacher is pointing out the fact that we are broken people. Whether it is divorce or even gayness or the fact that we don't accept everybody, we all deal with our own brokenness. The Gospel is that healing aspect of brokenness. You do talk about things like divorce and I guess my approach to it and I think it is a Lutheran approach by and large is "hey, we are all broken in one way or another."

RESEARCHER: So, (nervous laugh) it just occurs to me then, that because as you said we are 'all' broken by human nature and brokenness is really and I am going to say 'original sin' and I don't know we haven't used that ...

INFORMANT: Yep, that's what it is.

RESEARCHER: So, then isn't that, (nervous laugh) I don't want to be arguing here, but isn't that more the issue than divorce or sexual orientation, I mean aren't those just distractions? So in a way...

INFORMANT: They are the manifestations of sin; that is if you consider homosexuality a sin, and I guess I do. One of the issues within the church is and this is a sidelight it seems to me that too often what happens with the church and should not happen with us Lutherans is campaigns to accept things that are by general standards considered sinful. Because that is really not the issue. Because what is really the issue is that we are all sinful and that we are all in that sense on that same level and the particular manifestation of our sinfulness is not the central issue. None of us escapes the fact that at the very basic we are sinful and unclean. As expressed in the confession of sin, that we are all in that state of sinfulness so

it is the original sin that God deals with. Some of those actual sins or whatever else it is what needs to be dealt with, too, but it is not the core issue, which is that alienation from God that we experience because of our sinful nature; the other things are just the manifestations. (Appendix F, Lines 410-449)

After having dwelled on this particular topic for quite some time, the researcher and informant proceeded to listen to the rest of the audio recording. The interview concluded with the researcher expressing that he felt he had collected enough data from the sermon preparation process and that he would like to take some time to review the data and then schedule a final follow up interview with the informant. The informant was agreeable with these arrangements.

Data from the Semi-Structured Follow Up Interview of May 22, 2007

The researcher met with the informant in his church office on Tuesday, May 22, 2007, for the fifth and final round of data collection. The purpose of the meeting was to conduct a semi-structured follow up interview in order to clarify data that had emerged in the previous rounds of collection. The researcher came to the interview with several prepared questions and the interview generated twice that many impromptu questions.

The researcher began the interview by asking if the informant ever conferred with other clergy members in the sermon construction process. The informant related how that he had once belonged to a “text studies” group with two other clergy members in the town where he pastored previous to coming to the current church he is serving. The other two ministers were not ELCA. The group tried to meet on a weekly basis for about eight years. The informant articulated that he appreciated the different perspectives of the two other pastors. He described one of the other clergy members as being “extraordinarily

conservative” and he himself was usually “in the middle of things.” (Appendix J, Lines 9-49)

The researcher next asked the informant to

Please recall and relate details of your personal struggle in the move from a literal interpretation of Scripture to your current position that Scripture is true, if not factual. What are the main things that you can recall when your position might have been challenged, your responses to that, and who might have helped you, what helps you found along the way to deal with this struggle and to come to where you are?

INFORMANT: I am not sure that I can exactly give you a pinpoint answer because I might answer this in different ways at different times as I think of different things. But one of the things that brought that about occurred in seminary. Through an Old Testament professor there, [THE INFORMANT NAMES THE PROFESSOR] and in the study of Genesis right from the very beginning, I guess it was then that most clearly that I saw that line of division between the story in the first chapter is not the same story as in the second chapter and that there is no way of reconciling those two. ... The professor in that instance was very influential in my way of thinking. And I think, uh, the kind of professor who has that tremendous reputation both for his intellect, but also for his toughness in the course. And then finding that as I was taking the course it was just an absolute joy in finding him to be a much more open and, for want of a better word, kinder guy than his reputation was. You know, when people, when you really like people and find them to be very companionable, that certainly

influences your thinking and so forth, too. And I found this sort of thing in this and some other professors and I was able to discover a deeper faith because all of those details of actualities and things like that became less important and what is important and what is actual became more important. (Appendix J, Lines 61-106)

The researcher then asked the informant “what were the things that made that literal interpretation something important to you to hold on to?”

INFORMANT: Well, it was, I would say that having received instruction from the pastors in the Missouri Synod. They tended more toward the literal interpretations and stressed the fact that it was important that we consider that if this is the Word of God it must be correct and true and accurate in every (emphasis) respect. Not just in a spiritual way, but it must be true also in a scientific way and everything else. I think that that is probably the same approach that many people, Biblical literalists and American evangelicals, must follow that line of thinking. If you give on one point, then it undermines the whole structure of the authority of Scripture. And authority of Scripture is pretty (emphasis) important to Lutherans. I would say that the Missouri Synod has a little different understanding of authority of Scripture and what it is based on than does the ELCA. There is a theological difference there in authority. Scripture is authoritative to both groups of Lutherans, but I think the basis of that authority is a little bit different in Missouri Synod than what it is in the ELCA. (Appendix J, Lines 136-148)

The informant went on to explain this theological difference in authority by articulating two points. First, the ELCA “faith and trust that the Holy Spirit guides the church in the first place” and second, this guidance by the authority of the Holy Spirit has found

expression in church history in the creeds and confessions gathered together in the *Book of Concord*. The *Book of Concord* is a “definite standard” and “an accurate description of what the Scripture teaches concerning our salvation and concerning the human condition and any number of topics.” (Appendix J, Lines 156-166)

The interview then revisited the issue of homosexuality. The researcher referred to several documents he had found on the ELCA website relating to a 2005 Report and Recommendations from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality. The task force published its report in January 2005 as a prelude to a national meeting of the ELCA later that year. The task force report made several recommendations for action by the national assembly. The ELCA web site included several press releases referring to the task force report and the various groups of bishops, theologians, etc., coming out in favor or opposition to it. (Evangelical Lutheran, 2007)

The informant related that this had been such a divisive issue at the 2005 national assembly at which the recommendations of the task force were defeated that the denomination had declared the topic off-limits for the 2007 national assembly. The motivation for this research was to explore with the informant what might constitute authoritative information resources he would consider in his struggle with the issue of homosexuality, what weight the opinion of ELCA theologians and bishops or a change in denominational policy on the issue might carry with him personally.

On the influence of theologians and bishops in the ELCA, the informant responded:

Potentially, theologians in the Lutheran church, because we are a doctrinal church, carry a fair amount of weight. Because they are the ones who train the

clergy and that sort of thing so they have a large influence that way. Not so much in terms of making pronouncements and whatever else, but I would say that theologians have a lot of influence within the Lutheran church. You know the Lutheran movement began as a university movement out of the University of Wittenberg. And in that respect and some of the seminary and theological schools in Germany and Scandinavia still have tremendous amount of influence and certainly seminaries in the United States have a certain influence because we are not a hierarchical church. We do have bishops in the ELCA. We do have a political format, but it is not like the political format in the Roman Catholic or the Episcopal Church. We are not arranged hierarchically like that so professors and theologians and writers of theology probably have a much greater influence among Lutherans than they do in other church denominations. (Appendix J, Lines 328-342)

Later in the interview, the informant clarifies the political format of the ELCA as a congregational denomination. This structure means that local ELCA congregations choose their own clergy members, which gives the congregation a good deal of power. United Methodist, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic traditions operate from hierarchical systems in which the denomination appoints a clergy member to a congregation. Such systems give denominational officers, such as bishops, a great deal of power over the congregation. For the ELCA, this means “both the bishop of the whole church and the bishops of our synods have tremendous influence, but they have no power.” (Appendix J, Lines 440-441)

RESEARCHER: So in your personal struggle with this issue, and I remember last time you said you do want to go there, you would like to have an answer, to know what to say. How much weight in your heart and conscience would a decision by the denominational assembly in either way, how much would that carry with you or is it going to be a personal struggle for you? (Appendix J, Lines 344-348)

The informant's answer reiterated the statement from the previous round of data collection about his personal discomfort with the idea of having a clergy member who was a practicing homosexual. He referred to his feelings as a "schizophrenic moment" and "intellectual inconsistency," but he did not address the question about a denominational decision and the authoritative weight it would carry with him.

RESEARCHER: I want to take this back to the struggle on a denominational level, on a church doctrine level. Since you mentioned you had some question perhaps that the church is not always, I mean you used the phrase "power politics" and expressed some level of disgust when that happens. So in that light, if a decision was made, a doctrine was articulated in one way or another, how would you deal with that if you had some question as to whether it was a political decision or whether it was really the guidance of the Holy Spirit? How would you deal with that? (Appendix J, Lines 378-384)

INFORMANT: Oooohkaaay (ponderous). ... I am, sometimes, you do not know that until you are actually confronted with the situation. I have, of course, some principles with regard to the authority of Scripture. That the authority of Scripture stands above any church council or any decisions that any body of human beings make or anything else. But then you have the issue within our own church where

you have people with different interpretations of Scripture who are obviously struggling from both ends of the thing and then a whole bunch of us in between trying to find our way. And ... I ... have my principles that the unity of the church is an extremely important (emphasis) matter. Even if you consider, where do Lutherans come from? Well, we exist as Lutherans only because the Roman Catholic Church would no longer tolerate us. Neither Luther nor any of the other reformers ever left the church. It was the papal bull "Arise O Lord, a wild boar is loose in your vineyard" (laughs) and the wild boar was Luther, the Reformers, and the doctrine of justification by faith. And the edict came down that anyone who preached justification by faith alone is automatically ex-communicated, you know, and Luther burned the papal bull and declared "We are justified by the grace of God by faith alone." That was the break, but the Reformers never considered themselves outside of the Catholic Church, and it was only because they were ex-communicated and that they were given the derisive name of Lutherans that the Lutheran Church exists. So now, we accept the fact that we can be called Lutheran and we call ourselves Lutheran, but it was not our idea in the first place. So the unity of the church is an important matter. I pray that we might be one and we are not and that is an unfortunate thing. Would I leave? I cannot foresee any decision that the church would make that would cause me to leave this little chunk of the church. Because I think that would be schismatic.

(Appendix J, Lines 386-408)

Finally, the researcher referred to what he understood to be a dilemma for clergy members in the ELCA created by the use of the word “conscience” on either side of the issue.

RESEARCHER: The report advocates for a freedom from disciplining for those pastors who have prayerfully searched their conscience and have reached the conclusion that God or the Holy Spirit is leading them. The theologians [who have come out against the task force report] on the other hand have articulated that such a decision would be evidence of a weak conscience and therefore a mistake. One document seems to say ‘Trust the individual clergy member to make the right decision’ and the other document seems to say ‘There is only one right decision and unless the individual clergy member decides this way, then that clergy member has a weak conscience and cannot be trusted to make the right decision’. That’s my interpretation.

INFORMANT: (laughs) That’s probably ... I have not read those documents and whatever, but I would say that would not be inconsistent with the way I know Lutherans think.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so that sort of goes back to our earlier conversations about the role of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation. It seems to put the clergy member on the slippery slope that unless the message reflects the denominational position, then the Holy Spirit is not really involved and the clergy member has been fooled. So we have sort of talked around this topic of do we not give an inch or do we step out on that slippery slope and see what happens? I don’t know,

that's not really a question, but what is your response to that observation on my part?

INFORMANT: Well, my observation of how things work within the church with regard to so many issues and I have been in the ministry long enough to see some issues come and go. How things that are such burning issues at one point become lesser and lesser issues. And that ... in the history ... you know Americans are so insistent on having immediate satisfaction and immediate decision on things and the church just works very, very slowly. And I think God works pretty slowly, in human terms. And with regard to some of the things that just in my ministry have seen change and certainly over history have seen change and even how Roman Catholicism changes. It may take 500 years, but there are changes that are made and even under such a strict hierarchical and an almost dictatorial format. I think change maybe happens a little faster among Lutherans and yet when you look at our roots and our basic theology, I guess that doesn't change very much because if you have a theology based on the undeserved grace of God and I don't know that that really has changed. Attitudes certainly have with regard to what is right and what is wrong and some of those peripheral things, but not in regard to the theology. It's God has loved us so much that in spite of ourselves, uh, that he desires us and like I say, I find a Lutheran approach to theology to be a very freeing thing. There are an awful lot of things that do not make whole lot of difference. There are issues that I may think about politically and there are things that I may think about morally and I am certainly not saying that politics and morals are not important because they are extremely important, but by the same

token they are penultimate and not ultimate. The ultimate thing remains the grace of God as expressed in his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we preach Christ crucified for our sins. And all of those times that we are totally baffled or those times when we either willfully or unwittingly do that which is contrary to the will of God, there is nothing that God is waiting there to crush us under his thumb, but his redemptive work in Jesus Christ brushes us off and we can start over again.

Sometimes he corrects us rather harshly (laughs) and sometimes it is not that he corrects us harshly but we screw it up so bad that we cannot get out of the mess.

But this grace of God is the ultimate, the other things are not quite as important as we sometimes think they are. (Appendix J, Lines 448-498)

The researcher remarked that this sounded like a great way to summarize the ministry of the informant and a good place to conclude the data collection process.

Chapter 5

Discussion of the findings

The discussion of the research project findings is in three parts. The discussion will focus first on findings that relate to the three research questions. Then the discussion will use the interpretive framework of Sense-Making theory to articulate the Sense-Making behavior of the clergy member in the routine task of sermon preparation. Finally, the discussion will link the findings to the LIS literature.

Discussion of the Findings Related to the First Research Question: How Does a Clergy

Member go About Choosing a Scripture Text or Topic for the Sunday Sermon?

Limiting the Choices to the Liturgical Church Calendar and Lectionary

In order to find his answer to the question “From what Scripture text should I preach this week?” the informant turns to the information resources of the liturgical church calendar and lectionary, which assigns four Scripture texts for each Sunday in a three-year cycle. The four Scripture texts include one selection each from the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Gospels. The liturgical seasons of the church calendar: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost, guide the selection of Scripture texts. For example, one can expect that the Scripture texts for the Christmas season tell the story of Jesus’ birth rather than the Easter story of his death and resurrection.

The informant articulated the following advantages to using the Lectionary:

- The themes suggest a lot of different facets of what it means to be a Christian (Appendix H, lines 7-8)

- It is tied to the church calendar liturgical seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost (Appendix H, lines 14-18)
- It helps to ground the sermon in the Gospel, in the life of Christ (Appendix H, line 19)
- It helps the clergy member avoid using the sermon to grind a personal axe (Appendix H, lines 21-26)

The informant indicated that he does not know of any ELCA clergy members who do not use the Lectionary readings for sermon preparation. (Appendix H, lines 31-33) This is in keeping with earlier studies, (U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2001) which found that 59.3% of Lutheran clergy “always” use the Lectionary for sermon preparation and 39% use it “most of the time.” Less than 2% of Lutheran clergy report using the Lectionary only “occasionally” or “never.”

Personal Freedom and Interpretation

By limiting himself to the four Scripture selections from the lectionary, the informant submits himself to information resources prescribed by the denomination very much like a teacher follows a curriculum plan created by the school administration. Within the parameters of the information resources, however, the clergy member enjoys a great deal of freedom to interpret the Scripture as he chooses, very much as a professor has academic freedom in teaching a particular subject.

The clergy member is also free to emphasize one Scripture text from the lectionary selections over another or to ignore a particular text if it is his personal preference to do so. This may indicate arbitrariness on the part of the clergy member, but it is important to remember the clergy member is in a relationship with the sermon

audience that may last several years. Consequently, he may avoid particular Scripture texts because he has interpreted them in a sermon the year before and he cannot add anything new to the previous interpretation. The informant's decision not to preach on the story of Doubting Thomas is a case in point.

While a teacher's audience may change from semester to semester in a high school or post-secondary education setting, allowing the use of the same lesson plan within a curriculum, the same is not true for the clergy member's audience. The clergy member faces the same audience week after week, year after year. The informant articulated that he did not preach on the Doubting Thomas story because he had done so many times before and felt the need for something fresh. This historical context affected his decision to focus on one of the other readings from the lectionary rather than this traditional story for the Sunday after Easter.

Interpretative Freedom and Denominational Affiliation

To what degree does the clergy member exercise his freedom for interpretation and what forces affect his expression of it? As mentioned above, the denominational affiliation of the clergy member creates certain expectations in terms of sermon content and interpretation of Scripture. To what degree is a clergy member of a denomination that holds to a literal interpretation of Scripture free to introduce ideas in a sermon that call the denominational position into question? In the early years of the informant's career, he was not very free at all as he spoke to the consequences for seminary faculty and clergy in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod who chose to deviate from the denominational position regarding the literal interpretation of Scripture.

It is interesting to consider the potential consequences when turning this particular situation in the other direction. What would happen if the informant were to advocate the literal interpretation of Scripture in his sermons as a clergy member of the ELCA? The answer might depend on several variables such as the frequency, tone, and duration of the clergy member promoting his position and the attributes of the congregation served by the clergy member. However, because the ELCA takes a moderate and tolerant position on other issues, one might reasonably expect considerable patience extended to the clergy member in such a situation.

The Need for Further Research

In order to gain greater understanding of how clergy members choose Scripture texts and topics from which to prepare the Sunday sermon, the research focus must expand to include clergy members who do not use the liturgical church calendar and/or the lectionary. What other resources or frameworks besides the lectionary and liturgical calendar do clergy members use for the selection of Scripture texts and topics for the preparation of sermons? To what degree do clergy members within the same denomination tend to use the same resources and frameworks as clergy members within the ELCA tend to use the lectionary and liturgical calendar? To what degree do denominational affiliation and doctrine affect the selection of Scripture text and topic for sermon preparation? These questions and more require further research.

Table 2 reports on the use and non-use of the lectionary by clergy members of various denominations. The data indicate that designing a future research project to recruit informants from the Nazarene and Baptist denominations should yield a uniquely

different data set than that of the current study. The table is not representative of all denominations.

Table 2

Lectionary use by clergy of different denominations

Lectionary use	Lutheran (n=400)	Presbyterian (n=519)	Methodist (n=172)	Nazarene (n=102)	Baptist (n=121)
Always	59.3%	18.1%	14.5%	5.9%	2.5%
Most times	39.0%	53.9%	55.2%	7.8%	2.5%
Occasionally	1.5%	19.5%	20.3%	29.4%	15.7%
Never	0.3%	8.5%	9.9%	56.9%	79.3%

(U.S. Congregational Life Survey, 2001)

Discussion of the Findings Related to the Second Research Question: What Are the Factors That Affect How a Clergy Member Interprets Scripture?

Sense-Making is a methodology that describes itself as addressing the in-between where the real and the interpretive meet (Dervin, 2003, pp. 140, 141). The process of interpreting Scripture for sermon preparation, then, seems a perfect subject of study for Sense-Making as it requires a coming together of the real and the interpretive, of knowledge and faith. Just how the real and the interpretive, faith and knowledge come together for any clergy member depends on a number of factors. The four leading factors that emerged from the data affecting how the informant interprets Scripture include:

- Seminary education
- Lutheran theology
- Differentiation from American evangelicalism

- Social ministry experience

Seminary Education

The data revealed at least three important factors of the informant's seminary education that affect how he interprets Scripture for the sermon preparation task:

- The concept that Scripture interprets Scripture
- Extensive education in Biblical languages
- A broader perspective of Scripture beyond a literal interpretation

Scripture interprets Scripture. In order to find an answer to the question "What is the Scripture saying?" the informant engages in particular research methods, which he learned in seminary. The informant articulates awareness that Scripture is a rather complicated information resource, and he demonstrates a rather sophisticated use of Scripture as an information resource. For example, the Bible contains a number of seeming contradictions. One Scripture passage contains the Biblical law that allows for the taking of an eye for the loss of an eye and the taking of a tooth for the loss of a tooth. (May and Metzger, B., 1977, p. 153, Leviticus 24:19-20) In another passage, we find the teaching of Jesus to turn the other cheek. (May and Metzger, B., 1977, p. 1177, Matthew 5:38-39) In such situations, the four books of Scripture known as the Gospels provide the definitive direction for the informant in an interpretive method he refers to as Scripture interpreting Scripture. The informant articulated this method as "you cannot take one passage [of Scripture] and run with it ... in ways that are contrary to the spirit of the rest of Scripture." (Appendix H, line 83-84) The informant also articulated that the four Gospel books are the standard by which the interpretation of Scripture is measured and specifically against Jesus' teaching to love one's neighbor.

Biblical languages. The informant's college and seminary education required several years of education in the Biblical languages. The requirements of his educational degrees and ordination as a Lutheran pastor stipulated four years of study in biblical Greek, two years of study in biblical Hebrew, and studies in Latin and German. When asked how often he studied the Scripture texts in the original biblical language, the informant replied that it depended upon the text (Appendix E, line 55), but it is the impression of the researcher that the informant more often than not conducts research on the original texts.

Acceptance of a non-literal interpretation of Scripture. The seminary experience led to the informant being able to reach beyond a literal interpretation of Scripture. The informant's denomination when he was a youth resisted change to the doctrine that the Bible is the absolute truth in every regard including historical and scientific fact. During seminary, he encountered faculty members who dared to deviate from that doctrine and taught a broader view of Scripture that the informant described as helping him to "think outside the box" in his understanding of Scripture.

Lutheran Theology

The data revealed at least four important concepts within the informant's theology that affect how he interprets Scripture for the sermon preparation task:

- The concept that the Word of God is a living thing
- The concept that the Holy Spirit works through the sermon
- The concept of the authority of Scripture
- The concept of law and Gospel

The informant describes the Lutheran tradition as being organized around an orthodox theology, which consists of adherence to three historic creeds and the Lutheran Confessions. (Appendix J, Lines 35-43) The creeds and confessions of the Lutheran tradition are collected in the *Book of Concord*, which the informant described as “an accurate description of what [we believe] the Scripture teaches concerning our salvation and concerning the human condition and any number of topics.” (Appendix J, Lines 164-166) The *Book of Concord* dates to the 16th century and serves as a primary information resource for the informant. The informant referred to the *Book of Concord* eight times during four different interviews and particularly in the reflection on preparing the sermon of April 22, 2007 in researching the topic of conversion. (Appendix B, Lines 30-38) The word “theology” occurred 27 times in eight of the ten interviews. He used the phrase “Lutheran theology” on six of these occasions and “my theology” twice. Of the 1,568 transcript lines attributed to the informant, 429 coded to Lutheran theology (27.36%). Lutheran theology was also noticeably present in each of the three sermons used for the data collection process and reflected 15.5%, 35%, and 13.8% of each sermon text, respectively.

The concept of the Word of God as a living thing. The purpose of the sermon from the informant’s perspective begins with an understanding that the sermon is the Word of God as articulated by Lutheran theology. In his Apology of the Augsburg Confession written in 1531, Philip Melancthon states “one cannot deal with God or grasp him except through the Word” and it is in the hearing of the Word that one comes to have faith. (Tappert, 1959, p. 116) In the Large Catechism of 1529, Martin Luther wrote:

When we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, new pleasure, and a new spirit of devotion, and it constantly cleanses the heart and its meditations. For these words are not idle or dead, but effective and living.

(Tappert, p. 379)

The informant also referred to the Word of God as “a living thing” and this living dimension means, “You never quite know where you are going to be going” in preparing a sermon. (Appendix G, Lines 42-43) It is within this context that the informant asks, “Where is the Holy Spirit leading?” in terms of preparing the sermon.

The role of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation. The Formula of Concord describes the Word of God as the means by which the Holy Spirit affects conversion to those who hear it preached. (Tappert, p. 470) The sermon, therefore, is the Word of God, and when the sermon is “preached, pure, and unalloyed according to God’s command and will. . . . God is certainly present with his grace and gives what man is unable by his own powers to take or to give.” (Tappert, p. 532) An understanding of the Word of God as something which is living, is spoken, can be heard, and has power to effect change is a basic building block of the informant’s theological world and the context from which he interprets Scripture in the sermon preparation process.

The informant articulates a belief that the Holy Spirit is involved in the preparation of sermons and the nature of this involvement is the main factor in how the sermon comes together:

One of the things about writing a sermon is that sermons do not always come together in the same way. Some of them just flow and some of them you just

slave and work at and probably the main factor is how the Holy Spirit happens to be speaking to you that particular week. I do believe that the Holy Spirit is involved in sermon writing and that the Holy Spirit does not always work in the same way. (Appendix G, Lines 23-27)

This is in keeping with Lutheran doctrine that the Holy Spirit “opens the intellect and the heart to understand the Scriptures.” (Tappert, p. 526)

The informant describes the work of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation as an unveiling of the text:

As you go into a text you can feel it kind of unfold for you. That as you study it becomes richer; it acquires a deeper meaning. I think there is a certain unveiling. (Appendix H, Line 163-165)

This reflects the Lutheran doctrine that the Holy Spirit removes the veil of the law from the understanding of persons who receive the Holy Spirit through faith.

The authority of Scripture. The Formula of Concord, written in 1577, articulates that Scripture is “the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised.” (Tappert, p. 464) The data suggests that Scripture is the main information resource for the informant for answers to every question pertaining to how one should live his or her life. Scripture provides clear guidelines for personal behavior and for relationships with others. (Appendix I, line 75) The data also suggest that the *Book of Concord*, mentioned previously, as the collection of creeds and confessions that describes the Lutheran beliefs of what Scripture teaches, is the second most important information resource for the informant. The informant also acknowledged the influence of church history as having an impact on his thinking, but except for one brief mention of

a current news story in the first round of data collection, the informant did not mention the use of any other information resources for sermon preparation outside of Scripture and the *Book of Concord*.

Law and gospel. The *Book of Concord* divides Scripture into two doctrines: the law and the promises of Christ or the Gospel. (Tappert, p. 108) The law is “a divine doctrine which teaches what is right and God-pleasing and which condemns everything that is sinful and contrary to God’s will” asserting that the Gospel is the “doctrine that teaches what a man . . . should believe.” (Tappert, p. 478) The informant explained the Gospel as “the power of God unto salvation” (Appendix H, Lines 127-128) and the law as that which “helps you recognize your sinfulness, but it does not give you any means by which you can come to God.” (Appendix E, Lines 155-157) It is important to note that the Gospel as the means of salvation is different from references to the four Biblical books known as the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and from reference to the Gospel reading or the Gospel lesson in the Lectionary.

The informant articulated the importance of the law and Gospel concept in the sermon preparation process when asked what he thought was the biggest challenge to overcome each week in terms of how the congregation would receive the sermon:

In any congregation, you have people sitting out there who still are coming to church to find out what they have to do for their salvation. People still tend to keep putting themselves under the law and asking ‘what must I do for my salvation?’ rather than recognizing and glorifying God for the fact that they are saved and now since I am, what do I do with it? (Appendix H, Lines 237-247)

The informant's second sermon focused on conversion as an interpretation of the Scripture text relating the dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-20). During the review, the researcher stopped the audio tape to comment on a line from the sermon that Saul's conversion was so dramatic because he had a dramatic distance to go before his life could be brought to Jesus. The researcher noted that Saul was not the stereotypical sinner, but rather a devout church person who thought he was doing the right thing in persecuting the disciples of Jesus. The informant replied,

Well, what would make the old Saul a pretty poor Lutheran was that he was very law oriented. He played by the rules. That has no place in Lutheranism. In Lutheran theology ... we are not big on rules." (Appendix E, Lines 129-132).

Opposition to a legalistic mind set and a law-oriented theology is a prominent factor in the Sense-Making behavior of the informant in the interpretation of Scripture for the Sunday sermon.

Summary of the Effect of the Informant's Theology from the LIS Perspective

The informant's commitment to Lutheran theology affects the sermon preparation process in at least two important ways. First, Lutheran theology provides the definition by which the informant understands the essential purpose of the sermon, which in turn serves to define his information needs for the sermon preparation task. Lutheran theology proclaims that God has saved humanity from sin through the life and death of Jesus and the effect of salvation occurs in the sacrament of baptism. Therefore, the sermon does not need to convict the members of the congregation of their sinfulness. Rather, the purpose of the sermon is to motivate the members of the audience to rejoice in their salvation, to live in such a way as to give glory and praise to God. Therefore, the information needs of

the informant are not for evidence that the world “is going to hell in a hand basket,” or for signs of God’s wrath and judgment, but rather for examples that affirm the essential goodness of humanity and the wonder of God’s creation.

Secondly, Lutheran theology emphasizes the authority of Scripture and the Book of Concord as the authoritative Lutheran interpretation of Scripture, which serves to limit the scope of the information resources used by the informant for the sermon preparation task. The informant did participate for several years in a text study group with clergy members from two other denominations. He indicated that it was interesting and worthwhile to get the perspective on a Scripture text from other denominational traditions, but he did not articulate any situation in which these different perspectives affected his interpretation of a Scripture text. Further research is necessary to determine whether this use of information resources is unique to the informant or generalizable to ELCA clergy members.

Differentiation from “American Evangelicalism”

From the first unstructured interview in the data collection process, there were indications of a complex and multi-faceted contextual factor that affected how the informant interpreted Scripture for sermon preparation. The factor came to be referred to throughout the study as American evangelicalism. The informant articulated a perception of American evangelicalism as placing a greater emphasis on law versus Gospel.

Concern for the misinterpretation of Scripture. In the first sermon of the data collection process the New Testament reading was from the Book of Revelation. In his sermon, the informant noted that many preachers choose not to speak on a text from Revelation and that “even a Scripture lover like Martin Luther was not very fond of the

Book of Revelation” because of historical “mischief” caused by “some interpretations of this rather enigmatic writing.” (Appendix K, lines 56-59) However, the informant encouraged his congregation to “look at the Book of Revelation” as he believed God intended, which is not to “try to force weird interpretations on it or use it like a crystal ball to look into the future.” (Appendix K, lines 61-62) Rather, it is to realize that the Book of Revelation is a book that reads “like a hymnal, like a full service of worship.” The informant told the congregation that the liturgy used every Sunday in their worship service draws more material from the Book of Revelation than from any other book in the Bible. (Appendix K, lines 66-71)

In his reflection on the preparation process for this sermon, the informant shared: Whenever we get into Revelation, I always think of how badly Revelation is misused by a lot of Christians, particularly a lot of Christian preachers, with this document that comes out of a persecution time of the Church. (Appendix A, lines 75-77)

The need to differentiate himself from American evangelicalism may have some root in the informant’s upbringing in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and its policy of non-fellowship with anyone but fellow church members. However, the ultimate basis comes from Lutheran theology which holds “that any interpretation of the Scriptures which weakens or even removes this comfort and hope is contrary to the Holy Spirit’s will and intent” and more forcefully “May God destroy these wicked sophists who so sinfully twist the Word of God to suit their vain dreams!” (Tappert, pp. 632, 200)

Concern for an inclusive understanding of conversion. The second sermon used for this study was on the topic of conversion and in his reflection of the preparation process, the informant stated:

I know that the airwaves and a lot of the TV evangelism and so forth revolves around a type of conversion that is somewhat at odds with a Lutheran concept of what Scripture teaches as far as conversion. (Appendix B, Lines 28-30)

He mentioned that in his preparation he had consulted the *Book of Concord* to “refurbish” his memory on what the Lutheran Confessions say about conversion and how it may or may not be “different from the American evangelical concept” (Appendix B, Lines 32, 35). At this same time the informant expressed frustration, with humor, as to feeling the need to distinguish such a difference because “we are the Evangelical Lutheran Church and we were there first before it [the word ‘evangelical’] got stolen from us.” (Appendix B, Lines 34-35)

Concern for the motivation for evangelism. During the review of the audio tape recording of the third sermon, the researcher raised the differences between the Evangelical Lutheran Church and American evangelicalism once again. The topic of the sermon was evangelism and, as mentioned previously, focused on the Scripture reading from the Book of Acts when the early church was led to accept persons previously considered unacceptable. The researcher prefaced a question recalling his own upbringing in the American evangelical tradition and “evangelism of which you are talking about, of witnessing is sort of driven in the large part by a rather apocalyptic impending sense of” at which point the informant interjected “by fear.” (Appendix F, Lines 30-32) The informant followed the interjection with an explanation of the Lutheran

understanding of evangelism as more a matter of proclaiming the good news of Jesus rather than the threat of eternal damnation; “It is not the fire and brimstone sort of thing.” (Appendix E, Line 65)

Social Ministry Experience

A final factor that affects how the informant interprets Scripture in the sermon preparation process is the concept of love of neighbor, which the informant put into practice most notably during his 13 years of social ministry in an urban setting. As mentioned above in the concept of Scripture interprets Scripture, the love of neighbor concept serves as a litmus test for the interpretation of Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Augsburg Confession holds that love of neighbor is the greatest virtue and is evidence of one’s complete acceptance of God’s forgiveness of sin. (Tappert, pp. 138, 123)

The informant articulated a Lutheran commitment to social ministry linked to the socialist politics of several northern European countries from which many Lutherans trace their ancestry. (Appendix F, Lines 109-115) During the time that he spent administering an urban housing ministry he “came across a lot of people who had a lot of social problems.” (Appendix F, Line 172) It is important to note that the link to socialist politics is only a starting point for social ministry; the true motivation is love of neighbor and acceptance of all people.

Love of neighbor and acceptance of all people were implicit themes of the informant’s third sermon, which focused on evangelism. In the introduction to the sermon, the informant, in a humorous way, lamented a Lutheran reluctance for evangelism, to tell others the good news of God’s love. During the review of the sermon,

he articulated this further as Lutherans being uncomfortable with the idea of saying to someone “let’s have a cup of coffee and I will tell you what Jesus Christ means to me.” (Appendix F, Line 100) While acknowledging the discomfort that most members of mainline churches would experience at such a proposition, the informant also expressed a belief very similar to the text from the Augsburg Confession presented earlier:

By the same token, I think that people who are embraced by that love and who sense it in their lives and who live it, still should have a comfort level in at least saying that ‘I have found something or something has found me that makes a difference in my life’. And I know that in my own life that is true. What I experienced in my own family when we became active Christians was something very different than what it had been before. (Appendix F, Lines 103-108)

Social ministry and love of neighbor, therefore, is not an obligation, as that would align the concept with the law and good works. Rather, social ministry and love of neighbor is a joyous fulfillment from fully accepting God’s love of forgiveness.

The Need for Further Research

The current study is a first attempt at understanding the many contextual factors that affect a clergy member’s interpretation of Scripture. The methodology of Sense-Making Theory, which allows the informant to be the expert in his or her own world, is effective in identifying these contextual factors and then exploring them in depth.

Identifying additional contextual factors that affect interpretation of Scripture.

The interpretative framework of Sense-Making Theory mandates a focus on how clergy members create knowledge by utilizing strategies that involve “varieties of internal and external cognizings, emotings, feelings, and communicatings that make, reinforce,

challenge, resist, alter, and reinvent human worlds.” (Dervin, 2003, p. 141) This is a process known as verbing and it can express itself in several different forms including factizing or the making of facts from that which is assumed to be real, “consensusing, negotiating, power-brokering, defining, hunching, muddling, and suppressing.” (Dervin, 2003, p. 142)

Clergy members inherently deal with matters of faith, which require at least some degree of assuming to be real certain concepts and entities such as God, the Holy Spirit, eternity, heaven, hell, salvation, and so on. The informant articulated certain concepts in the sermon preparation context such as the involvement of the Holy Spirit through a process of leading, speaking, and unveiling. By this process, the sermon becomes the Word of God, a vehicle by which the Holy Spirit may work in the lives of those who hear the sermon. The contextual factors of seminary education, Lutheran theology, the need to differentiate from American evangelicalism, and his social ministry experience affect the verbing process by which the informant interprets Scripture for sermon preparation.

Additional research may help to identify different and/or additional contextual factors for clergy members of other denominations and backgrounds that affect the verbing process in sermon preparation. The obvious contextual differences with the informant of the current research project would be education and theological position, but other contextual considerations include gender, age, and years of experience. What possible effect might becoming a clergy member after several years on a different career path have on the interpretation of Scripture? Or coming from a military background?

Denominational turmoil and the voices of dissent. The informant spoke to a 30 year cycle within the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod during which there is an

expanding and contracting on the tolerance of deviance from stated church doctrine on such issues as the literal translation of Scripture, fellowship with persons of other denominations, and so on. The informant described an experience in the early 1970's during which the denomination disciplined and removed seminary faculty and clergy members for deviating from the denominational position on the literal interpretation of Scripture. He also related a sense that perhaps the conservative element within the LCMS is experiencing a backlash for its reaction against a denominational official who violated denominational policy by participating in an interfaith worship service in New York City in the days following the bombing of the World Trade Center.

Dervin (1998) writes, "No matter how closed a system, somewhere, someone is making deviant observations, arriving at a sense that would be useful to the entire system if a way can be invented to admit that deviance safely into the discourse." (p. 41) A worthy expansion of the current research project would focus on additional clergy members who, like the informant, left the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod due to the denominational turmoil of the 1970's and how the decision has affected their ministry and how they interpret Scripture for sermon preparation. If LCMS clergy members who deviate from the denominational doctrine could be safely identified and interviewed, additional and valuable data sets might be secured through the Sense-Making methodology.

The affect of authoritarian information systems. Dervin writes that "Sense-Making ... assumes information to be an in-flux creation of a power structure always subject to the forces of power both for its maintenance and its resistance to change" (2003, p. 152) and "that knowledge made today is rarely perfectly suited to application

tomorrow.” (Dervin, 1998, p. 41) Several examples emerged from the data that speak to need for further research on the notion of power structures that resist change in order to maintain current knowledge and of past knowledge once thought absolute that is no longer considered so.

The informant was raised within a power structure that maintained and resisted change to the knowledge that the Bible is the absolute truth in every regard including historical and scientific fact. During seminary, he encountered a microcosm within that structure that dared to deviate and effectively teach that what was knowledge yesterday is no longer knowledge today. The informant also came to experience sense unmaking concerning his earlier knowledge of how to interpret Scripture.

Continued research in the structural maintenance and defense of accepted knowledge, especially knowledge that divides and generates conflict between people, and how to learn from the experiences of those who have come to unlearn this kind of accepted knowledge is a valuable contribution that the field of library and information science could make to society.

Discussion of Findings Related to the Third Research Question: What Goals Does a Clergy Member Hope to Accomplish with the Sunday Sermon?

The data suggest that whatever goals the informant has for a sermon emerge from a commitment to be true to the Word while also asking, “What will the congregation think?” The data revealed at least four important factors that affect the goals the clergy member hopes to accomplish with the Sunday sermon:

- The informant's commitment to using the lectionary readings and liturgical calendar
- What the Word says to the informant
- Lutheran theology
- Concern for the reaction of the congregation

The effect of lectionary readings and church calendar on the goals of the sermon.

The informant's commitment to the use of the lectionary readings and the liturgical church calendar means that during the seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter the focus of the sermon will be on the life of Jesus. During the Pentecost season, the focus of the sermon will be on the life of the individual and the life of the church. (Appendix H, Lines 17-18) Within these broad parameters, the clergy member is free to interpret and apply the scripture readings as he feels led by the Holy Spirit or hears the Word speaking. The informant articulated that he usually preaches from the Gospel lesson, which is in keeping with his theological emphasis of Gospel over law.

The influence of the Word on the goals of the sermon. The informant articulated the need to let the Word of God speak to him early in the sermon preparation process as a way to determine the direction, focus, and goals of the sermon. The Word may speak to an issue on an individual level or a church or societal level. (Appendix G, Lines 37-41) In two of the sermons used for the research project, the informant speaks to individual issues such as

- The need to be aware of the type of music one listens to and its power to influence one's thinking and outlook on life, and
- The need to live a life that bears fruit of one's conversion

The third sermon spoke to the historical struggle and recurring issue within the church to reach out and accept persons who in one way or another are different.

The informant articulated the need of the church to “speak out on social injustice and so forth” and of having “a strong sense that justice ... needs to be brought forward in the church from time to time to make sure that people understand there is a tremendous equalizing force behind the Gospel.” (Appendix G, Lines 41, 47-49) However, his sermons did not focus on any social justice issues during the period of the current study. The informant did make a brief reference to one particular issue that was in the news and to other general issues, but the informant also was clear that he was “not one of the bold, brash preachers.” However, as mentioned earlier, the informant demonstrated a commitment to being true to the Word and struggling with rather than dismissing the leading of the Holy Spirit even in times when he found himself saying “Oh, I really don’t want to go there.” (Appendix G, Lines 44-46)

The influence of Lutheran theology and doctrine on sermon goals. Analysis of the informant’s sermons indicate that he speaks to the themes of Lutheran theology and doctrine, perhaps with the intention to continue and reinforce the education that congregation members receive in the catechism class. Lay members of Lutheran congregations traditionally are baptized as infants and then are educated in the Lutheran doctrine through catechism class during adolescence. Adults who wish to join the ELCA but were not raised and educated in the denomination as children participate in an adult catechism class prior to membership. The percentage of the three sermons used for the current study coded to Lutheran theology and doctrine at the rates of 15.5%, 35%, and 13.8%, respectively.

For example, the theme of the first sermon proclaimed that music is a gift from God as a means for us to praise God and meet God in song. The informant asks the congregation “But what do we have to sing about?” and answers his own question with a detailed list of the beauty of creation, the senses to enjoy it, the “forgiveness for our sins, victory over death and darkness, a place in the Father’s house.” The informant concludes the sermon encouraging the congregation to let the songs that glorify God be the songs that influence their lives and to lift their sights “to things that are valuable and lasting.” (Appendix D, Lines 347-368)

While not directly referencing the first article of the Apostles Creed, the sermon speaks to many of the themes articulated in the Large Catechism from the *Book of Concord*, specifically with the First Article of the Apostles Creed. The “Creed is nothing else than a response and confession of Christians based on the First Commandment” to have no other gods but God; to “hold and believe that I am a creature of God” so that “we are duty bound to love, praise, and thank him without ceasing.” We are not to “swagger about and brag and boast as if we had life, riches, power, honor, and such things of ourselves, as if we ourselves were to be feared and served,” but rather that “everything we see, and every blessing that comes our way, should remind us that this is God’s doing.” (Tappert, 1959, pp. 411-413)

In his sermon, the informant speaks to the “music on MTV and other popular venues that glorify the same kind of language and the same denigrating and humiliating attitudes” that television talk show Don Imus host used to describe a women’s college basketball team that caused a national controversy at this period. The informant portrayed such music as a corruption of God’s gift and further stated that:

Moral degeneration begins with giving glory that belongs to God to some false god, singing some tacky tune glorifying a creature rather than a creator. Paul is making some kind of connection between the way we sing and give praise and the way we live. Sing songs that glorify things that degrade and devalue our humanity, violence, hatred, kinky sex, victimization, and the end result is your own degradation. (Appendix D, Lines 219-224)

The *Book of Concord* explains moral degeneration as the work of the devil, who cannot create substance, but is able to corrupt “the substance which God has created” (Tappert, 1959, p. 469), which in this case is the gift of music.

Concern for the reaction of the congregation. The informant’s goal for the sermon of April 15, 2007, was to encourage his audience to be aware of the music they listen to and the influence it has on their lives. During the sermon delivery, the informant inserted material that was not included in the original sermon manuscript because “it occurred to me while I was talking ... of not wanting people to make an assumption because most people here know that I am inclined towards classical music than toward other forms of music.” (Appendix D, Lines 120-124, 134-137) The material was inserted in order to clarify that he was not advocating a position that one must “only listen to Christian music or classical music” or “that it is not possible to glorify God with any popular forms of music such as rap or hip hop.”

The informant was also concerned about the reaction of the young people in the congregation because “obviously young people are not going to [go] around with hymns buzzing in their head all the time. There is still good music in terms of [what] they listen to, but certainly not all of it.” This is in keeping with the informant’s commitment to the

Lutheran theological position of the freedom to express one's faith versus a moralistic and legalistic position stance that would hold secular music as inherently bad. In the words of the informant: "I do not want people to think that only church music is the only kind of music that praises God because there is the creativity that is reflected in human making of music is something that is also a part of praising God in one's being."

(Appendix D, Lines 143-145)

The potential reaction of the congregation is also a consideration for the informant when he feels led to speak on social justice issues. The informant did not articulate the concern in terms of serving a congregation in a politically conservative state, but the statement that the congregation does "not necessarily always want to hear what their shortcomings are" was made within the context of naming Lutheran leaders throughout history who were persecuted and even executed for "speaking to power." (Appendix G, Lines 55-67)

The Need for Further Research

Dervin (2003) writes that, "Sense-Making thrusts itself between chaos and order ... facts and illusions, external worlds and inner, universals and particulars." (p. 140) The researcher would argue that such is the working world of the clergy member and also that a primary reason why 20% to 40% of the population attends weekly worship services is the search for information to help them deal with an unstable and ever changing reality. "Sense-Making assumes that the quest of human beings to fix the real faces a never-ending riddle" (Dervin, p. 140) and the current research project has operated from the premise that people come to worship services with the expectation that their pastor will provide them with the clues necessary for solving their personal riddles. This places the

clergy member in a unique and powerful position as a knowledge disseminator, and, as such, an important focus of continued research within the LIS field.

What impact does the sermon effect in those who hear it? The current research project focused solely on how the clergy member interprets Scripture for sermon preparation. Further research is required to explore the effectiveness of the sermon as an information product disseminated to the members of the congregation. How do members of the congregation interpret the clergy member's sermon? What impact does the sermon have on their lives?

Using the earlier work of Cheuk (1998) on the Sense-Making behavior of financial auditors as a comparison, the information delivered in an audit report might effect feelings of trust in investors towards the management of a particular business and might also effect self-validation for the honest and hardworking managers of the business. In a similar manner, those persons who heard the sermons of the informant during the data collection period may have gained a greater understanding of their place in the world. They may have left each worship service with a greater appreciation for the blessedness of life and how they might better live in appreciation and affirmation of life's blessings.

The role of power. Dervin (2003) writes that "Sense-Making mandates attention to forces that both impel, assist, and facilitate movement as well as those that constrain, hinder, and limit movement." (p. 142) The informant seemed intent on facilitating movement and growth in the faith of the people of his congregation through his sermons. Only further research will reveal if this a general goal of all clergy members or whether

some clergy members interpret Scripture for sermons with the goal to constrain, hinder, and limit movement in the lives of congregation members.

The sermon topics on the power of music and on conversion spoke to the opportunity to accept the grace of God in order to live a life of joy, peace, and faithfulness. The sermon on evangelism spoke to the opportunity to share this power to live with others. The informant seemed to encourage congregation members to think critically and to evaluate for themselves the music they listen to and other forms of influence in their lives. The informant believes in the essential goodness of people and the goals of his sermons are to expose the members of the congregation to what they already know so that they can restore order from whatever chaos that might have led them to the worship service on a particular Sunday.

*Discussion of the findings through the interpretative framework of
Sense-Making Theory*

Previous studies in the Sense-Making literature (Cheuk, 1998; Cheuk & Dervin, 1999) found that members of the architectural, engineering, and financial auditing professions tend to go about completing an assigned task in similar patterns of information use and Sense-Making behavior. First, they ask certain questions that define the assignment and initiate a process by which the professional will work towards its completion. Second, they form a focus of the task and begin a third stage of assuming different ideas, confirming or rejecting these ideas in a process that may repeat itself several times before reaching the stage of idea finalization. Then, they consider how the presentation of the assignment results will be received by both their supervisor and their client and the task is complete. The research data suggests that the clergy member

approaches the task of sermon preparation with information seeking and use behavior very similar to that of other professionals engaged in routine task completion and problem solving situations.

Table 3 presents a comparison of the Sense-Making instances articulated by auditors, engineers, architects in the Cheuk and Dervin (1999) study. The figures added for “Clergy” were deduced from the interviews with the informant in this study. The table reports the number of instances (*n*) when members of each profession encountered a particular Sense-Making situation in the completion of a routine task. Some situations are encountered more frequently than others, but which situations encountered more frequently than others varies by profession. The table calculates the percentage of each Sense-Making situation as encountered by each profession and orders the encounters from highest (1st) to lowest (10th).

Table 3

Task completion process similarity between professions

Situation	Architects	Auditors	Engineers	Clergy
Task initiation	3.7% (n=8) (8 th)	4.3% (n=11) (7 th)	6.5% (n=10) (7 th)	6.2% (n=3) (7 th)
Focus forming	9.8% (n=21) (5 th)	26.2% (n=67) (1 st)	10.3% (n=16) (5 th)	12.5% (n=6) (3 rd T)
Idea assuming	28.8% (n=62) (1 st)	21.5% (n=55) (2 nd)	25.2% (n=39) (1 st)	29.2% (n=14) (1 st)
Idea rejecting	12.6% (n=27) (2 nd)	12.9% (n=33) (4 th)	17.4% (n=28) (3 rd)	10.4% (n=5) (5 th)
Idea confirming	9.3% (n=20) (6 th)	16.4% (n=42) (3 rd)	17.4% (n=27) (3 rd)	20.8% (n=10) (2 nd)
Idea finalizing	11.6% (n=25) (3 rd)	9.4% (n=24) (5 th T)	10.3% (n=16) (6 th)	8.3% (n=4) (6 th)
Idea sharing	7.0% (n=15) (7 th)	9.4% (n=24) (5 th T)	11.0% (n=17) (4 th)	12.5% (n=6) (3 rd T)
Approval granting	2.8% (n=6) (10 th)	0	0.6% (n=1) (8 th T)	0
Design generating	3.3% (n=7) (9 th)	0	0	0
Approval seeking	11.2% (n=24) (4 th)	0	0.6% (n=1) (8 th T)	0

It should be noted that the informant in the current study articulated experiencing the same types of information seeking situations as members of the three professions studied by Cheuk and Dervin (1999). There is also noticeable similarity in the frequency rankings of particular situations between the professions such as Idea Assuming and Idea

Confirming. It is also noteworthy that the informants in Cheuk and Dervin's study reported on only one task and the informant for the current study reported on three separate tasks.

Task initiating situations. Informants from previous Sense-Making studies have defined the task initiating situation as facing a gap "which requires getting started on new assignments" and finding themselves asking factual questions about the assignment. (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation Type #1, paragraph 1) The informant for the current study articulated that his preparation of sermons occurred on a week by week basis rather than like some other clergy members he knows who "know what they are going to preach on for the next three or four months and have that all written down." (Appendix D, Lines 320-322) Therefore, the informant faces a task-initiating situation on a weekly basis, which always begins with referring to a Lectionary calendar to find the Scripture texts assigned to the upcoming Sunday on the church calendar.

The informant articulated a preferred routine for sermon preparation that moves in linear fashion from task initiation to idea sharing through the week with particular benchmarks for particular days of the week. The process would ideally be initiated each Monday morning with the initial reading of the Scripture texts for the coming Sunday. By Wednesday, a clear idea for the theme and direction of the sermon would be in mind and by Friday the informant would have typed a manuscript of the sermon text. (Appendix G, Lines 7-16) The informant noted that this preferred routine does not always happen due to a variety of reasons and, in fact, this was the case during at least two of the three weeks of sermon preparation for the research project.

During the three unstructured interviews, the informant did not articulate the process in terms of the preferred routine, that is, that certain things were done or decisions made on particular days of the week. Rather, the informant articulated a particular pattern of Sense-Making behavior that he repeated with each weekly sermon preparation situation regardless of the amount of time available during the week. The amount of time spent on each step in the process may well have varied, but the informant never articulated one way or another that time was ever a factor in the sermon preparation process.

Focus forming situations. Informants from previous Sense-Making studies have defined the focus forming situation as “not having clear ideas of exactly what information they needed” and they “saw unclear and foggy paths ahead.” (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation Type #2, paragraph 1) Information seekers may ask questions about the past such as “how many times have I preached on this text before?” (Appendix A, Lines 8-9) They may ask questions about the future, about possible directions the task might take, and about the opinion of others. (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation Type #2, paragraph 1)

Once the sermon preparation task has been initiated, the informant in the current study articulated that a period of time was necessary for “mulling over,” (Appendix G, Line 8) “to rumble those things around in my mind as to how they tie together,” (Appendix A, Line 25) and to prayerfully consider “Okay, what is this about?” (Appendix G, Line 36) The informant also articulated a situation by which the Word of God speaks to him in terms of the church and society which may determine the focus of the sermon:

Sometimes the church is the foremost thing or it may be that the foremost indicator from what I hear the Word speak to me is an individual thing or it may be the problems of society. That is where you get into those things where you feel the church needs to speak out on social injustice and so forth. So to me, because the Word is a living thing, you never quite know where you are going to be going. (Appendix G, Lines 39-43)

The focus-forming situation is complete once a sermon theme begins to emerge or, sometimes, jumps out for the informant. (Appendix B, Line 8)

Idea assuming situations. In previous Sense-Making studies of other professions, informants who defined themselves in an idea assuming situation described “having formed clear ideas about their destinations and ... saw the need to get access to specific information required to improve their specific task knowledge and get going toward their destinations.” (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation Type #3, paragraph 1) This is the search for value-added information characterized by specific details and current information. The engineers of Cheuk and Dervin’s research describe this situation as needing to know what resources are available, and the architects described it as needing all the structural input. (Cheuk & Dervin, Information seeking situation Type #3, paragraphs 4 -5)

The informant in the current study began the weekly task of sermon preparation with a clear idea of the destination as the Word that the Holy Spirit would have him preach on the coming Sunday that would give hope of salvation to those who would hear the sermon. Consideration of the different Scripture readings as resources for the sermon

message by which the Word would speak to him, the Holy Spirit would lead, and a theme for the sermon would emerge characterizes the idea-assuming situation.

Idea rejecting situations. In previous Sense-Making studies of other professions, informants defined idea-rejecting situations as those in which

- Movement is problematic because they see themselves as being out of control of the situation
- They are being dragged down a road not of their own choosing
- When sense cannot be made of the situation because of conflicting or unexpected information that “did not conform to their plans, expectations or personal understandings.” (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation Type #4, paragraph 1)

The informant encountered five idea-rejecting situations in the preparation of the three sermons for the current study, all of which related to the selection of Scripture text. The informant prefers to preach from the Gospel text, (Appendix H, Line 146) but for two of the three sermons in this study he chose to preach on one of the other texts so that the idea of preaching from the Gospel text was rejected. He rejected the idea of preaching from one of the secondary texts three times. The informant articulated the situation in terms consistent with the Sense-Making literature in that there was a gap between the Scripture texts and his plans, expectations, or personal understandings. On one occasion, he expressed having preached on the Gospel lesson many times before and felt a need “for something fresher than that.” (Appendix A, Line 9) On another occasion, he rejected the idea of preaching on the Gospel lesson due to not being “particularly fond of the theme.” (Appendix C, Line 6) Ideas for preparing the sermon on one of the secondary

Scripture texts were rejected because the text “was not the deepest or richest source for the day” (Appendix A, Line 11) and because it has been historically misused and misinterpreted by many other preachers. (Appendix A, Line 76)

It is important to note that the informant never defined a situation in the sermon preparation process in which he felt out of control or of being dragged down a road not of his own choosing in a negative sense, as have informants from other professions in idea rejecting situations. In the course of all the interviews there was never any indication that the informant ever experienced a sense of potential failure to prepare a sermon for Sunday morning due to matters beyond his control. Rather the informant operates from the belief that the Holy Spirit is involved in the sermon preparation process. Some sermons “just flow” and others “you just slave and work at,” (Appendix G, Lines 24-25) and some of the sermons may be “clinkers,” but the Holy Spirit works through the sermon regardless in the lives of those who hear it. (Appendix H, Lines 234-237) The informant understands the need to allow the Holy Spirit to lead, to be in control of the sermon preparation process. This can often cause a situation defined by the informant as “Oh, I really don’t want to go there.” (Appendix G, Line 44-45)

Idea confirming situations. In the Sense-Making literature, idea confirming situations are those in which informants define themselves as “connecting to truth and having to confirm, verify and double-check certain assumptions, ideas, issues and suggestions.” (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation Type #5, paragraph 1) Connecting to truth for the informant in the current study may mean verifying information in terms of factual accuracy, but it may also mean connecting to an idea that never intended to be factual at all. For example, connecting to truth for the informant may

mean verifying the original Greek word translated in English as “conversion” and the frequency of its use throughout Scripture. (Appendix E, Line 67-68) Or it may mean connecting to the truth of the story of the creation of the universe in six days as recorded in Genesis chapter 1, which was not originally intended to be factual at all. (Appendix J, Lines 77-84)

A significant event along the phenomenological horizon of the informant has been the transition from believing in the factual accuracy of Scripture in every detail to an understanding of Scripture as true even if it is not scientifically or historically accurate. (Appendix H, Line 58-59) It is important to note that the definition of an idea-confirming situation for the informant, both in the sermon preparation process and in daily life, has changed over time from a simplistic faith, which defies reason, to a much more complex faith informed by reason. His seminary education enabled this change and the realization that letting go of a literal interpretation of Scripture did not mean that he was losing anything in terms of his faith, but rather that he was gaining. (Appendix J, Lines 124-130)

Idea finalizing situations. Idea finalizing situations, as defined by informants in Sense-Making studies, are those in which a whole picture is formed in order to make a decision or reach a conclusion, when personal or collaborative judgments are made in order “to come up with value-added decisions/conclusions.” (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation #6, paragraph 1) In each of the three reflective interviews, the informant articulated the formation of a whole picture by which he made a judgment and reached a conclusion considered to be of value to those who would hear the sermon.

The informant defined the idea-finalizing situation in his reflections on the first sermon in this study. The sermon was introduced with an engaging story from his days in

college when the pep band and student body motivated their basketball team with a new school fight song to reach beyond its normal level of play to defeat a top ranked team. The introduction served to guide the sermon to the value-added conclusion “that if music can compel a rather mediocre basketball team to a moment of greatness, then it has a lot of other powers to influence.” (Appendix A, Lines 87-88) The informant wanted his audience to consider that they should be conscious of the influence, both positive and negative, that music has in their lives. (Appendix D, Lines 364-368)

Idea sharing situations. Cheuk and Dervin (1999) found that when their informants defined themselves as being in an idea sharing situation, they saw themselves as information providers, needing “to share their information and knowledge with other people.” (Information Seeking Situation Type #7, paragraph 1) It is worth noting that idea sharing tied for third (See Table 3) as the most frequent information seeking situation type for the current informant representing 12.5% of the total number of defined situations, both of which are higher than for Cheuk and Dervin’s informants from other professions. Sharing information and knowledge is inherent in the clergy profession as evidence required for ordination is the ability to proclaim the Word of God so that those who hear the proclamation have hope of salvation. (Tappert, pp. 123, 324)

The idea-sharing situation is defined by the bridging of all the information gaps by the information seeker so that all necessary information is ready for sharing. (Cheuk & Dervin, 1999, Information Seeking Situation Type #7, paragraph 2) For the informant in the current study the sermon is ready for sharing when it generally includes the elements of a three-point sermon, which is somewhat of a standard idea within the clergy profession. The informant learned his particular model for a three-point sermon in

seminary and it consists of a Goal, which is generally spiritual development; a Malady, which is always sin; and a Means, which is always the Gospel. (Appendix H, Lines 197-203)

Discussion of the Findings Through Links to the LIS Literature

The current research project adds to the LIS body of knowledge in regards to members of the clergy profession. The single-case study methodology of the current study offers a deeper insight into an area of interest common to the previous studies. The previous studies of Lancour (1944), Huseman (1970), and Porcella (1973) informed the researcher to listen for any mention by the informant regarding reading materials or library usage. The informant did not articulate any particular titles of books or periodicals in any of the interview sessions outside of Scripture, the *Book of Concord*, and denominational studies on the issue of homosexuality. Neither did the researcher ask any direct questions of the informant regarding his reading interests and library usage.

In retrospect, the opportunity to ask these questions existed in the semi-structured follow up interviews. This may have yielded data indicative of a link between clergy reading interests, library usage, and sermon preparation. The researcher will take this potential line of questioning into consideration in the design of any future studies in this area.

The current research project linked to Tanner's (1992) findings that clergy members tend "to demonstrate a high degree of personal involvement with both their [sermon] topics and their information sources." (p. 318) He reported that several of his informants articulated an ability to preach only on issues with which they were personally

struggling and that the second most frequently used information source for sermon construction was the personal experiences of the informants. (1992, p. 318)

In the course of the data collection process, the informant for the current research project articulated a high degree of personal involvement with each of the three sermon topics: music, conversion, and evangelism. The primary information resource for the informant was Scripture of which he was rather passionate in describing his respect and awe. The informant shared a personal experience from his days of playing in the college pep band as a major component of a sermon and he touched on at least one issue with which he was personally struggling, sexual orientation and ordination.

The current research project linked to Wicks' (1999) findings that clergy members use a more closed information system when their work role intersected with their theological world. This means that clergy members tend to stay within their theological and denominational worlds when selecting information resources, especially for the preaching role. (p. 211) He defined closed information system as when "the individual restricts her or his information-seeking to a limited number of communication contacts." (p. 209)

The informant for the current study articulated a very strong connection between his theological and denominational worlds and his preaching role. Significant portions of the sermon contents were directly attributable to these worlds and the same was true for his responses during all but one of the 10 interviews conducted during the data collection process. The informant articulated a passion for his work, his mission, as a clergy member in proclaiming a message of hope and salvation within the parameters of his theological world. However, it is evident that the informant did not consider it necessary

to look any further than Scripture and the Book of Concord to inform the topic, direction, and development of his sermons.

Chapter 6

A summary of the research project

The researcher began the current study with several assumptions based on his 11 years as a clergy member and preparing sermons. First, the researcher assumed that the contemporary clergy member in the situation of needing to interpret Scripture for the Sunday sermon faces a chronological gap of 1600 years between contemporary times and Biblical times. Second, the researcher assumed that Scripture, as consisting of the 66 books of the Holy Bible, is a static document, the contents of which have not changed for 1600 years. Third, the researcher assumed that in order to be true to the Scripture text, the contemporary clergy member must research the historical, social, and political contexts in order to ascertain the original purpose and intent of the Scripture text. Fourth, the differences in interpretation of Scripture from one clergy member to another was a matter of individual contextual factors such as education, doctrinal position, experience, denominational affiliation, and more.

All of these assumptions are valid, yet far from sufficient to explain the Sense-Making behavior of a clergy member faced with the task of interpreting Scripture in order to prepare a Sunday sermon. The assumptions of the researcher are rooted in his own academic approach to sermon preparation. What emerged from the interviews with the informant for the current research project is an example of a completely different approach to sermon preparation. While the approach utilizes certain academic tools, it is grounded in a strong faith in the existence and workings of the divine entity known as the Holy Spirit.

What emerged from the data was a verbing by the informant of the sermon preparation process as a collaborative effort with the Holy Spirit. This collaborative effort establishes connectivity that overcomes the gaps of time, place, and worldviews between the contemporary clergy member and the long line of prophets, preachers, and priests from Biblical times onward who have heard and spoken the living Word of God.

Dervin (2003) writes:

Sense-Making assumes that there are myriad ways that human beings have individually and collectively verbed their worlds, in adaptation, response, resistance, creativity, challenge, and invention. This, in turn, implies that in attempting to understand the human condition Sense-Making admits all manner of connectivities and patterns, not just causalities but spontaneities, simultaneities, temporalities, collaboralities, and so on. This includes not just connectivities that imply anchorings in the real (e.g., factizings, experiencings, or structurings) but those that imply soarings beyond (e.g., narratings, fantasyings, or imaginings). (p. 145)

The researcher will argue that the informant verbs his world, especially the sermon preparation process, in such a way that combines connectivities both anchored in the real and soar beyond the real by faith.

Collaboration with the Holy Spirit

For the informant in the current research project, the collaborative relationship is more than simply waiting for the Holy Spirit to tell him which Scripture text to select and what to say in the sermon. There is recognition of the subjective nature of the collaborative relationship and that the informant must take certain objective steps to

insure that he is indeed hearing the Holy Spirit speak and that he is being true to the living Word of God. These objective steps include:

- Use of the liturgical calendar and Lectionary for Scripture text selection,
- Research of primary resources such as the original Biblical languages, and the Book of Concord, and
- Utilization of the concept that Scripture interprets Scripture.

These objective steps are methods by which the informant anchors the sermon preparation process in the real through structure, experience, and factizing. The informant perceives these steps as necessary preparation so that the Holy Spirit may unveil or reveal the Word to which he must give voice through the Sunday sermon.

The Holy Spirit is something other than an information resource because the clergy member cannot just pull the Holy Spirit off a bookshelf, turn to the proper page, and get an answer. The Holy Spirit is the active presence of God, mysteriously and timelessly at work in the world and in the informant's life. The informant understands the Holy Spirit to be unpredictable and that he is never able to know how the Holy Spirit is going to lead. One week, the Holy Spirit leads the informant to prepare a sermon on an issue that is of a personal nature and another week the sermon may focus on the congregation, society, or the world. The informant prepares himself for the leading of the Holy Spirit both by the objective research and by a spiritual worldview that lends itself to sensing the Spirit's guidance.

A question that the researcher would like to pursue in future research is this: If sermon preparation is done in collaboration with the Holy Spirit, then why do so many sermons seem to contradict each other, even within the same denominational affiliation?

As demonstrated previously, one sermon declared the resurrection of Jesus a legend not to be taken literally while another sermon declared it a real and literal occurrence of cosmic proportions. Is one sermon more accurately the word of God than another? An anticipated answer might be that each sermon is a unique collaboration with the Holy Spirit based on the unique ability and context of a particular clergy member and the unique needs of the congregation.

The Holy Spirit's Role in the Selection of Scripture Text

Through his dedicated use of the Lectionary and the liturgical church calendar, the informant anchors his sermon preparation within a structural connectivity that gives his work historical, denominational, and doctrinal validity. The informant does not see limiting his choice of Scripture texts to the four Lectionary readings for any given Sunday as a limitation placed on the Holy Spirit. The informant sees the Lectionary as a mechanism of church tradition that helps to focus sermons on accepted themes of Christian living and to avoid using the sermon to “grind a personal axe.” He joins thousands of other ELCA clergy members each week in what they might describe as a best practice for their particular community within the clergy profession.

Not all clergy members, however, use the Lectionary and liturgical church calendar. Further research is needed to determine what other structural connectivities clergy might use for Scripture text selection or even if that is the first step in sermon preparation for all clergy members. Other clergy members might wait for the Holy Spirit to guide them in the development of a sermon theme and then research the Scriptures to find particular passages that illustrate the theme and validate the sermon contents. Either

procedure is collaboration with the Holy Spirit. Further research is necessary to explore the nuances of each approach.

Further research is required to determine what other information resources clergy members use to select and interpret Scripture texts for the weekly sermon and to what degree other clergy members emphasize one particular area of Scripture over another. The research has implications regarding similarities of the Sense-Making behavior of members of other professions such as teachers and social workers. Teachers must make decisions regarding the interpretation of subject matter for their students. Social workers make decisions that significantly affect the lives of their clients based on their interpretation of particular situations.

Attributes of Collaboration with the Holy Spirit

Power and Authority

Throughout the text of this report, the researcher has referred to the clergy profession. It is a term with which at least a few clergy members would take exception in preference for the designation of a calling. When clergy membership is understood as resulting from a call from God, the clergy member is endowed with much more power and authority than would be the case if clergy membership were simply a matter of education and board exams such as with the medical and legal professions.

The implications of such power and authority are of particular interest in a knowledge society. While an individual might have great respect for lawyers and doctors and their knowledge of law and medicine respectively, such knowledge is seldom if ever believed to have the power of the divine as its source. To be certain, doctors and lawyers must practice caution with the knowledge that they share due to the risk of liability.

Clergy members have generally been immune from charges of liability and are protected by the constitutional rights to free speech and religion.

The overwhelming majority of clergy members appear to take great responsibility for the knowledge that they share. They are ethical and conscientious in wielding the power and authority of their position. Yet, recent events suggest that society is increasingly intolerant of clergy who claim freedom of speech and religion to preach a message that only a small minority of persons believe to have divine authority. Further research might help to clarify norms and standards from within the clergy membership for the implementation of legal policy on the questions of liability and immunity.

Ordination

The denomination with which the clergy member is affiliated bestows the power and authority upon the clergy position through the process of ordination. Ordination is differentiated from the call to the potential clergy member in that ordination is collaboration between the church and the Holy Spirit to identify and confirm those who are called. (May & Metzger, 1977, p. 1337) The requirements for ordination vary from denomination to denomination. Additional research into the various requirements and understandings of ordination might be beneficial in providing additional clarification of the contextual differences and similarities in sermon preparation between clergy members.

When the denomination is satisfied that an individual is truly called from God to enter the clergy, a public ceremony of ordination takes place to confirm that the clergy has met the requirements of ordination and has shown evidence of the ability to hear and speak the living Word of God. The ability to hear and speak the living Word of God is

the nature of the clergy member's collaboration with the Holy Spirit. In the case of the ordination process for the informant, there is again evidence of a balance between connectivities anchored in the real and those that soar beyond.

The informant and all ELCA clergy are required to complete a seminary education as a prerequisite for ordination. This requirement provides a structural connectivity with a recognized standard of objective measurement of the skills, talents, and abilities of the would-be clergy member. The requirement of a seminary education as a prerequisite for ordination is common in several denominations and optional in others.

The variability of this structural connectivity between denominations provides an opportunity for further research on how this particular context affects the sermon preparation process of different clergy members across the spectrum of the connectivity. The lack of a seminary education for clergy members in denominations for which it is an option usually determines the size and location of congregations that the clergy member might expect to serve. This, in turn, affects the salary that a clergy member might expect to receive. Such segmentation of clergy members also provides an opportunity for additional research.

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is the accrediting agency for more than 200 schools affiliated with more than two dozen Christian denominations and the Jewish faith in Canada and the United States that offer the Master of Divinity (M.Div) degree. The ATS also accredits a large number of non-denominational seminaries. The M.Div. is the recognized terminal degree for ordained ministry and usually requires 90 hours of course studies. This large number of accredited seminaries offering the M.Div. may be indicative of a widely accepted standard for ordination. Such a standard for

education as a requirement for ordination adds to the need on the part of the LIS field to recognize members of the clergy as a community as worthy of study for information needs and behavior as is currently the case with the members of many other professional communities.

Further research is necessary to determine the degree to which there exists a standardized curriculum for the M.Div. degree in order to explore how differences in the M.Div. education might affect the Sense-Making behavior of clergy members. One might reasonably expect differences in theology courses to reflect the doctrine of the denomination affiliation, but one might also hope for certain required elements of Biblical languages, church history, ethics, and more. In any event, seminary education provides a structure by which the denomination may test the potential clergy member for the validity of a calling. In the case of the informant, this included the ability or inability to comprehend and apply Biblical languages, theological concepts, and principles of Scriptural interpretation to determine if the calling was truly of God.

Collaboration with the Holy Spirit Defines the Goals of the Sermon

The current study sought to identify the goals of a clergy member for each sermon that he prepared and to explore how these goals affected the selection and interpretation of Scripture texts. While particular goals for each sermon did emerge from the interview data, more importantly was the emergence of an overarching goal affected by the contextual factors of the informant's life and a reflection of his worldview, but primarily defined by collaboration with the Holy Spirit in the sermon process.

Indicative of his theological tradition, the informant interpreted Scripture and prepared sermons in such a way as to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. This

means that the informant believes that in Jesus, God has redeemed humanity from the power of sin and that the proper human response is to rejoice in this salvation and live a life that gives praise and glory to God. The general and specific goal of each of the informant's sermons was to communicate that this salvation is God's gift given to each of us before we are born and that we cannot earn this salvation through adherence to a strict moral law. This goal is reflective of Lutheran theology, which teaches that the role of the clergy member is to give voice to the Living Word of God so that the Holy Spirit can effect change in the lives of those who hear it.

The informant articulated that he does not tend to reflect nor dwell on a sermon after delivering it to the congregation. He articulated a position that once a sermon has been given a voice, it is beyond his control to make it better or to take something back that might have best been left unsaid. Rather, the power of the delivered sermon is in the hands of the Holy Spirit to work whatever good and effect whatever change that it may.

Further research is necessary to determine to what degree clergy members share this general goal. Other goals may play a greater role in the clergy profession in the task of Scripture interpretation. The informant often alluded to other clergy members who seem to emphasize adherence to moral law in their sermons. Additional research may test the validity of this claim and yield greater insight into the differences and similarities among and between clergy members. Such research could expand into the effect of political and social worldviews on the performance of other professionals who significantly influence the lives of others such as teachers and social workers mentioned earlier.

In conclusion, the current research project accomplished its goals in the identification and exploration of how a clergy member goes about selecting a Scripture text to interpret and from which to prepare a sermon. The research project identified and explored important contextual factors that affect how the clergy member interprets Scripture. The research project identified and explored the goals that the clergy member hopes to accomplish with each sermon, which in turn, affects his interpretation of Scripture. Finally, the current project has developed a research agenda that builds on the findings and adds to the academy of knowledge in the use of Sense-Making Theory to interpret qualitative data in the information and Sense-Making behavior of an individual confronting and negotiating particular situations in life.

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Appendix A

Transcript of the first unstructured interview: the informant's reflections on preparing the sermon of April 15, 2007

1 **Researcher:** Monday morning April 16, 2007 This is the first interview with the
2 informant for my data collection process for my dissertation "Relating Faith to the
3 Modern World". At this time I will ask the pastor to just relate as much as he is able to
4 recall and willing to share, as to how his sermon of April 15, 2007 came to be.

5 **Informant:** First of all, this week I got a late start on sermon preparation. I did not get
6 started thinking about it until Wednesday. As always, I start off with the readings that are
7 appointed to be read on that particular day and one of those was the Gospel which
8 includes Thomas and the "Doubting Thomas" aspect which I have probably preached on
9 almost every year of my ministry and I thought, "I need something fresher than that".
10 The book of the reading from Revelation was a possibility, although it was, in my
11 opinion, not the deepest or richest source for the day. It was about this time that all the
12 news about Don Imus broke and which seemed kind of a reflection on how our society
13 has become very much coarser and very much meaner than basically it has been. With
14 that as a reflection point, I began to think particularly about the Psalm for the day which
15 was Psalm 150. My wife and I pray lauds virtually, the office of lauds, virtually every
16 morning and that is part of the liturgy in the office of lauds. It is one of those things that
17 lifts up the praise of God with all kinds of musical instruments and so forth. It just has
18 that quality of being able to lift one's spirits and one's thoughts to God. It emphasizes
19 how all things, everything ends up, everything that has breath, praise the Lord and this is
20 one of the things that I think if we truly live our faith, that becomes one of the main

21 functions of our lives, not just in word and deed and song and whatever, but it is that we
22 praise God with all that we are, with our whole being. Then I began reflecting on how
23 important music is in that shaping of our lives and our praise, particularly in our liturgy,
24 music is a very important factor in the liturgy of the church and the historic liturgy.

25 I began to rumble those things around in my mind as to how they tie together and I began
26 to realize that this time, I am going to do something that I don't ordinarily do and that is
27 somewhat depart from using the texts for the day as a structure for the sermon and using
28 a theme, the theme of Praise of God, particularly in music, as a theme for the sermon.

29 As the week advanced, I began to reflect, too, that this might be helpful to the
30 congregation because we have just entered into using a brand new hymnal and that
31 requires some adjustment for our congregation to get acquainted with some of the new
32 hymns in the new hymnal and, also, some of the new liturgy in the hymnal. And to
33 emphasize to them that now with the new hymnal, we have ten different settings, some of
34 which will be based on music that is foreign to them and to emphasize, too, that when it
35 comes to the praise and worship of God, there are all forms of music that can be used and
36 there are all forms of language that can be used. Our transition to the new hymnal has
37 been fairly easy compared to what it was 25, 27, 30 years ago when another new hymnal
38 came out and all of a sudden we were not using Thee and Thou in the liturgies and so
39 forth and that was a little bit of a struggle to get Lutherans over that. They don't like
40 change all that well, but they did get over that and that became kind of a standard but I
41 have been kind of surprised that there has been virtually no backlash to this one and we
42 really seem to be making progress in that, but I did think that a sermon on music and its
43 importance in the worship life of the church is important. But then, to emphasize more

44 importantly, how music is kind of a leading factor in social change. When I think back to
45 my days in seminary and standing around singing “We Shall Overcome” and some of the
46 Civil Rights songs and so forth, that it was really kind of a cutting edge of the changes
47 that were made in the Civil Rights Movement. The music became a positive influence
48 for change. So now my concern is, that we have a lot in music that is a negative
49 influence, that has become mean and demeaning to racial groups, to homosexuals, to
50 women and all kinds of ways in which music, if it truly is the cutting edge, it is cutting
51 the wrong edge and leading our whole society down to a coarser, more violent and
52 meaner way. So, the sermon begins to take shape around a recognition that music does
53 have an influence on our lives.

54 Really, when I talk with our teenagers, I think it has a bigger influence on our lives or
55 their lives than it did on the kids in my generation. In talking with them, I sometimes
56 hear from some of our teenagers, “music is my life” and yes, they are right in some
57 respects, it is their life because it is a lead—it shapes the way they think you know, and
58 sometimes I am both afraid and both confident that it shapes their lives far more than it
59 did in my generation. This is something that can be a very positive influence in their lives
60 and I am so glad that a youth band has started up now and is going pretty strong and
61 plays for church once in a while that we have kids involved in music. And that those kids
62 that say “my music” and they do refer to it as “my music” not that just that what they
63 mean by that, not just what they play, but what they listen to. “My music is my life” and
64 I think maybe all of us need to take a look at what influences that music brings to our
65 lives and what we listen to and what we sing is going to have that influence.

66 So, the sermon began to shape up as a reflection, hopefully leading people into the idea of

67 how music is a powerful influence and that because it is a powerful influence, we need to
68 see what it is that is making that influence in our lives. Not that we need to be singing
69 hymns all the time or listening to Christian radio all the time or whatever, partly because
70 I can't stand most Christian Radio. Anyway, it doesn't mean that it has to be classical or
71 the great music or whatever, but to understand that we are letting something influence the
72 way we think and the way we act and all of those things. That begins where we form the
73 shape of the sermon and the power that is exhibited in the praise of God, particularly as
74 expressed in the Psalm for the day, Psalm 150, I think is good.

75 Some of the side lights to it: whenever we get into Revelation, I always think of how
76 badly Revelation is misused by a lot of Christians, particularly a lot of Christian
77 preachers with this document that comes out of a persecution time of the Church, and
78 reflects, if not the way worship was actually conducted, because I doubt that many of
79 those Christians, although some were wealthy, and I doubt that many of those Christians
80 had access to a regular diet of all of the fancy things that are mentioned as far as worship
81 aids in Revelation, but in this idealized church service in the Book of Revelation, you
82 certainly find all of those elements of how important how worship and praise of God is
83 and that sounds like we are going to spend our eternity doing that with the incense and
84 the trumpets and harps and whatever else.

85 With those things as resources for the sermon and one of them comes out of my own
86 experience of the power of music and that became the introduction for the sermon and I
87 figure that if music can compel a rather mediocre basketball team to a moment of
88 greatness, that it has a lot of other powers to influence. So, then, after an introduction
89 moving into a little bit of reflection on Revelation and what I feel is the proper

90 interpretation and use of Revelation: to assure that Christians, particularly persecuted
91 Christians understand that God's got the ultimate victory and that in the praise of God,
92 we express that confident hope that God does indeed have a victory over sin and over
93 death and that is for eternity, the eternal victory is His and therefore, through Jesus
94 Christ, becomes ours.

95 Some further reflection on how the sermon developed would be that it really revolves
96 more around Psalm 150 than any of the other lessons for the day. The other lessons are
97 not irrelevant to what Psalm 150 has to say, but it was taking that theme of the power of
98 praising God and applying it to some of the other thoughts of the sermon and that is kind
99 of how it developed.

Appendix B

Transcript of the second unstructured interview: the informant's reflections on preparing the sermon of April 22, 2007

1 RESEARCHER: This is the recording of the interview with the Informant on
2 Wednesday, April 25, 2007 at 4:20 p.m. This is our second meeting following the
3 sermon of April 22, 2007 (second interview of data collection process, but first meeting
4 following the sermon of April 22, 2007). At this point the Informant will relate the
5 sermon preparation process for the sermon of that date, the Third Sunday of Easter, Year
6 C in the Lectionary Calendar.

7 INFORMANT: When I looked at the lessons from the Lectionary this time, the account
8 of the conversion of St. Paul kind of jumped out partly because it is one of those lessons
9 that is repeated in the year. Most of the lessons are not repeated, but this one happens to
10 be on a particular day relating to the period of time between the confession of St. Peter
11 and the conversion of St. Paul. Between those two dates in the church calendar the
12 confession of St. Paul shows up again and then becomes something of a challenge to find
13 something new to say about that. And for some reason, in this particular time, and I am
14 not really sure what the reason is, but the conversion of St. Paul kind of jumped out as
15 providing a theme for the day because it seemed to me that between the Gospel which
16 was Peter's reinstatement among the disciples with Jesus asking him "Do you love me?"
17 three times and telling him he had a job to be done, "feed my sheep, feed my lambs, and
18 take care of the church" that this was Peter coming back in kind of a second conversion.
19 So you have the dramatic event of Paul's conversion as he is on his way to persecute the
20 Christians in Damascus compared to St. Peter who, I don't know, for want of a better

21 way to say it, comes back to Christ with his tail between his legs and recognizing that he
22 has failed in really standing up against the forces that caused the Lord's death, but Jesus
23 is very open to accepting him back. And you have Peter denying Jesus three times, but
24 now Jesus giving him the opportunity three times to say "I love you." And to me it is that
25 wonderful picture of grace of God that accepts us not as we would like be: brave and
26 courageous and full of faith, but that God accepts us as we are and then commissions us,
27 gives us work to do for him and gives us a place in his kingdom. Relating to that are
28 these two forms of conversion. And I know that the airwaves and a lot of the TV
29 evangelism and so forth revolves around a type of conversion that is somewhat at odds
30 with a Lutheran concept of what Scripture teaches as far as conversion. So that then sent
31 me to the Book of Concord and the Lutheran Confessions and to find out and refurbish
32 my memory on what the Lutheran Confessions do say on conversion and how it may or
33 may not be different from what I would say would be an evangelical, I hate that word
34 because we are the Evangelical Lutheran Church and we were there first before it got
35 stolen from us. Anyway, how we are different from the American evangelical concept of
36 conversion. So I did a little study in the Book of Concord tracing down the various
37 places in which conversion is dealt with and found some material and some things that I
38 think we need to think about as to what conversion is. As a sideline, the Lutheran
39 perspective of conversion is not the same as the decision type of theology in which a
40 person makes that decision for Christ that you often hear about. The Lutheran
41 perspective goes more from the standpoint of God being the initiator and frankly the
42 human being much more passive in the conversion process than in the decision theology.

43 So with those things in mind, I felt that basically the descriptions in the Bible itself, for
44 the lessons were pretty dramatic as for examples or whatever, but I also remembered
45 from some readings in the Church Fathers that I had done, the story of Polycarp and how
46 he was martyred and after 86 years as a Christian he maintained his confession of faith to
47 the end. So I thought he was a pretty good example of somebody who had been a
48 Christian all of his life, probably could not point to the day of his conversion because
49 likely it was in his infancy when his family brought him to Christ, but that would be a
50 very early, well, from the early second century. It is thought that Polycarp knew and was
51 actually instructed by the apostle John when Polycarp was a young man. Kind of a neat
52 story and one while not Biblical, but a good example of someone who probably never
53 knew a time when he was not a Christian. He was brought up that way, but his
54 conversion was with his baptism and his being brought up in a Christian family. At least
55 as far as we know, because 86 years old is pretty old for somebody in that particular age
56 or time of history.

57 That's the background of where this sermon began coming together to talk about
58 conversion itself, conversion in the Lutheran confession, and how something that a lot of
59 Lutherans don't think about and some of the leading Lutheran dogmaticians did not think
60 about and that is the importance of showing the fruits of one's conversion. Because the
61 Lutheran confessions just simply state that if there is not evidence by lifestyle of
62 conversion it is doubtful that conversion took place. And of course the Confessions were
63 written during what we would call the height of the concept of Christendom where
64 virtually everyone in Europe was identified as Christian whether they were or not. Times
65 are different now, but the fact that the Confessions emphasized that you really could not

66 be considered, or you had to look inside yourself and if you don't walk the walk, talking
67 the talk doesn't cut. Conversion is reflected in the way that we live. That's about it.

Appendix C

Transcript of the third unstructured interview: the informant's reflections on preparing the sermon of May 6, 2007

1 RESEARCHER: This is the recording of the interview with the Informant on Monday,
2 May 7, 2007 at 10:20 a.m.. At this point the Informant will relate the sermon
3 preparation process for the sermon he delivered on Sunday, May 6, 2007, the Fifth
4 Sunday of Easter, Year C in the Lectionary Calendar.

5 INFORMANT: This is one of those sermons that began again with the Lectionary, and I
6 was not particularly fond of the theme for the Gospel lesson. The appeal of the
7 evangelism aspect of the first lesson, the one from Acts, was what caught my eye,
8 particularly because I had just attended a little evangelism event so that added to the fact
9 that that was on my mind. So I decided to use that first reading as the theme for the day.
10 It is kind of an interesting one in the history of the church because this was the (with
11 emphasis) great turning point even though the entire church did not turn suddenly toward
12 accepting Gentiles, but it was certainly in the theme of Acts with the spread of the Gospel
13 and the growth of the church. This was a huge moment in the life of the church, but it
14 was a moment that seems to me that gets repeated over and over again. Because the
15 church has had its periods of expanding its horizons in terms of who is the Gospel really
16 for. We keep going over the fact that God so loved the entire (emphasis) world that he
17 gave his son and that Jesus' commission was to go and make disciple of all (emphasis)
18 nations. But we still seem to go through the various stages of 'what does that really
19 mean?' What does "everybody" mean? Because that seems to be a repeated theme and it
20 is within the congregation because this congregation has been around for one hundred

21 and fifty years or whatever, what ever the exact number of years may be, yet we are,
22 (pause) we include various economic levels within the congregation, but the congregation
23 does not reflect the [name of town] community. And how good are we at reaching out to
24 other parts of the community? It is one of those things I do not feel you can force the
25 situation, but groups of people of similar background tend to form friendships and
26 alliances with groups of people who are of similar background. So even within a
27 community like [name of community] reaching out in evangelism becomes difficult
28 because you still have those things that separate us. Sometimes it is color, sometimes it is
29 economic background, and sometimes it is just social, various social things, that tend to
30 divide communities, to divide churches and so forth and that make us aware of reaching
31 out to people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And so with that as a background of what
32 the community situation is and with the background of what I feel the story of Acts tells
33 us, that was where the sermon got started.

Appendix D

Transcript of first semi-structured interview: review of April 15, 2007 sermon

1 [Informant begins the sermon by repeating Psalm 150]

2 [Inserted by the informant and not a part of the original text of the sermon]: Wonderful
3 words from Psalm 150 tells something about worship and about praising God and how
4 important it is to praise God.]

5

6 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Back in the early 1960's, when I started college, Kansas
7 was well known for an extensive system of Junior Colleges. Some of them still exist
8 today in the form what we now call community colleges. These Junior Colleges had a
9 national reputation for fielding some outstanding basketball teams. It was almost a
10 regular event for the Junior College national champion basketball team to come out of
11 Kansas. I attended St. John's Junior College in Winfield and we did not produce any of
12 those national champions. In fact, though our team played many of those great teams, we
13 were not in their league, literally or figuratively. However, we did have a pretty good
14 pep band if I do say so myself, and I played in it. This particular year, Parson's Junior
15 College had a team everyone thought was a contender for the national Junior College
16 championship and they were on our schedule as a home game. Two or three weeks
17 before this impending debacle, Dr. Foelber and Mr. Johnson, our vocal and instrumental
18 music directors took a weekend retreat in which they wrote a school fight song. It was no
19 great work of art; it was so corny that it started da, da, da, But the band played it with
20 great enthusiasm and at the only pep rally I can ever remember at St. John's we taught it

21 to the whole student body – all 300 and some. They loved it and hooted and cheered and
22 couldn't wait for the debut of the new fight song at the game against Parsons. That night,
23 as the St. John Eagles came on the court the gym erupted with the new fight song played
24 loudly by the band and sung mightily by the student body – we must have played that
25 thing 20 or more times that night – it seemed like every time St. John's scored a basket
26 we played and the students sang. Parsons didn't stand a chance. Mighty Parsons fell by
27 three points to the lowly Eagles.

28

29 [RESEARCHER]: So the question that I have, especially given that earlier in the week
30 you were in the hospital having this heart procedure done and I was especially interested
31 in what the topic of your sermon would be. Obviously, music is very important for you.
32 You mentioned playing in the college band and I know that you sing in the community
33 chorus as well. And so is there any connection between the medical procedure that you
34 had earlier in the week and your choice to preach on the power of music? Did music and
35 singing sustain you in any way in the past week and in a particular way that might have
36 translated into this sermon?

37

38 [INFORMANT]: Yes. There is that element. I think that music is important for many
39 facets of my life, that it plays an important role. I find myself singing to myself a lot or
40 singing around the house or thinking of hymns or that sort of thing. I wouldn't say that it
41 was in a very specific way or in an unusual way during this medical procedure. But I
42 would say that during that time there were hymns in my mind and of course we were just
43 in the afterglow of Easter as well. (laughs) Whenever you are thinking about medical

44 procedures the resurrection is always a neat thought to have in the background. Because
45 it is our faith and although it is a faith to live by, it is also a faith to die by if that is God's
46 will. So you go into a procedure like that, any kind of medical procedure, any kind of
47 major sort of thing and music lifts my spirits. I think that I mentioned to you yesterday
48 that it was kind of a downer when I found out that I was going to have to go through that
49 procedure because I had thought that everything was going quite well with my heart and
50 to find out that I would have to go through this thing for a day or two was kind of a
51 downer, but the anticipation of and the joy of Easter and the double services and all the
52 music certainly had a lifting and confidence building kind of thing. A lot of people
53 would ask me about that when they found out that I was going to be going into the
54 hospital, when they heard my name in the prayer list and what was going on. And I
55 would just say that they could wish me well and that I was confident. And even if things
56 do not go well, I am still confident because that is where the resurrection hope and the
57 resurrection assurance comes in that we can live and die confidently.

58

59 [RESEARCHER: So this is really a culmination of a lifetime journey really?

60

61 [INFORMANT]: Well, in a way it is. At the end of the Good Friday service, which is the
62 office of Tenebrae as we leave the church in silence, the acolyte and I lead that out as the
63 acolyte carries the light of Christ out into the world and I follow the acolyte and the verse
64 that I have always used at the end of the Tenebrae service is one that has been significant
65 for me. The line from "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" – "Be though my consolation,
66 my shield when I must die. Remind me of thy passion when my last hour draws nigh.

67 Mine eyes shall then behold thee, upon thy cross shall dwell, my heart, my faith enfold
68 thee who dies thus, dies well.” (SPOKEN FROM MEMORY) and that says a great deal
69 to the hope that is still there even in the darkness of Good Friday. There is a hope of the
70 light of the world.

71

72 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: So what’s the point? I mean other than Pastor’s getting
73 old and sentimental? The point is that music has power. Music has power to influence
74 our thoughts and even who we are. All this week we have heard about the Don Imus
75 controversy and the fact that perhaps we have found a point of coarseness and degrading
76 speech that has gone beyond the pale of what our jaded culture will tolerate. And yet,
77 there is music on MTV and other popular venues that glorifies the same kind of language
78 and the same denigrating and humiliating attitudes. This may mean that a few years from
79 now, we will shake our heads in disbelief that Imus’ comments could be so offensive,
80 because our songs have a lot of influence on our thinking and speech.

81

82 [INFORMANT]: I may have mis-spoken there because if I heard correctly I said that “I
83 think” that a few years from now we may – actually what it is, is that I fear that a few
84 years from now because of the way that much of music is going that we will look back on
85 Imus as we do on many things and say “what was the big deal?” And that unless we
86 change course, that is more of a fear that this is leading us into, unless we reverse this,
87 this tendency to demean and to be mean about things, that that kind of music leads us in
88 that wrong direction. So if I said “I think” I really should have said “I fear”.

89 [RESEARCHER]: And that has sort of been an interesting thing in the news, that those
90 who lead the way in the protest against his remarks, some of them are saying that this is
91 just the first step and now we go after the entertainment industry.

92

93 [INFORMANT]: Yes, the Howard Stern's and fortunately in the black community there
94 has been a lot of discussion about rap music and hip hop and what the message there is.
95 And that is a positive sign if it should happen. Some of these things blow over rather
96 rapidly so I am not going to say that it is going to happen, but if.

97

98 [RESEARCHER]: I was going to stop the tape here in just a moment anyway so I will go
99 on with the question that I had. You proclaim that music is a gift from God, we meet
100 God in music and that in music we understand ourselves as those who have been created
101 for praise for the glory of God. You say that music has the power to influence who we
102 are and you express concern about music that glorifies denigrating and humiliating
103 attitudes. Could you spell out for me in more detail what sounds to be a pretty detailed
104 philosophy regarding music and how it relates to our reason for existence?

105

106 [INFORMANT]: Okay. Well, back in classical Christian thought – we have the question
107 as to the chief purpose of man? And the answer seems to be in the classical terms – it is
108 the praise of God. And certainly music and certainly as reflected in the Psalm for the day
109 reaffirms that classical idea of what is the purpose of human existence, why were we
110 created in the first place? Although Genesis does not specifically say that, I think that as
111 Old Testament thought developed and particularly as you get into the Wisdom literature

112 of the period, the praise of God becomes not an end in itself, but a goal in itself. That in
113 terms of classical Christian thought the purpose of man is the praise of God. That is
114 where that is going and the background for it.

115

116 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: God has given us the gift of music, the ability to praise
117 God, and to meet God in song. In music, we experience and understand ourselves as
118 those who have been created for praise, for the glory of God.

119

120 [INSERTED DURING SERMON DELIVERY]: Now, I am not saying that the only way
121 is to only listen to Christian music or classical music. I am not saying that at all. I am
122 not saying that it is not possible to glorify God with any popular forms of music such as
123 rap or hip hop, whether it is soft rock or hard rock or the music that happened to be
124 popular back in the days when I grew up. (MUCH OF THIS DID NOT COME
125 THROUGH ON THE AUDIO RECORDING).

126

127 [RESEARCHER]: So this was a part of the sermon that was not originally in the text.

128

129 [INFORMANT]: Right. One of those times when you start winging it. I had a little
130 thought and you wonder if you can develop this a little as you speak.

131

132 [RESEARCHER]: And so was that sort of spontaneous thing?

133

134 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, it was spontaneous. It occurred to me while I was talking that
135 this was something else and also because you get that feeling of not wanting people to
136 make an assumption. Because most people here know that I am inclined towards classical
137 music than toward other forms of music, but I try not to be narrow minded about that
138 because I really do not feel that that is the only grand expression, but I find that for me
139 that it is that classical expression. The other thing is to get the idea that obviously young
140 people are not going to do this, going around with hymns buzzing in their head all the
141 time, but there is still good music in terms of music that they listen to. But certainly not
142 all of it. Just like there is country and western, an awful lot of that is not really a positive
143 kind of thing. So it occurred to me that I do not want people to think that only church
144 music is the only kind of music that praises God because there is the creativity that is
145 reflected in human making of music that is also a part of praising God in one's being.
146 When it is good music and a positive thing about being a little closer to what God created
147 us for.

148

149 [RESEARCHER]: And you said in the sermon that it is possible to glorify God with all
150 genres of music including hard rock and so on. And I know that growing up in a
151 conservative denomination of my youth that such a statement would have drawn a rather
152 negative response. So I am wondering about your statement in reflection of having
153 grown up in the LCMS and whether there is any history there of your struggle, and
154 actually I do not know what their position is in regard to rock music. But just wondering
155 if there was any conflict with your love of music and church teaching and popular music
156 and culture and how you arrived at your position today?

157

158 [INFORMANT]: I really have not, as a Lutheran, had to reflect on that very much
159 because the basic Lutheran attitude is that all things can possibly have that potential for
160 praising God so that there is not something inherently evil in guitars and drums. In fact,
161 Luther was a guitar player. Actually, they called it a lute back in those days, but that was
162 his instrument. He played the lute. Some, not as many as some of the folks in music
163 seem to think, but there are some of the hymn tunes that were old bar songs and things
164 that have been taken, which might not have been all that positive in themselves, but why
165 did people sing them? Because they were very singable and you apply the words that
166 praise God and back in those days some people may have said that was not an appropriate
167 kind of music, but it fired the Reformation in many respects because getting back again to
168 the main theme of the sermon, it was largely through music that the Reformers taught
169 people who were illiterate the basic principles of salvation by the grace of God and some
170 of those very basic principles. Because basically church music had been taken away
171 from the people and isolated into choirs of monks or paid musicians and was no longer to
172 the degree that it should be the property of the people. And that was one of the things
173 that hymns that restored that music and that theology to the people and it was something
174 that they could understand and grasp and became the leading edge for reformation.

175

176 [RESEARCHER]: I was thinking yesterday, well, your opening illustration describes a
177 rather ecstatic situation. The band is playing this fight song over and over, the crowd is
178 going nuts and the end result is a competitive victory. I was reflecting on Weber's
179 Sociology of Religion and talking about the history of music in a religious perspective as

180 a means towards ecstasy, an ecstatic experience, especially for the laypeople, the
181 common folks who did not have the office and the authority and the charisma. So in a
182 way it sounds to me like you are describing that the essence of music is to the glory of
183 God and yet it gets sidetracked a lot of times in an ecstatic achievements other than the
184 glory of God.

185

186 [INFORMANT]: Well, it can. I have a fairly broad definition of what 'to the glory of
187 God' is. I think that when Bach wrote his works of music whether they were his religious
188 works or his secular works they all had "SDG" "Sola Deo Gloria" at the bottom of them.
189 Music can work to the glory of God in many ways. There is that element where music
190 becomes mere self-gratification. And we could debate some of those points at what point
191 it becomes self-gratification. But I think at the same time that if self-gratification is being
192 moved by or influenced by then I am not so sure that is the case because I think that it is a
193 gift to elevate and to lift our sights and our souls to higher levels. And it certainly does
194 that. So you can get to that point where an experience is so ecstatic that it is only self-
195 gratification. I think once in a while I have witnessed that in some rock concerts or
196 whatever where it just seemed that the level of volume and ecstasy almost gets out of
197 hand. And that can happen in religious circles, too. But at the same time the fact that a
198 person, and I do this sometimes when they are singing something like "For All the Saints
199 who from their labors rest" and you get a tear in your eye or something because when
200 that line comes "And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long, steals on the ear the
201 distant triumph song" (FROM MEMORY). You can hear (emphasis) that, you can hear
202 that distant triumph song (INFORMANT SLIGHTLY CHOKES UP A BIT). And that, I

203 don't know, that is something that does lift and elevate our spirit and our souls to God.

204 Augustine said that he who sings, prays twice and that is a valid thing in my opinion.

205

206 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: In the beginning of Romans, Paul makes a rather

207 remarkable statement just before his inventory of the world's moral chaos – envy,

208 murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, gossip, slander, God-hating, idolatry, sexual perversion.

209 Why all this bad behavior? Not because people don't obey the law. Not because we

210 don't live our lives in accord with the Bible. Not because affluence and immorality seem

211 to go together. Although Paul could have given any of these as a reason for bad morals

212 and bad behavior, he doesn't. Instead he says that people gave glory to the world and to

213 human creatures and human creations that they should have given to God. Chapter 1 v.

214 22 and 23: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the

215 immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed

216 animals or reptiles."

217

218 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: In other words, bad behavior begins with or is the result

219 of bad or misdirected praise. Moral degeneration begins with giving glory that belongs to

220 God to some false god, singing some tacky tune glorifying a creature rather than a

221 creator. Paul is making some kind of connection between the way we sing and give

222 praise and the way we live. Sing songs that glorify things that degrade and devalue our

223 humanity, violence, hatred, kinky sex, victimization, and the end result is your own

224 degradation.

225

226 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: For the next several Sundays the second reading will be
227 from a book of the Bible that to many of us preacher types is considered a portion of
228 Scripture that might best be left on the sidelines. Even a Scripture lover like Martin
229 Luther wasn't very fond of the Book of Revelation. In fact he questioned whether or not
230 it should even be considered a book of the Bible and there isn't much question that a lot
231 of mischief has been caused in the Church by some interpretations of this rather
232 enigmatic writing that identifies itself in the very first sentence as "The Revelation of
233 Jesus Christ". But if we look at the Book of Revelation as I believe God intended us to
234 look at it and not try to force weird interpretations on it or use it like a crystal ball to look
235 into the future, we can learn a lot from this one of a kind New Testament Book.

236

237 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: We should not forget, in interpreting Revelation that it is
238 a vision. It's a vision that occurs on the Lord's Day, Sunday. Furthermore, a lot of the
239 book reads like a hymnal, like a full service of worship. Revelation is filled with hymns,
240 hymn fragments, vivid metaphors and other poetry that suggest that here is a vision
241 meant to be shared in the context of Christian worship. And in fact in the historic liturgy
242 of the church, the one we use almost every Sunday, more material comes from the Book
243 of Revelation than from any other book of the Bible.

244

245 [RESEARCHER]: You mention that a lot of ministers don't ever touch the Book of
246 Revelation and I know that I never preached from it in eleven years. Our New Testament
247 professor in seminary would not even discuss it, but it sounds like you have given it a lot

248 of thought and study. Any particular reason or is this something that came out of
249 seminary?

250

251 [INFORMANT]: Well, in regard to the Book of Revelation itself, the challenge,
252 particularly in this country is that are so many preachers, television evangelists, and
253 whatever who seem to tremendously misuse the Book of Revelation or, for that matter,
254 any of the apocalyptic literature: Daniel, Revelation, or even the apocalyptic parts of the
255 Gospels. The fact that all of those kinds of misuses are trying to apply a saying to a
256 contemporary situation. I know that within my lifetime I know that there was so many
257 and some are still preaching on TV who would take references from Revelation and
258 Daniel and talk about Armageddon and Gog and Magog and that one was the Soviet
259 Union and one was the United States and just down the line there was going to be this
260 huge confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States because right here in
261 the book it says. You know. Now there is not even a Soviet Union to match up with that.
262 And now there are those who would say that the Islamic world and the west or Christian
263 world or whatever. There is this tendency to energize Christian pathos with interpretation
264 and I think that is really a fad and really a gross misuse of Scripture. As long as we have
265 Revelation as a part of Scripture and is generally recognized. The thing about the
266 Lutheran Church is that although most people do not think about it in those terms, in our
267 confessional writings we use some of Baruch, Cyrach, and whatever that are a part of the
268 Roman Catholic Bible. And yet, generally speaking, we fall into the category of the rest
269 of the Protestant Church. As Lutherans we do not exactly have a canon of Scripture.
270 Nothing that officially says “These are the books of the Bible, this was inspired by the

271 Holy Spirit.” Certainly, we commonly accept as inspired by God what is the Old and
272 New Testament and we do believe they are inspired, but no one ever really sat down and
273 said exactly what those books are. And there is that kind of freedom when you are
274 talking about music and that sort of thing. We strongly believe in the freedom of the
275 Christian to experience worship or to sort of like we have a set pattern by which we have
276 agreed to worship, it is the old pattern of the mass, but can we deviate from that? Sure.
277 There is nobody who says that it must be done this way because we do not believe that
278 Scripture has given that as a guideline. In my theology we are guided by the Gospel first
279 and foremost of all and we are freed by Jesus Christ to worship in so many ways. We are
280 not tied to a set of rules, we are tied to a Gospel that tells of God’s love and God’s grace
281 and it is a wonderful free and kind of thing.

282

283 [RESEARCHER]: I was taken by your comment about how the Book of Revelation is
284 often misinterpreted or used in a way different than what you used it yesterday.
285 Basically, it is to me that which preys on people’s fears and you are taking praise as a
286 whole different direction with it.

287

288 [INFORMANT]: Well, look at what’s its purpose was. Its purpose was to give comfort
289 and reassurance to a persecuted church. Not to be scared that Jesus was coming again,
290 but rather "Hallelujah, Jesus is coming again!" And how does it end? “Amen, come
291 Lord Jesus.”

292

293 [RESEARCHER]: Still, I mean that is very different from that sermon which would say,
294 and again, I will use my own childhood experience as remembering very vividly as being
295 afraid to go to sleep at night for fear of Christ coming again. Because if you are not
296 perfect in some way and I remember the saying that the Second Coming would happen in
297 the moment that you least expect it. So if I am always expecting it then I can delay it
298 (THE INFORMANT CHUCKLES). You know the thinking of a ten year old wondering
299 if this little fib is going to lead to eternal damnation.

300

301 [INFORMANT]: Part of that is because your world revolves around you and when you
302 are ten years old you the center of your own universe and that it is to be expected and that
303 is just natural. And, in apocalyptic literature there is some of that element, it is not
304 worded exactly that way, but sort of that idea of will he find you ready? How is it
305 worded? That if you are faithful to the end, God is faithful to you or something like that,
306 but I think as Scripture interprets Scripture, God has been a lot more faithful to us and to
307 the people of Israel than we or they have ever been faithful to God so he accepts us,
308 embraces us with his love.

309

310 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Furthermore, the Book of Revelation, probably dating
311 back from the late first century, gives us some clues about how the early Christians
312 worshiped.

313

314 [INFORMANT]: That is where you get “The Lamb who was slain” in the lesson.”

315

316 [RESEARCHER]: Are you planning on preaching several sermons from the Book of
317 Revelation?

318

319 [INFORMANT]: It had crossed my mind, but I am not so sure that I am going to do that.
320 I mean I understand and I have done this, that there are preachers who have a whole plan,
321 they know what they are going to preach on for the next three or four months, and have
322 that all written down. Frankly, I am much more a week to week preacher as to what it is
323 in the text, the readings for that day, because I almost always preach on the readings.
324 Once in a great while [with emphasis] I might go off course and pick out some other text
325 to preach on. But I think that the given texts and you have four of them for every
326 Sunday, the Psalm, plus the Old Testament, the Second Reading and the Gospel. You
327 have a pretty broad selection of things to preach on so I do not stray from the appointed
328 readings very often. For the most part, its each week that I see how they strike me.

329

330 [RESEARCHER]: That was very much my experience. I always used the lectionary,
331 very rarely, you know if there was a book that I found that I really liked. Like the Gospel
332 according to Peanuts was one of my favorites. But yes, and I could never come up with a
333 title because I was usually finishing up on Saturday night after the bulletin had been
334 printed. Whenever I fill the pulpit and they ask me for a title I just say, you know, just
335 say the Spoken Word.

336

337 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, I am not good on titles. I rarely give a title to any sermon.

338

339 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The victory celebration near the end of Revelation
340 would make any high church lover drool. Trumpets, and choirs, and white robes, and
341 incense, and a golden altar with preachers preaching and deacons deacing, with a
342 multitude gathered around it singing “Hallelujah, Amen.” Praising God in any way we
343 can is an integral part of life as a person of faith, but praising God in music seems to hold
344 a high place in the Bible. And singing praise to God with intelligence and understanding
345 along with the Spirit is held in the highest place of all.

346

347 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: But what do we have to sing about? To begin with, all
348 the beauties of spring that surround us: popping buds and flowering trees, the green lawns
349 and the productive fields, the sunshine and the gentle rain, and the song of birds. The
350 beauty of the creation and the good sense to enjoy and protect it, isn't this something to
351 sing about?

352

353 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: More than that, all that was gained for us through the
354 death and resurrection of Christ: forgiveness for our sins, victory over death and
355 darkness, a place in the Father's house. That's really something to sing about. The great
356 blessing of the continuing presence of God's Holy Spirit to comfort and lift our hearts
357 gives each of us reason to raise our songs of thanksgiving and praise.

358

359 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Music has power and when it's used to praise God it
360 also lifts and edifies us. You may not be able to carry a tune in a basket, you may be shy
361 about your musical ability, you may be pretty narrow in what you like in types of music,

362 or you may not be very fond of music at all. But whatever your feeling about music may
363 be, remember that our songs of praise are directed, not to ourselves, but to God. The
364 songs we sing not only tell a lot about us, but they also are powers that shape us. What
365 do the songs that run through your mind during the week tell about you? Do those songs
366 have an influence on the shape of your life? I hope the songs of the Church and the songs
367 that glorify God are lifting your sights to things that are valuable and lasting and that lift
368 your soul to God.

369

370 [RESEARCHER]: Was there particular goals that you had in mind with this sermon?
371 Either in terms of message or audience that you hoped to reach and did you feel
372 successful in reaching those goals?

373

374 [INFORMANT]: Part of the answer to that is to make people more aware of both what
375 they listen to and sing on their own because at least of the people I know in this
376 congregation they are listeners of music. In their homes very often the radios will be on.
377 And just to be somewhat aware of that. I mean, the goal, underneath that in kind of an
378 oblique way was also a message that is important is what our kids are listening to and
379 parents really ought know what they listen to and to the degree that they can give some
380 guidance. When I got down to my confirmation class, and I already knew this, that the
381 hymns that we sing are not exactly on the top of their hit parade list. But there are those
382 that they do like, some hymns that they do like even though the genre of the music is
383 pretty typical of the church. But and maybe that is another thing that we need to think
384 about, to find the expression of the church in the music that contemporary people

385 appreciate. So, that would be part of it. I don't know if you would call that an ulterior
386 motive because I did not address that directly but in more of an oblique way. But it comes
387 out of knowing what the tolerance of music is and even from a Scriptural standpoint there
388 is that element through which the Holy Spirit works in music.

Appendix E

Transcript of second semi-structured interview: review of the April 22, 2007 sermon

1 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Our second reading for today, the one from the
2 Revelation to John, is a picture of Heaven.

3

4 [The informant inserts material here that is not included in the original text and is very
5 difficult to understand from the recording. Many people in the audience are coughing
6 throughout the sermon.]

7 [INSERTED DURING SERMON DELIVERY: In this particular portion of John we
8 have one of those]

9

10 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The language is symbolic, but the lesson is real. The
11 hosts of heaven, an uncountable number of them, surround the throne of God to sing
12 praise to the Lamb that was slain. The language of their accolades is a quotation from
13 David's great blessing and thanksgiving to God that is recorded in the Old Testament
14 book of I Chronicles 29. The song hails the Lamb as worthy to hold the seven great
15 possessions of the Risen Lord: power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and
16 glory and blessing. The song of the angels is echoed by every creature – it's the victory
17 celebration of a redeemed creation, a whole world restored because Christ, the Lamb of
18 God, suffered, died and rose again as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of a world gone
19 mad.

20

21 [INFORMANT]: I did not realize that in preaching that that I spent as much time as I did
22 on the Second Lesson. Because that was really a kind of secondary highlight of the
23 lessons for the day and it did somewhat tie in with last week with this great worship
24 session in heaven, but, I am pretty sure that I did not write all of that. We were winging
25 it for part ... I did not realize that it went that long. But, again, I did see that as I was
26 preaching as a connection to the part that follows about how it connects in with the other
27 lessons, but like I said, until I listened to it I did not realize that I spent that much time
28 talking about it, the Second Reading.

29

30 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The songs and accolades in this vision of heaven always
31 acknowledge that it is God who is the mover here. God initiates his plan to bring back
32 and restore a world that has strayed away – the whole of humanity that has left God to
33 follow its own way, the way of destruction.

34

35 [INSERTED DURING SERMON DELIVERY: However, ... nevertheless God does not
36 forget to let us go. He created us with a loving care and he ... and that is why we have
37 this wonderful plan of salvation in Jesus Christ that by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ we
38 will all be

39

40 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Figuring deeply in how this restoration to the Kingdom
41 of God is going to take place is what we call “conversion”. The word that is translated
42 “conversion” is pretty rare in the New Testament but the concept of the direction of life
43 and destiny being changed is a theme we find over and over again.

44

45 [RESEARCHER]: I was trying to remember, I think last week that you made mention of
46 having to study Latin and Hebrew and Greek, is that right? And that was in high school
47 or college as well as seminary?

48

49 [INFORMANT]: No, I did not get it until college.

50

51 [RESEARCHER]: Okay, I see. My question is how much does studying the Biblical
52 languages figure into your preparation since you are talking about this word conversion
53 in its original language?

54

55 [INFORMANT]: Well, again, it depends on the text itself. There are sometimes texts
56 that I preach on that I may not go back to the original languages at all. In some instances,
57 you sense that there is going to be something that you will find in the original that is not
58 necessarily reflected in the translation. In this particular case it is fairly neutral. This was
59 more a matter of going back into a concordance and finding out that actually
60 “conversion” is used only once and I am not sure where that is in the New Testament.
61 And it is not translated that way into English from the Old Testament. In the Old
62 Testament you have all those times when a conversion takes place, but that is also, the
63 word is “shulv” and what happens there is that many of those times when God, I think in
64 the King James is translated like “God repented” that He was going to do this, but He
65 changed his mind, He repented. And that is how it is very frequently used; the word that
66 is translated or that means conversion is often used of God. And then used in human

67 beings it obviously has a very different meaning. But it does mean much like the Greek
68 word “metanoiao” (?) which means to change ones mind. That is why I say the idea of
69 conversion is quite frequent in the New Testament, but its translated in a different way. It
70 is not translated conversion, it is translated repentance, usually “metanoiao”(?) usually
71 comes out as repentance. But the two are closely related and certainly the idea of
72 conversion, particularly in [the book of]Acts in a prominent theme, there are all kinds of
73 conversions.

74

75 [RESEARCHER]: I guess I see repentance as sorrow, as a reactionary kind of thing, but
76 conversion is much more, it requires a discipline, a change.

77

78 [INFORMANT]: And, repentance is really a daily thing. As Christians we are not
79 without sin and it requires a daily return to our baptism. And repentance is a daily thing.
80 We do not ordinarily think of conversion as a daily sort of thing. I suppose that if you
81 were to stretch the point I guess you could think of it that way, but conversion is more
82 like, it can happen more than once like it did with Peter, but it usually implies a second or
83 third time or fourth time it then seems to imply there is a loss of faith and then a return
84 more than just continuing in faith, but yet repenting of the things that we do, think, or say
85 that are wrong.

86

87 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The Bible and the history of the Christian Church are
88 filled with stories of conversion – those stories are varied enough and conversion is

89 important enough that today, since we have a couple of conversion stories in our
90 readings, is a good day to look at what Christian conversion is about.

91

92 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: How do conversions take place? Slowly and quietly or
93 quickly and loudly? Augustine felt the need and the prompting to be converted from the
94 worldly path he was on to a life of faith, but he fought against his conversion for quite
95 some time. Martin Luther became a monk initially because of a rash promise he made
96 out of fear during a storm, but in his own estimation his conversion came later.

97

98 [RESEARCHER]: In a similar way to the question about Biblical languages, it sounds
99 like church history is also something you enjoy reading quite a bit. How much does that
100 provide a context for you for sermon preparation?

101

102 [INFORMANT]: Probably a great deal. That was my area of concentration in college
103 and seminary, history first of all and then church history. Yeah, it probably does. I really
104 had not thought of that a lot, but it probably plays a pretty sizeable role in my thinking
105 about things and how concepts come about and how they have changed over the years in
106 Christian history. History was a much stronger point for me than languages were. I am
107 not that good at languages. I can handle them, but if you ask me to translate, particularly
108 Hebrew, if you ask me to translate a paragraph of Hebrew, I would probably have to say
109 “How many weeks do I have?” But it is one of things that does stick with you and it does
110 make it a little more difficult for someone to buffalo you into “the Bible says this or the
111 Bible says that” when you know the historical context and when you know the language

112 and how the word was used in that particular era because languages change. Just like
113 there are things in the King James version that we read now that actually are not what
114 they said back in England in the 17th century.

115

116 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: And if you look at your own faith and life – you have a
117 story of your own about your conversion. You may not be able to designate the time and
118 date as some people claim to be able to do, but you also have a story of your conversion.

119

120 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: We just heard two accounts of conversion. In our first
121 reading we heard the story of the conversion of St. Paul and this is a conversion that
122 anyone could recognize as a conversion. Saul wasn't just an average guy searching for
123 meaning in his life. He was a persecutor, THE chief persecutor of the church. Maybe his
124 conversion was so dramatic because Paul had a dramatic distance to go before his life
125 could be brought to Jesus. I have known people who say that if you can't name the hour
126 and day you accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, well then, you're not really a
127 Christian. For them, the way Paul was converted – unexpectedly, dramatically and in just
128 a moment – is the only way.

129

130 [RESEARCHER]: I was really struck by this statement that Paul's conversion was so
131 dramatic because he had a dramatic distance to go before his life could be brought to
132 Jesus. Yet, my thought is that Paul or Saul was not the stereotypical sinner that we
133 usually think of in dramatic conversions. He was not a drunkard, not an adulterer, not a
134 gambler. Really, my impression, and correct me if I am wrong, but he was a church

135 person. He was very righteous. And so when you mentioned earlier the pietistic heritage
136 of Lutheranism or of any denomination, but I would think that Saul was a pretty pietistic
137 person and it was his religion, his faith, that led him to be a persecutor. He thought he
138 was doing the right thing.

139

140 [INFORMANT]: Well, what would make the old Saul a pretty poor Lutheran was that he
141 was very law oriented. He played by the rules. See, that, has no place in Lutheranism.
142 In Lutheran theology, it is, if you want to call it the law of love, that is possible, but we
143 are not big on rules. There are different responses to different situations, that require a
144 Christian intuition of what we are being called to do, not a solid and set rule that you can
145 go by. It may even sound like I am talking Situation Ethics, which was a big term back
146 when I was going to school, but it really isn't that. It is a recognition that the law does not
147 cover every situation and you cannot have a hard and fast rule or even the 10
148 Commandments for every potential thing. This is, you know, where Jesus struggled with
149 the Pharisees over and over again: the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law.
150 What's the spirit of the law? And that is where Christianity comes in. Christ introduced
151 us to the grace of God and to the guidance of the Spirit in our response to the Gospel and
152 not by a set of rules to go by. The Pharisees were excellent at the letter of the law, but
153 they did not reflect much love, in that is the stereotypical image of the Pharisee. There
154 must have been good Pharisees. In fact, Jesus hung out with Pharisees. That is how he
155 got into so many confrontations with them. Because the Saduccess were probably a
156 hopeless case and the Esseenes did not talk to anybody, but the Pharisees probably would
157 talk with him. And he probably had some pretty good friends who were Pharisees. You

158 know that he dined with them and he was invited to dinner at their houses and so forth.
159 But he did have to show them that for all of their self-righteous obedience to all of the
160 regulations that they drew up on the basis of the Ten Commandments and almost where
161 they got absurd about the letter of the law not doing work on the Sabbath day. Jesus said,
162 “Well, if you got an ox stuck in a ditch on the Sabbath day,, don’t you pull the thing
163 out?” And they would have to admit that yes, that was allowed under Pharisaic law. And
164 there were always those exceptions to those things so when you have a law-gospel
165 dichotomy where does conversion take place? The law may help you get ready for it
166 because it helps you recognize your sinfulness, but it does not give you any means by
167 which you can come to God. You can work your tail off trying to do the works of the law
168 and you are still not going match up to it and that is where the Gospel or God does it.
169 Because God has to do it because we cannot do it, we cannot approach God on our own
170 and that is where the Gospel becomes the dynamic of conversion because no one was
171 ever converted by the law because all they ever had was fear, fear of God. And in the
172 Gospel we see this wonderful, gracious God who reaches out to us and is willing to go so
173 far as to die for us. Like Paul said, “Well, there might be some people who would die for
174 a righteous man, but Christ died while we were his enemies. While we were still in our
175 sins and enemies of God, Christ died for us” and that is the absolute glory of the Gospel.
176 That is why the Gospel may be open to more people than we think or God may be open
177 to more people than we think because it is pretty hard to limit the kind of love He has
178 shown for us.
179

180 [RESEARCHER]: I guess what is going through my head is the statement earlier of
181 whether or not you want to go there in the sermon and your statement about little sins and
182 big sins and my thought is that legalism is always a temptation for the Christian and it has
183 such a strong gravitational pull it is easier to say “Give me a set of rules to live by” rather
184 than to challenge me to love my neighbor as I love myself.

185

186 [INFORMANT]: In spite of the accusation that living by the Gospel is a cheap grace or
187 sloppy way of Christianity, when you really get down to it that is the more difficult of the
188 ways, but fortunately it does not depend on us doing difficult stuff. It’s what God has
189 already done for us, all we are doing is responding to that.

190

191 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: While I think it’s fine that these folks experienced a
192 specific moment when they were turned around from going the way of destruction to
193 returning to God, I have some bones to pick with their attitude toward folks who, in my
194 opinion, don’t get enough attention. Not that they’re looking for attention, because that’s
195 not the kind of people they are. These are Christians who have never known a time when
196 they weren’t Christian. They were brought to Jesus as a tiny baby and their baptism as an
197 infant was their conversion. They have belonged to God all their lives. They have
198 considered service to Christ of utmost importance and if they were called upon to give
199 their lives for their faith they would do so.

200

201 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: These are people like Polycarp who had been a Christian
202 all his life and in his old age was martyred. As he was taken to the execution site he was

203 given a chance to deny Christ and acknowledge the emperor. He replied “For 86 years I
204 have served Him, He has never done my any ill; how can I blaspheme my Savior and my
205 King?”

206

207 [INSERTED DURING THE SERMON DELIVERY]: And as the flames of his
208 martyrdom rose around him, ... to his Lord Jesus Christ.

209

210 [RESEARCHER]: Maybe this is as good a time as any to ask a couple of things. What
211 does the word “Evangelical” mean to you? You have said a couple of time how it has
212 sort of been hijacked by the very conservative, fundamentalist kind of theology in
213 America. And then is there is anything about your own conversion experience that you
214 wanted to talk about since you were not brought to the church as a baby as you talked
215 about here.

216

217 [INFORMANT]: Well, the word “Evangelical” means “gospel”. The evangel is the
218 gospel or the good news “evangelion.” The Greek is transliterated over to “evangelical.”
219 In the context of Europe after the Reformation you were either “evangalish” or “catolish”
220 (?) and the evangelical were then divided into either Lutherans or Reformed. So virtually
221 everyone in all of Christendom was either catolish or evangalish and if they were
222 evangalish they were either Luterish or Reformera. And so that is what I mean by
223 Evangelical is Gospel centered, whereas American evangelicalism is pretty much
224 legalistic centered, centered on the rules and we have let them get away with hijacking
225 the name “Evangelical.” You see a guy like [names a popular TV preacher] preaching on

226 TV and he calls himself evangelical or he even talks about the glorious gospel of Jesus
227 Christ. Well, He is glorious, but I think he preaches a little different gospel than my
228 understanding of what the gospel is. His gospel seems to be pretty much “line up
229 according to the rules” and make yourself worthy. Whereas, that is not my theology, but
230 it is God who accepts us in the first place not because we are worthy, but sheerly out of
231 his grace. Then he’s got something to work with and in our response to the gospel.
232 And from my standpoint as I had indicated we were not active in church. I mean in the
233 general sense of Christian, yeah, if you were to ask “are you a Christian?” my parents and
234 I probably would have said “Yes”. And I was a year old when I was baptized which
235 would indicate that my parents were not real diligent about getting me baptized in the
236 early stages like usual, but they finally got around to that after a year. I would say my
237 own conversion was one of those things that was not some dramatic turnaround, but it
238 was over a period of time of growing in the grace of God and there might be some people
239 who have a different name for that kind of development and not call it conversion, but I
240 would say what I saw of my parents and my own conversion was over an extended period
241 of time. By an extended period of time I mean over a year, maybe two. And then from
242 that point we sort of had that real, solid trust in God and in God’s way and in God’s plan
243 for you. I would say that my conversion was not an immediate conversion but one of
244 those over a period of time.

245

246 [RESEARCHER]: What role does the catechism play, when I say catechism I mean like
247 confirmation class, what roles does that play for most folks in your church in terms of the
248 conversion experience that they relate to?

249

250 [INFORMANT]: It makes them knowledgeable about what their baptism was about and
251 it prepares them to declare for themselves what their baptism sponsors declared for them
252 in the first place. It is a personal way of saying "I believe." And you know you try to
253 make that ... in junior high age kids, you struggle to make that an intelligible,
254 knowledgeable thing. And, but, still knowing that faith is different from knowledge.
255 And for some of them, well, it is a bridge point between the simplistic childlike faith into
256 a little bit of theology and understanding a little bit more, with the idea of preparation for
257 adulthood. Now, as I say these words, I think to myself I look at junior high age kids and
258 I think "my gosh!" This is not an age when this could be taking place, but again in our
259 history those kids are like 14 years old and it was at that age you know the next year, 15
260 or 16, the girls would get married, the boys were going off to learn a trade, they were
261 apprenticed to somebody, they were adults at that time. It sometimes makes me wonder
262 if we are doing this at the appropriate age or not because these kids are not ready to be
263 adults at all in our society. You know, looking at kids now days I really have a time
264 thinking how grown up kids must have been back in those days. I think our kids these
265 days know a lot more, but they are not socially ready for the kind of responsibility, in
266 fact, talk about irresponsible. I can't think of any age group that is more irresponsible
267 than that junior high age group, but they are the kids who are so delightful and so
268 frustrating all at the same time. There are some aspects of confirmation that are just right
269 because they are becoming mature. And of course it varies with the individuals, too. But
270 you look at, you recognize at times they really have some insight into life and then in the

271 next moment they do something that makes you absolutely despair that they are ever
272 going to grow up.

273

274 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The point also comes home in today's Gospel. There,
275 Jesus restored Peter to his place in the number of the disciples. Peter had denied Jesus
276 three times and Jesus gives him three opportunities to affirm his love and devotion for the
277 Risen and living Lord. This restoration underlines a couple of things about conversion.
278 It would seem to me that in this story we have another type of conversion. This
279 restoration seems to be a second conversion. Peter had followed Jesus from the time
280 Jesus invited him to follow and be a fisher of men. Peter was the disciple who seemed to
281 get it when he declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Then, when
282 pressed and stressed, he broke and denied he even knew Jesus.

283

284 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: It's not unheard of for a baptized person to have a time
285 in life when they succumb to the pressures that are always in the world and that lure
286 many back to a life apart from God. They, like Peter, need Christ to restore them,
287 convert them again. The Lutheran Confessions put it this way: "If those who have been
288 baptized act contrary to their conscience and permit sin to rule in themselves and thus,
289 grieve the Holy Spirit within them and lose him, they dare not be baptized again, though
290 they must certainly be converted again..."

291

292 [INSERTED AT THE TIME OF SERMON DELIVERY]: Now granted, this may ... of a
293 time in Europe when Europe was known as Christendom. We don't have Christendom

294 anymore. The idea that almost everyone we know is a Christian is no longer a part of our
295 society. Nevertheless, the church holds that ...

296

297 [RESEARCHER]: This has been very educational for me. As I was reading this today I
298 was thinking about in the tradition I was raised in we would talk about “backsliding” and
299 “sanctification” as opposed to a second conversion. This notion of decision theology vs.
300 a passive theology this is all sort of new for me so I am enjoying this. And I was thinking
301 earlier as we were listening, was it William Blake that wrote of the Hound of Heaven that
302 pursued me through all the depths of hell and I have always been fascinated by that
303 notion that God never gives up on us. I was definitely raised with the understanding that
304 you can reject God. But this almost says that it is not up to you to reject God and Blake
305 would say even if it takes an eternity in hell God is not going to give up on you because
306 God never makes a mistake so that at some point you are going to give in to the grace.

307

308 [INFORMANT]: I would not go that far. Luther’s way of putting it, which I think would
309 be indicative of what Lutheran theology would be, would be that, you see in Luther’s
310 time, and one of the big division points between Reformed and Lutheran was the idea of
311 predestination and with the Reformed Church it was double predestination. That God
312 was supreme and was the ruler of all and therefore his will would always be done and so
313 apparently God did will that some people would be lost forever in hell. And so you were
314 predestined, either to accept Christ and be saved or you were predestined to serve eternity
315 in hell. And Lutherans would not accept that theology. They would say “We believe that
316 God is indeed supreme and that God knows all things, but foreknowledge is not the same

317 as destiny. And that Lutherans, and this is a little inconsistent for theologians who are
318 supposed to be so terribly consistent, but they would say that “We will accept that God
319 does predestine human beings to heaven, but we reject the idea that God would ever
320 predestine anybody to spend eternity in hell.” So I don’t know whether all those old
321 scholastics that Lutherans were famous for being, whether they were really being
322 consistent, but they did refuse to say that God would ever predestine any part of his
323 creation to hell. So, that was, I am not even sure how we got on to this, but I don’t think I
324 have answered your question, yet.

325

326 [RESEARCHER]: Well, I am not sure that I had a good question there. I guess I want to
327 go back this notion of conversion. You made a statement about faith being different than
328 knowledge, and I agree, so I was thinking about that time in our life, or in a church
329 members life, when they have that, I will say the “aha” experience that “I do believe this”
330 and it is not just something I have been taught, but I believe it. And maybe that “it” is
331 that God loves me so much more than I have ever experienced or understood before so
332 someone then can say “this is the moment that I knew that I understood and I knew that I
333 believed.”

334

335 [INFORMANT]: Chances are they won’t, most Lutherans cannot put a time and date on
336 it. They know a period in their life when things changed and they began to have a deeper
337 sense of God’s presence and will in their lives. There is a wonderful hymn,
338 contemporary hymn, written by a Lutheran hymn writer, but it really gives kind of the
339 Lutheran perspective on what life is about. One of the phrases in it is, which to me

340 describes what is true for so many people in early adulthood: “In a blaze of light you
341 wandered off to find where demons dwell” and it just to me somehow, that phrase “that
342 you wandered off to find where demons dwell” that really says in a poetic way what
343 happens in a lot of people’s lives, especially young adults. That is from “Borning Cry”
344 are you familiar with that hymn? It is one of my favorites among the contemporary
345 hymns. [THE INFORMANT RETRIEVES A HYMNAL FROM A SHELF AND
346 TURNS TO THE PARTICULAR HYMN AND READS THE FIRST TWO VERSES
347 TO THE RESEARCHER]: “I was there to hear your borning cry. I’ll be there when you
348 are old. I rejoiced the day you were baptized to see your life unfold. I was there when
349 you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well; in a blaze of light you wandered off to
350 find where demons dwell. When you heard the wonder of the Word I was there to cheer
351 you on; you were raised to praise the living Lord, to whom you now belong. If you find
352 someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one, I’ll be there to make your
353 verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun.” THE INFORMANT IS OBVIOUSLY MOVED
354 BY THE WORDS. And then it goes the next verse is the middle years and then the end
355 of life. That, in a contemporary way, is a Lutheran perspective on life, what life often is,
356 not in every instance, but he has a pretty good grasp of God never giving up on us. But
357 like Luther said, “God does not drag anybody to heaven by the hair of their head.” He
358 invites, does not give up on us, embraces us, but if somebody is really determined to live
359 without God, they will be without God.

360

361 [RESEARCHER]: That reminded me of the C.S. Lewis story, I cannot remember the title
362 (The Great Divorce) where people are riding the bus to heaven, they are in the queue and

363 they don't quite realize what is going on. Are you familiar with this story? It is a great
364 story. They get off the bus in heaven and there is someone from their past there to greet
365 them and to explain what is going on. One example, of course there were several stories,
366 but there is a husband and his wife has gone before him and he gets very upset like, "Oh,
367 I guess you think you are better than me now, you have been here and you are an angel
368 and I just don't think I can live with this" and he just goes and gets back on the bus. So
369 the invitation is there and he has the opportunity to go through the gates and his wife is
370 trying to explain to him how everything is different and yet it is just like a marital
371 argument they had had years before except she was not arguing. That was definitely an
372 aside.

373

374 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The story of anyone's conversion is a dramatic story of
375 change brought about by the living Christ. Peter, Paul, you and I are Christian, not by
376 our own decision, discovery, or desire, but by being chosen by the living Christ. Our
377 relationship with Christ was Christ's idea before it was ours. And that's a really
378 comforting thought. I don't know about you but sometimes I don't always think, act, feel
379 or believe like a Christian. But, praise God, my relationship to God is not something that
380 I do; it is something that God has done and is doing in Jesus Christ.

381

382 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The church needs to give more attention, more
383 emphasis, to how dramatic our conversion really is. I fear we sometimes reduce this faith
384 of ours to a slow, orderly, even boring matter of plodding along behind Jesus. Life with

385 our living Lord ought be more interesting and exciting than that. We are called to be
386 creative when it comes to living our faith in our daily lives.

387

388 [INSERTED AT TIME OF SERMON DELIVERY]: I think of people who talk about
389 being bored with life ... how unfortunate that a person is so uninspired ... if you have the
390 joy in your heart of the risen Christ there is no time and there is no opportunity to be
391 bored. Life is exciting.

392

393 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Paul, Peter, and every other converted person whose
394 story is told in the Book of Acts is called to positive work in building the kingdom of
395 God. The Lutheran Confessions point out that if there is not evidence of conversion in
396 the form of obedience to God then conversion has not taken place.

397

398 [RESEARCHER]: I was wondering about what your sense is of the percentage of your
399 congregation that have been active in the Lutheran Church since childhood, who went
400 through catechism as opposed to those who might have joined as adults? And then, how
401 important is that context, and I am also assuming that then there is an adult catechism
402 class, so how important is that context of catechism, that familiarity with Lutheran
403 Church doctrine, to your sermon preparation of having a context that people will
404 understand what you are referring to such as the Lutheran Confessions, things like that.

405

406 [INFORMANT]: Well, okay. I am not so sure that in the high school class or that in the
407 junior high school class, we do not talk so much about the Lutheran Confessions. The

408 catechism is part of the Lutheran Confessions – are they going to remember that?
409 Probably not, but it is the exposition at their age level that Luther wrote for that particular
410 age level to understand the basics of the Christian faith. Sixteen parts of the Christian
411 faith. But from time to time we do mention the Lutheran Confessions, it is not unusual in
412 preaching to talk about the Lutheran Confessions because that is what identifies us as
413 Lutherans and still today does. Pastors, as far as I know, every branch of the Lutheran
414 Church, when they are ordained, acknowledge their adherence to and their conviction that
415 the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of the Christian faith. Again, that is
416 head knowledge and it is not the same. There we are talking about the Lutheran faith we
417 are identifying a set of propositions or at least an exposition of what we feel Scripture
418 teaches; particularly with regard to law and gospel, sin and grace, and so that is what we
419 base it on. The Augsburg Confession, it is not the largest, but it is the base of it, I would
420 say there are a fair number of Lutherans who have at least heard of the Augsburg
421 Confession and with some understanding that is what we are based on.

422

423 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Jesus' life, death and resurrection tell us that God will
424 stop at nothing to make us his own and to bring us to live in his kingdom of glory forever.
425 Nothing – the cross, death or hell itself will defeat the accomplishment of God's purposes
426 for the world. Your presence here today is a sign, maybe even a proof of Easter, living
427 breathing testimony that God really does work wonders and that you are one of those
428 wonders. Your conversion to be one of God's people in Jesus Christ assures you of your
429 place now and forever among the chorus singing "Worthy is the Lamb to receive power
430 and wealth and wisdom, and might and honor and glory and blessing."

Appendix F

Transcript of third semi-structured interview: review of the May 6, 2007 sermon

1 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT] Ken Ward is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church
2 in Canada who was asked to reflect on Lutherans talking about their faith and doing the
3 work of evangelism. His response went this way: “I remember a dance at our high school
4 when I was in my early teens. The boys stood on one side of the gym and talked,
5 nervously looking over at the girls who were standing on the other side of the gym doing
6 the same thing. There was one girl in particular who caught my eye. The evening was
7 winding down. Finally, with palms sweating and a mouth so dry that I was afraid that I
8 could not speak, I slowly and anxiously crossed the floor to where she stood. When I got
9 there finally, I finally asked, “will you dance with me?” – to the girl standing next to her.

10

11 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: His response goes on: “I think that those feelings of
12 anxiety and confusion just about sum up how much Lutherans feel about talking about
13 their faith with other people. We know it’s a good idea. We think it should come
14 naturally. We even suspect that it might be a lot of fun if we could muster up the courage
15 to go over and say something. Much of the time we just think about it and somehow
16 never cross the room.”

17

18 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: On this fifth Sunday of Easter our Lord invites us to
19 explore Easter and its implications as the basis for our evangelism. On Easter, when the

20 women went to the cemetery to visit the tomb of Jesus, the angel met them with a
21 startling message – “He is risen!” Then remember what else the angel told them? The
22 angel did not say “You will now be immortal and live forever.” The angel did not say
23 “Now get busy doing good work to make the world a better place.” Rather, the angel said
24 “Go and Tell.” That remains the work of the church to this day. Go and Tell.

25 [INSERTED DURING THE SERMON DELIVERY]: That the Gospel of Jesus Christ is
26 that he is risen from the dead and that he offers new life, eternal life to everyone. And
27 now as Scripture says “How will they know if no one tells them?”

28

29 [RESEARCHER:] I have been thinking about this, again in terms of my history and what
30 I have learned about the Lutheran tradition through our interviews. And I know that in,
31 what we have come to call the “American evangelical” tradition, in which I was raised,
32 evangelism of which you are talking about, of witnessing is sort of driven in the large
33 part by a rather apocalyptic impending sense of ...

34

35 [INFORMANT]: by fear.

36

37 [RESEARCHER]: Yes, exactly. Well, fear, this concern perhaps an altruistic concern,
38 but a concern that the Lord is coming any day and we have to get everybody saved. And,
39 also, you have mentioned several times this history and tradition of Christendom in which
40 it is assumed that everyone is saved, I mean that everyone is a Christian, and also a
41 difference in theology. You talk about more of a passive kind of role of the Lutheran
42 Christian, it is not a decision. So all of these things have been going through my head as

43 you seem to be asking “why do we Lutherans have a hard time sharing our witness?” So
44 the leading question for me is whether or not there is a sense of the apocalyptic and the
45 second coming at all in Lutheran theology?

46

47 [INFORMANT]: It’s there, but it is not an emphasis. I suppose some of that is a reaction
48 against the extremes of that sort of theology, that apocalyptic sort of thing. The other
49 thing is that it seems to me that if you read the Gospels straight through, you don’t catch
50 too much of that sense of urgency or not that sense of urgency that is expressed in
51 American evangelicalism in the way in which Christ dealt with it. He invited and he
52 accepted and he seems to have embraced, but you don’t find him being quite as, what
53 would you say, grab people by the shirt collar and ask them “Are you saved?” A little
54 more laid back than that. But there is an apocalyptic emphasis. We believe in a linear
55 time frame, we do not believe that things go on forever in either a circular or in a spiral
56 sort of way, but we believe that there is an end of the world and that Christ will come
57 again and that there is a point of judgment. The thing is, is that we are not too inclined to
58 do that judging ourselves, prematurely. And there is a certain recognition that God deals
59 with people probably in a different way than what we as human beings do. That is not
60 even particularly a part of the Lutheran confession which would define Lutheranism, but
61 it is more of a matter of our makeup or whatever. It may also be that we are still the
62 largest of the Protestant bodies and that we are a worldwide church and the fact that
63 there are a lot of Lutherans. Like someone said Lutherans are like box elder bugs, there’s
64 an awful lot of them, but they don’t seem to bother anybody. (laughter). So that I guess, I
65 don’t know if that answers your question, I would say that we do have a little bit different

66 approach to evangelism. It is our sense that evangelism is important, but it is more a
67 matter of proclaiming Jesus Christ, not that threat of being lost forever, not that that's not
68 there, that's a terrible thing to think about being without God for eternity or to be apart
69 from God for all eternity, but it is not the fire and brimstone sort of thing. When you see
70 that Christ is establishing his church to both work in this world for the good of human
71 kind, but also there is that time when time will end and there will be a judgment, but we
72 are less inclined to judge who will be saved, whether they have toed the line enough,
73 because toeing the line is not exactly the point of our theology.

74

75 [RESEARCHER]: Just earlier you said something about, perhaps more to the Lutheran
76 perspective on, anyway, you used the word that Jesus invites us. Which to me is a little
77 different, inviting is a little different than witnessing. And so I am wondering do you feel
78 that Lutherans, what I mean by that is an invitation to come worship at my church is a lot
79 different than me telling what my faith means to me and my life and why I go to that
80 church. Or why it is imperative for me...

81

82 [INFORMANT]: Okay, we may be talking on a couple of different levels here. I don't
83 see Jesus as inviting people to come to Temple. I think what Jesus invites people to is a
84 different way of life. And that it was an invitation to accept God's grace first of all,
85 which most people don't live lives of grace, we don't tend to live very gracefully. We
86 don't think very much relationally about our relationship with God, we don't even think
87 very much relationally about our relationship with our neighbor. And this is what I think
88 that Jesus invites us to and invited people that he encountered to is a new sort of

89 relationship. You are invited into a relationship with God that you have never
90 understood, that you have never experienced before because you have not experienced
91 this marvelous grace that reflects the love of God. It's always been on the basis of how
92 can I please God, how can I be good enough that God will accept me and it seems to me
93 that what Jesus was preaching was this enveloping love of God, was from God, that
94 surrounds us and is reflected in the world that has been created and that is just wrecked
95 because of human sin. And he calls us and invites us to leave that aspect of sin as it
96 corrupts our nature and invites us into a new relationship that is based on the fact that
97 God accepts us and that God actually has a concern for us and is not just waiting in the
98 wings to stomp us when we err from his ways, but who like the loving father in the
99 Prodigal Son parable continues to wait for us. And when we come he is overjoyed.

100

101 [RESEARCHER]: We probably are talking on a couple of different levels. I guess that I
102 was wanting to know if you think Lutherans and people in your congregation are
103 generally open to inviting people to church? Maybe that is the extent of witnessing for
104 them, what they are comfortable with.

105

106 [INFORMANT]: I think that they would be comfortable in doing that than sitting down
107 and saying "let's have a cup of coffee and I will tell you what Jesus Christ means to me."
108 That is not real comfortable for Lutherans.

109

110 [RESEARCHER]: Or I think for most mainline Protestants.

111

112 [INFORMANT]: Yeah. By the same token, I think that people who are embraced by that
113 love and who sense it in their lives and who live it, still should have a comfort level in at
114 least saying “I have found something or something has found me that makes a difference
115 in my life”. And I know in my own life that that is true. What I experienced in my own
116 family when we became active Christians was something very different than what it had
117 been before. I think that Lutherans tend to be less judgmental about people, and maybe
118 more accepting. In a lot of different ways, it affects the social fabric at least as Lutherans
119 view it because it is has always amazed me that as conservative as Lutherans are in some
120 respects, when you visit the Scandinavian countries that, despite the fact that an awful lot
121 of people don’t go to church there, they are certainly affected by the theology that has
122 been a part of them for hundreds of years. Where does socialism seem to really work? It
123 seems to be in those countries. And if you look at the north central part of our own
124 country, the Dakotas and Wisconsin and Minnesota, particularly Minnesota because it
125 has the highest percentage of Lutherans, some people have indicated that perhaps
126 Minnesota should just join up with Canada. There is concern that is reflected in an
127 equality and an acceptance that a lot of people really have a difficult row to hoe, that they
128 are not responsible for the difficulties that they have and that they need some help. Or
129 even when they are responsible they still need some help because that is part of their
130 problem. They create their own problem, but they need some help in that way. And that is
131 one of those things that to me that is amazing, for like I say, for as conservative as
132 Lutherans are that those states that are the most socialistic and certainly the countries that
133 has the most workable forms of socialism, that is where I think part of it comes out of
134 Lutheran theology – or least that has been a factor.

135

136 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Like Pastor Ward with his story of teenagers at a dance,
137 I know how we Lutherans feel awkward about talking about our faith. We have the same
138 fears that teenage boy might have. He's thinking to himself, "What if she says 'no'? I'll
139 feel rejected. Or worse, what if she laughs at me? That would be humiliating. Or worst of
140 all, what if she says yes – I'll probably have to dance."

141

142 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: But on the basis of today's readings there seems to be
143 something built right into the Christian faith that demands witness, testimony, and
144 evangelism. In our first reading the church finds itself in an awkward situation.

145 [INSERTED DURING SERMON DELIVERY: because there is a decision to made and
146 whenever there is a decision to be made, there are bound to be differences of opinion.
147 And in our first reading the church finds itself in that type of awkward situation.] The
148 story is about the first recorded Gentile convert to the Christian faith. This is Cornelius, a
149 Roman, a Gentile, an army officer, part of the occupation forces in Jerusalem has been
150 converted, baptized as a Christian. This conversion requires something of a conversion
151 within the whole church.

152

153 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The church at that point was Jewish. They worshiped at
154 the temple [INSERTED DURING SERMON DELIVERY]: they observed the kosher
155 laws. They saw themselves as the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament, all of the
156 Jewish tradition had given] in addition to meeting together on their own. The Jewish
157 concept of "holiness" or being set apart from the rest of the world was probably just as

158 strong in those first Christians as it was in any other Jew. So when Peter baptizes a
159 Gentile, especially one with Cornelius' resume, he has to give an explanation as to how
160 this could happen. Why has this good news that was addressed to Israel been given to
161 this non-Jew? Peter had to justify to the church in Jerusalem what he had done.

162

163 [RESEARCHER]: I was struck by your mention here of the "Jewish concept of holiness
164 or being set apart." I was wondering if this notion of "holiness" rather than
165 "evangelical" might be the better adjective to apply to this theological tradition over here
166 and might be a way for you and the ELCA to reclaim the word evangelical – that is an
167 aside. But definitely within the context of what you were just describing in Minnesota
168 and this Lutheran concern for those who are having problems and where the response is
169 to reach out and help rather than to separate and say "You are unclean." And over the
170 course of our interviews the American evangelical part of our Christian tradition has
171 come up and so I am wondering if there is some bigger picture issues here or concerns
172 might be a better word between this tradition which you are coming from, of reaching out
173 as opposed to this being set apart, that sort of guides your overall beliefs and theology
174 and creeps into your sermons. Is that a fair question?

175

176 [INFORMANT]: It is a fair question and it really revolves around, as you ask it, my
177 mind is going in two directions. One is Lutheran theology and in a way my own
178 experience. Because when I was at [name of social ministry organization]...

179

180 [RESEARCHER]: What is that? Is that a church?

181 [INFORMANT]: No, [name of social ministry organization] was a home for senior
182 citizens and handicapped people in [name of city] in the [name of neighborhood] area,
183 which was a declining area. And in that context and in my service there for 13 years I
184 came across a lot of people who had a lot of social problems. We had one-third or more
185 black population within [name of social ministry organization]. And just in living
186 between and within the different cultures and getting to know people and finding that
187 acceptance of people goes an awfully long way in just forming community and
188 relationships and things like that that are so important in the expression of our faith. So I
189 had that wonderful opportunity to being able to relate with members of the black
190 community and with people – a lot of alcoholics, I got to know them, I got to know the
191 AA system quite well and all of the other kinds of social problems as you get involved
192 with peoples families because economics has, you know you don't know what the driving
193 force is, whether it is economic being deprived economically that causes social problems
194 or whether social problems causes people to be economically down the list. I knew a lot
195 of people who had mental problems because they were accepted into [name of social
196 ministry organization] because that was a, a lot of young people with mental problems
197 because they qualified for apartments there because they were classified as handicapped,
198 and dealing with some of those kinds of situations some of them really quite bizarre. But
199 all of this, in my personal experience of being able to accept all different kinds of people
200 with what a lot of people would term their limitations or things that put them on the
201 fringes of society. This was at the time when the Reagan administration was very much
202 promoting the closing of all these facilities for people with mental handicaps and how
203 they were just cast out onto the street and how many more there were who we could not

204 reach. And getting to know some of these people; one of them who I got to know (sigh)
205 really pretty well and was becoming one of those things where a person goes off their
206 meds and becomes more and more bizarre. Finally, to the point where we had to tell Fred
207 that he was not able to live there anymore and yet he did not qualify for getting help for
208 him. All kinds of social workers and efforts to get work for him and so he had to leave
209 [name of social ministry organization] because he was just becoming too bizarre to deal
210 with and literally, we felt, was becoming dangerous and yet could not get help for this
211 guy. I think it was about eight months later he and some other guy were sleeping under
212 one of the freeway bridges and somehow he doused the other guy with gasoline and set
213 him on fire. You know, Fred, did not deserve the fate that he received because of that.
214 The other guy certainly did not and, you know, just the frustration of dealing with some
215 of the social problems that our system does not seem very well equipped to do. You
216 know, I cannot hold Fred as having been personally responsible for a terrible act that, yes,
217 he committed, but I do not see him as being personally responsible for that. And I do get
218 a little upset when everything is society's fault, but there are things that are society's
219 fault. We need to provide for folks. And this was in a state, in [name of state], where
220 providing for people was pretty good, but you reach that point where too many people
221 fall through the cracks in our society. For as rich as our society is, we are not very good
222 at providing for folks who really need some help.

223

224 [RESEARCHER]: So this seems like a very fertile garden for your philosophy that you
225 have articulated earlier about really the bottom line is the love of the neighbor. This

226 explains to me a lot of where you are coming from. I appreciate your sharing that story
227 with me.

228

229 [INFORMANT]: But there are a lot of those stories and Fred was really a pretty young
230 guy, not one of our youngest. But the fact that you could meet these people, deal with
231 them, accept them and so forth and then a lot of times just – a very common mental
232 problem now days is so-called bi-polar disorder. I think back in those days we still called
233 it pretty much manic-depressive, but to encounter a number of young people whose
234 whole life cycle was guided by that. That they would be going along dealing with their
235 medications and so forth, cruising along, get an apartment with us and a lot of them did
236 make it. But there is something about the medications that these folks take, I know that
237 one of them was that they would always have that dry mouth and a little bit of shakiness
238 so there was an impetus to go off their medication. They think things are going really
239 well so they go off their medication and then get really bizarre as they go into that manic
240 stage. And you see that cycle over and over again and this is sort of their fate and yet
241 because of that rule that you cannot intervene until they are clearly a danger to
242 themselves or to someone else, no one will do anything about it. So you watch people go
243 through this decline and then have to wait until things get so bad that they are forced to
244 go into the hospital, forced to take the medication and things like that to get back on
245 track. And come out again only to repeat that cycle over. And it just gets so frustrating
246 and heartbreaking for them and for their families.

247

248 [RESEARCHER]: This is sort of an aside, but was a clinical pasturing experience
249 required for you in seminary? We called it CPE when I was in seminary.

250

251 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, I don't think it was as extensive as it is required now, but yes we
252 had to do a few hours of CPE.

253

254 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: When he addresses the church in Jerusalem, Peter
255 describes a series of events that led to a momentous shift in his own thinking. He was in
256 Joppa, along the Mediterranean coast, proclaiming the risen Christ to other Jews and
257 establishing the church there. He has a dream or vision in which he receives a divine
258 directive to eat things that weren't kosher, things that were considered unclean by the
259 Jewish law. Then men came from the Gentile city of Caesarea asking Peter to come with
260 them. The Holy Spirit tells Peter to go with them and not to make a distinction between
261 these Gentiles and himself. [INSERTED: Can you imagine how uncomfortable Peter
262 must have felt? He probably had never before eaten with a non-Jew and for the Jews table
263 fellowship was extremely important. He must have been extremely uncomfortable. The
264 Holy Spirit was telling him to go with these Gentiles, to make no distinction, to eat with
265 them.] Peter then realizes that his dream wasn't really about unclean animals; it was
266 really about unclean people, Gentiles. Gentiles considered by the Jews to be unclean and
267 outside the promises of God are brought into those promises.

268

269 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The church is amazed and praises God and marvels that
270 "God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life." Even to the

271 Gentiles. It sounds as if everybody thinks this is just wonderful – but later on in the book
272 of Acts, we find that not everyone thinks this is so wonderful.

273

274 [INFORMANT]: We as Christians we sort of learn that lesson the Gospel is for all, but
275 we have to keep relearning it and relearning it and relearning it. And the church in Acts
276 seems to have had – there was this little puff with Peter and then there is that little dispute
277 between Peter and Paul because Peter has gone back to separating himself from the
278 Gentile converts so it was something that continually had to be learned and it is
279 something that the church still – and I am about to get to the point about acceptance of all
280 kinds of people and we have made our adjustment and right now we are struggling with
281 exactly where does the homosexual fit into the picture? For the Lutheran, for the ELCA
282 in general, we are not having so much of a problem with accepting membership of people
283 who are gay or lesbian, but we are certainly having a difficult time deciding whether they
284 are capable of being pastors or not. And that is something that I myself have not yet
285 found myself with any great conviction one way or the other on that. I have a strong
286 conviction that God loves the gay person and that they should be accepted into
287 membership in the church and the more often I hear some tirade that all gays are going to
288 hell or some tirade against homosexuality, I guess that I usually lean a little further
289 toward the other side. But something I have not resolved within myself and that I just
290 feel the church struggling both with a desire to accept and yet a hesitancy, must be an
291 awful like the hesitancy the early church felt about Gentiles. They are dirty and unclean
292 and headed for hell and whatever else. And how we struggle with that and we are

293 continuing to struggle and I struggle within myself and think I am kind of making
294 progress toward being led in one way and then I will kind of edge back the other way.

295

296 [RESEARCHER]: I had written down here that this sounds like one of those “Do I really
297 want to go there?” moments that you talked about a week or so ago.

298

299 [INFORMANT]: Well, I really would like to go there if I were that convinced within
300 myself as to which way to, but I mentioned it here to hopefully introduce it, well, it
301 certainly is not an introduction, but to bring it out so that people continue to think about
302 because how does this story from Acts fit into that exactly where we are today, the
303 struggles with that.

304

305 [RESEARCHER]: So given your method, really, of struggling with the primacy of the
306 Scriptures as a resource for you, any particular, can you describe the nature of the
307 struggle any more on that particular issue? In terms of Scripture, what help are you
308 finding to make sense of that?

309

310 [INFORMANT]: Well, I am able to understand the cultural context that a lot, well, I
311 should not say a lot because there are not a lot of things in Scripture that talk about
312 homosexuality, what are there, about four references in the New Testament that might
313 be? And not too many more than that in the Old Testament, but they are there and for
314 what purpose? I have not been able to come to a conclusion in the reading material, in
315 the extra-Biblical reading material where there are interpretations of this that or another

316 thing. I am not convinced on either side of that. I know that some of the traditional
317 interpretations have certainly always been that homosexuality is a great evil and that it
318 was not tolerated within the Jewish community, the Old Testament Jewish community
319 that seems pretty well established and under the penalty of death. And since Jesus had no
320 comment on it whatsoever and Paul's comments, two of them at least, are subject to
321 interpretation, which I think leaves only one (laughs) so ... you know, where does that
322 leave us? It seems to leave us at a point, you know, how terribly important is that? When
323 there is only one reference and yet it is there. I have that terrible waffling back and forth
324 about that. It also then leads into some of the very neat people who you have known and
325 do know who are gay and lesbian and who also exhibit great love for their Lord and who
326 potentially seem as if they could be great servants of the church. For our big issue, again,
327 is whether to allow for gay or lesbian clergy. Right now, the church standards are that is
328 not allowed and there have been some folks who have been disciplined for that and some
329 congregations who have been disciplined for that in our circle. And, like I say, I am still
330 torn about my own feelings, my own opinions, and my own intellectual acceptance of
331 that. I find it fairly easy, fairly (emphasis) easy, to accept a large number of gay people.
332 I used to do community theater when I was in [name of city] and did (emphasis and
333 chuckle) happen to meet a number of people in the theater group who were gay and I
334 seemed to be able to relate to them reasonably well and accept them, but still,
335 intellectually not quite convinced quite one way or the other.

336

337 [RESEARCHER]: So given the sort of lack of Scripture references, resources that you
338 mentioned, or at least that they are wide open for interpretation and then also you

339 mentioned that your struggle with this is affected by your hearing a rant about it, are there
340 resources you are looking at then outside of Scripture and outside of the rants that as you
341 are struggling with this?

342

343 [INFORMANT]: Oh yeah, the church has provided a whole bunch of Biblical studies.
344 The problem with those is that sounds so good when one side expresses their opinion
345 from a Biblical standpoint and then the other side then comes back with theirs. So that it
346 is enlightening because you learn a lot of stuff about Biblical interpretation and what
347 things were, but you don't really come down with a definite answer for yourself as to
348 what the contemporary situation should be. And I suppose I sometimes go with the idea
349 that the Gospel is for all and that we are all equal under the Gospel. And I find myself
350 with this most uncomfortable kind of split personality that I have no problem with
351 accepting the fact that Christ died for gay persons as well and that is their orientation and
352 that they are going to be that way and that it is no different from the fact that Christ died
353 for the alcoholic and Christ died for all. And then I come down to would I feel absolutely
354 comfortable in a congregation where I knew that my pastor was married to a person of
355 the same sex and emotionally, I don't know whether I am ready for that or not. So that
356 struggle goes on and I do read those books, I think I have a couple of them up there
357 [motions to the book shelf behind him] and besides a plethora of material that has been
358 produced by seminary professors and stuff like that for the ELCA as we have gone
359 through.

360

361 [RESEARCHER]: I want to push you a little more on this issue. So in my mind, and
362 again growing up in an evangelical tradition, I remember a few references to it and it was
363 always you know homosexuality is not natural, it is not as God intended, it is an
364 abomination of nature, and yet this question of what is natural and what is nature, to me
365 that is more and more called into question. The gray area seems to be getting bigger all
366 the time. One of the more recent scientific things that comes out that really fascinates me
367 is that evidently this statistical proof that the more brothers, older brothers a man has, the
368 greater the likelihood that that man will be gay and they trace this to a genetic occurrence
369 within the female body, the mother, and it has to do with the reproduction of the female
370 gene and so to me that is an astounding thing to think about in terms of what is nature,
371 what is natural, what is God's intention? I can identify with your struggle, the emotional
372 part of it, would I want a pastor who is gay. However, I know that in the United
373 Methodist Church we have struggled with a similar question and I imagine it is the same
374 in the ELCA, and that is do I want a pastor who is a woman? And that is something that
375 is becoming less of an issue in the United Methodist Church, I don't know about the
376 ELCA, but so I say that to think about at least the United Methodist Church we have
377 overcome that emotional issue, it has been 20 or 30 years in the making so ...

378

379 [INFORMANT]: But from the evangelical side things it would seem that is exactly what
380 they are warning against. You let one in then you get more and more used to it. It is like
381 the lobster in the pot that sort of thing and I suppose there is even some truth to that, but
382 the fact that it is such an issue within the church, much more so than I wish it were
383 because I think it has been a very distracting issue as well, distracting from what the

384 business of the church ought to be, but it is something that is being dealt within our
385 society and it needs, I guess, to be dealt with within the church, too. Like I say, I
386 continue to struggle within myself and sometimes get upset with one side or the other
387 side that is so intent on pushing its own agenda. But, it just is a problem that seems as if
388 in our age we have not been given a clear answer to yet, and things that are unclear I
389 guess we all get a little uncomfortable with. And yet that is one of the joys of the Gospel
390 is that we may be awfully confused and we may struggle with these things, but they are
391 not the ultimate issue. The ultimate issue is our relationship with God through Jesus
392 Christ and however the other things come out, they are still penultimate, they are not the
393 ultimate, so however we come out I may not be happy with, may not even be comfortable
394 with, but the Spirit still leads and we will find some way.

395

396 [RESEARCHER]: So bringing this back to the sermon preparation and thinking about
397 how this would be received in your congregation yesterday, without naming any names
398 of course, but any consideration, any awareness on your part of families for whom this
399 issue is much more personal than for others in the congregation and how that might have
400 affected what you chose to say?

401

402 [INFORMANT]: I don't think it affected what I chose to say, but I do know of folks in
403 the congregation who have gay or lesbian offspring and who have gone through their own
404 struggles in accepting that. Of course that was not the central issue of the sermon, but I
405 am aware of that and how that sometimes they need a little bit of umph to understand that
406 it is not just because of their personal involvement in it that we continue to struggle with

407 this thing. Acceptance is still an important part of it, that is part of what this sermon is
408 about, acceptance, part of evangelism is accepting people because God has accepted us.

409

410 [RESEARCHER]: I noticed that in the sermon yesterday and it was not included in the
411 original text that you also bring up the issue of divorce and this issue of accepting persons
412 who are divorced and as I was reading and listening to the tape I thought well, in some
413 ways, that's potentially a larger group of people for whom could have had some toes
414 stepped on or to consider how will this be received, just sort of wondering about that in
415 the context of what you wanted to say, and I know it is acceptance, but...

416

417 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, I don't know, I guess when it comes to divorce, I do not
418 particularly think of how that is received. I guess one of the jobs of the preacher is
419 pointing out the fact that we are broken people. And that you know whether it is divorce
420 or even gayness or the fact that we don't accept everybody, we all deal with our own
421 brokenness. The Gospel is that healing aspect of brokenness. You do talk about things
422 like divorce and I guess my approach to it and I think it is a Lutheran approach by and
423 large is "hey, we are all broken in one way or another. I may be broken because I make
424 judgments on other people, you know, or I may be broken because I just am broken, but it
425 is God who has reached out to quote "fix" not only some of the situations because some
426 situations are not fixable. I hate to say this even by God. But he can fix any human
427 being and he can fix us by his grace and forgiveness.

428 [RESEARCHER]: So, (nervous laugh) it just occurs to me then, that because as you said
429 we are “all” broken by human nature and brokenness is really and I am going to say
430 original sin and I don’t know, we haven’t used that

431

432 [INFORMANT]: Yep

433

434 [RESEARCHER]: So, then isn’t that, (nervous laugh) I don’t want to be arguing here, but
435 isn’t that more the issue than divorce or sexual orientation, I mean aren’t those just
436 distractions? So in a way...

437

438 [INFORMANT]: They are the manifestations of, that is if you consider homosexuality a
439 sin, and I guess I do, but one of the issues within the church is and this is a sidelight it
440 seems to me that too often what happens with the church and should not happen with us
441 Lutherans is campaigns to accept things that are by general standards considered sinful
442 because that is really not the issue, because what is really the issue is that we are all sinful
443 and that we are all in that sense on that same level and the particular manifestation of our
444 sinfulness is not the central issue. None of us escapes the fact that at the very basic we
445 are sinful and unclean. As expressed in the confession of sin, that we are all in that state
446 of sinfulness so it is the original sin that God deals with. Some of those actual sins are
447 whatever else that is what needs to be dealt with too, but it is not the core issue, which is
448 that alienation from God that we experience because of our sinful nature. The other
449 things are just the manifestations.

450 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Questions arose over whether God can really be that
451 open and generous with his grace and love. Maybe they thought that the good news was
452 just for them. Maybe they thought that it was enough for the living Christ to transform
453 the lives of a few people and gather them into a congregation of like minded souls.

454

455 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: But clearly Christ intends to claim the whole world.
456 The living power of God continues to break down boundaries and defeat deadly
457 restrictions that even God's people sometimes try to place on God's grace. In the history
458 of the church, the story of Acts 11 has been repeated again and again. The church has
459 had to be dragged kicking and screaming into evangelism and mission. At various times
460 and places the church has been challenged to rethink its position again and again – to
461 struggle with the amazing grace of God.

462

463 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: I think of one little Norwegian Synod congregation in
464 northwestern Minnesota back in the 1870's. The synod was urging pastors and
465 congregations to become more active in winning souls for Christ, but the pastor of this
466 congregation didn't see any opportunity for soul winning, so he wrote back that in the
467 whole area surrounding his church there were 71 Christians and 1 Swede.

468

469 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: The Holy Spirit led the church, or at least parts of it to
470 accept Gentiles as recipients of God's grace. The Holy Spirit led the church, or at least
471 major parts of it to accept women as fully equal under God's grace. The Holy Spirit led
472 the church, or at least most of it to recognize that there are no distinctions of race or

473 color. Today the church struggles to find the will of God with regard to sexual
474 orientation – and as in all of these other major moves – the church needs to trust the Spirit
475 to lead us through this struggle as well.

476

477 [ORIGINAL SERMON TEXT]: Though it is the nature of the gospel to reach out; it is
478 our nature to hunker down, to keep house with those that we already have rather than to
479 reach out to those who are somehow different from us. But Jesus has already burst the
480 bonds of death and now continues to break through the bonds of a vision of Gods love
481 that is too narrow.

482

483 [RESEARCHER]: You mentioned earlier that the Missouri Synod goes in thirty year
484 cycles of expanding and contracting.

485

486 [INFORMANT]: Its viewpoint, not so much its numbers.

487

488 [RESEARCHER]: Yeah, so, perhaps, I will say liberal and then perhaps reforming and
489 moving back to more conservative, is that a fair picture, of more tolerant and then less
490 tolerant?

491

492 [INFORMANT]: Yes

493

494 [RESEARCHER]: And so I notice that on the Missouri Synod website that one of the
495 major distinctions that the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod calls attention to in its

496 differences with the ELCA is the issue of homosexuality. So is this a contracting time, in
497 your opinion? I am asking to help my understanding, because I was under the impression
498 that this was a constant kind of thing, but you are saying that there have been periods of
499 greater tolerance and less tolerance.

500

501 [INFORMANT]: Oh yeah, they are not nearly as consistent as they sometimes, as they
502 would like to portray. And it is difficult for me because I have been out of Missouri
503 Synod for such a long period of time it is kind of difficult for me to comment on it, but I
504 do know that through their history, since what is it 1839 when their forebears came over
505 here, well the thirty year cycle is probably more of a twentieth century thing, but they do
506 seem to come about. Anyway, yeah, where are they right now? I am not exactly sure,
507 probably about to become more, it almost seems as if there is a certain pressure in both
508 directions now. When Missouri Synod gets a little edgy or confused as if things are
509 going to change, that is when they get a real strong reaction. Although it was on a very
510 small scale, there probably are some people upset right now by the fact that after that
511 9/11 deal there was some indications that perhaps with regard to fellowship with other
512 Christians and other religions and being able to talk with them that maybe a line has been
513 crossed and they may not be able to go back, because really, to me, one of the big issues
514 in the Missouri Synod is fellowship. It is very evident in the fact that for years and years
515 there were very, very few Missouri Synod congregations where English was spoken. And
516 it was out of, to the extent that at one point that they established an English district which
517 was comprised of the English speaking churches which were in doctrinal agreement with
518 the Missouri Synod and all the rest were geographic and primarily German speaking.

519 [RESEARCHER]: So again, so that I understand history, would it be fair to say when you
520 went to seminary was there an ELCA and a Missouri Synod?

521

522 [INFORMER]: Well, no, there was not an ELCA, that did not come about until later.
523 There was the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. There
524 were three Lutheran bodies that were pretty close in size, all about 2.5 million, give or
525 take. The LCA and the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod were all
526 holding conversations about possible fellowship. In fact the Lutheran Book of Worship
527 came out of that because we decided that we could all three have the same hymn book,
528 but in the reactionary period Missouri Synod pulled out of that and developed their own
529 hymn book. But there was a time, and that was when I was going to seminary, that there
530 was serious discussions among the three largest Lutheran bodies, and the only one
531 outside of that of any consequence at all was the Wisconsin Synod which is about
532 300,000 members. So when the reaction came in the Missouri Synod and they pulled
533 away from the discussion of fellowship, that was kind of my impetus, this idea of being
534 so separate. So anyway, but a lot of people even as late as the '70's then sort of felt like
535 the English district was the one that was out of ahead of everyone else in terms of a
536 liberal, if there is such a thing, aspect. So the English District pulled out of Missouri
537 Synod almost immediately, which was the basis of the Association of Evangelical
538 Lutheran Churches. So the ELCA then became after about 10 years as the American
539 Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in American and the Association of Evangelical
540 Lutheran Churches merged.

541

542 [RESEARCHER]: So this issue of fellowship as opposed to separateness, it sounds like
543 that was really the driving force for you in your decision to leave the Missouri Synod.

544

545 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, because in Missouri Synod if you followed their rules, and not all
546 clergy do, but if you follow the rules no one except another member of another Missouri
547 Synod Lutheran Church is allowed to communion in your church. Technically, you will
548 not even pray with anyone else.

549

550 [RESEARCHER]: So these issues of ordination of women and literal interpretation of the
551 Scripture these are all sort of issues that sound like have arisen since seminary days for
552 you.

553

554 [INFORMANT]: No, they have always been there. I don't mean to lead you down that
555 course, but the fellowship, what the Missouri Synod requires for altar and pulpit
556 fellowship is a complete doctrinal [?] ... so all of these other issues still do fall in
557 importance because you have to agree on all of those things and much, much more in
558 order to be in fellowship.

559

560 [RESEARCHER]: That sort of reminds me of an illustration about "The Lite Church"
561 that advertised, you know, "That we only require 8 of the 10 commandments and you get
562 to choose which 8 you want." So do you have any questions or comments?

563

564 [INFORMANT]: No, we have had a fairly long session here.

565 [RESEARCHER]: Yes, we have and I really appreciate it.

Appendix G

Transcript of semi-structured follow up interview of April 25, 2007

1 [RESEARCHER]: I would like to ask up a follow up question from last week. You
2 mentioned that you got a late start last week, you did not get started thinking about the
3 sermon until Wednesday and I was just wondering what is your normal or your desirable
4 kind of schedule? I know that this week has probably been thrown off, too.

5

6 INFORMANT]: Yeah it has been (the informant's wife suffered a heart attack and was in
7 the hospital awaiting surgery). And we maybe need to talk about that. But I usually
8 begin on Monday reading what is coming up for that week and then kind of mulling that
9 over on Monday and Tuesday. By Wednesday I would ordinarily have an idea of the
10 theme and some of the resources that I might be looking at. By Thursday I may begin
11 writing the sermon. Sometimes that may wait until Friday, but I feel more comfortable if
12 I can get started on Thursday, but that certainly does not always happen. And then
13 sometimes there are meetings and other time commitments, but then Thursday morning,
14 because I work best in the morning, and if it is not done by Thursday morning then it
15 extends and it usually does extend over into Friday morning. If I am a day late then it is
16 often Friday and Saturday. I really like to have the sermon done before Saturday but if
17 necessary, obviously, I will work on it on Saturday.

18

19 [RESEARCHER]: So any thoughts, comments, especially the last couple of weeks,
20 because I know you have not been able to keep that schedule, and just how perhaps that
21 affected the information you looked for, the whole thought process, anything at all?

22

23 [INFORMANT]: One of the things about writing a sermon is that sermons do not always
24 come together in the same way. Some of them just flow and some of them you just slave
25 and work at. And the probably the main factor is how the Holy Spirit happens to be
26 speaking to you at that particular week. I do believe that the Holy Spirit is involved in
27 sermon writing and that the Holy Spirit does not always work in the same way.

28

29 [RESEARCHER]: So given that statement, is there a process for you or a ritual for you in
30 which you somehow invite the Holy Spirit? I mean a quieting where you are trying to
31 make that possible for yourself?

32

33 [INFORMANT]: Well, even though I am somewhat ritual oriented because I get a lot out
34 of ritual, I would not necessarily describe it as a ritual. I do have a process of reflecting, it
35 starts off with the lesson, by reading the three lessons and then as you read the lessons to
36 develop somewhat in a prayerful way, "Okay, what is this about?" and from there on it is
37 a matter of trying to let the word of God speak first and then how that word God speaks
38 to me in my life and how I see it speak in terms of the church and society. Wherever that
39 may go, sometimes the church is the foremost thing or it may be that the foremost
40 indicator from what I hear the word speak to me is an individual thing or it may be the
41 problems of society. And that is where you get into those things where the church, where

42 you feel the church needs to speak out on social injustice and so forth. So to me, because
43 the Word is a living thing you never quite know where you are going to be going. My
44 problem is that there are those times in which I sense “Oh, I really don’t want to go
45 there.” You know and you struggle with yourself or maybe you are really more struggling
46 with the Holy Spirit. Because I am not one of the bold, brash preachers. But I have a
47 strong sense that justice and the, well not exactly the equalizing force that Christianity
48 exerts on society, needs to be brought forward in the church from time to time to make
49 sure that people understand that there is a tremendous equalizing force behind the gospel.

50

51 [RESEARCHER]: Can I ask you to tell me a little bit more about what is going through
52 your mind when you are having that question “Do I really want to go there?” What would
53 be holding you back from going there?

54

55 [INFORMANT]: Well the reaction of the community or the congregation. They do not
56 necessarily always want to hear what their shortcomings are and that is the dynamic that
57 works in Lutheran theology is law and gospel. We need to be confronted with our little
58 sins and our big sins. On a personal basis, maybe first and foremost because there is that
59 element in the pietistic heritage of the Lutheran church, but also in the social context you
60 know because that is also, you know the Bonhoeffer’s and the confessing church in
61 Germany during the Nazi period and before that. Those Lutheran theologians who stood
62 out and spoke against government, which in Germany particularly was pretty a rather
63 dangerous thing. Not just during the Second World War period, but going back to
64 Bismark or even from other Lutheran theologians – Kierkegaard in his social

65 commentaries and so forth and the hypocrisies of the church and the established church
66 particularly in Denmark. There is a long, five hundred year heritage of the Lutheran
67 church, beginning with Luther speaking to power, although Luther was pretty good at
68 staying alive by using power. But that is one of the things, when you have a long heritage
69 like that and frankly as Lutherans we would say that yeah we got bounced out of the
70 Roman Catholic Church, but we can in our heritage go back further than just the
71 Reformers, back into the other great saints of the church. And there is something with
72 that historical heritage that I think helps people speak and I don't mean that only
73 Lutherans have that heritage. We do have a particular heritage but it is a part of that
74 greater heritage that every Christian has of every denomination at least in the western
75 church. That was certainly a ramble.

76

77 [RESEARCHER]: Last week you mentioned about the power of music for change and
78 you talked about the civil rights era and when you were in seminary and I did not know if
79 you were just referring to those times in general or some particular involvement in the
80 Civil Rights movement that might provide some context?

81

82 [INFORMANT]: I was not deeply involved in that. I can remember when I was at [name
83 of college] in [name of town] going down to the hotel to picket George Wallace when he
84 was speaking there. And we set up a little picket thing in protest. I cannot say that I was
85 in any way, I mean most of us were involved in small ways in promoting the civil rights
86 effort and in trying to particularly within the Lutheran Churches to promote that idea.
87 One of those things where I don't think any, Lutherans certainly were as much involved

88 in prejudice probably as anyone else and in the sheer ignorance because we are primarily
89 a white church, white middle-class group. So there was some need for witness and for
90 education with regard to the need for civil rights. We had, there is one aspect of it, in
91 which we did not have to fight in the sense that some did because even in [name of town]
92 there were a few Klu Kluxers in some of the other Protestant denominations. But
93 Lutherans do not go too much for secret organizations like that. In the Missouri Synod at
94 that time they did not allow membership in any organization like Masons or any lodge
95 like that. In our branch of the Lutheran church there are Masons, there are lodge
96 members and so forth, but not something that is strongly promoted. But secret
97 organizations were strongly, strongly (with emphasis) opposed and always have been in
98 Lutheran circles across the world.

99

100 [RESEARCHER]: And the same is true in the Church of the Nazarene. What is the
101 thinking there?

102

103 [INFORMANT]: Well, the thinking there is that in particularly in the Masonic rituals
104 there is almost an idolatry kind of thing. The god they identify is not the Christian god.
105 So at best we think of it as a kind of poor witness, but in this congregation there are quite
106 a few Masons which is something I had not come across before, but I think it is partly the
107 nature of [name of town] being, well not clubby, but that joining kind of thing, you join
108 things for the community effort and stuff like that. I don't know that, if I had my druthers
109 people would not be messing around with things that are, in my way of looking at them, I
110 read some of the Masonic rituals there is almost a cult kind of stuff. But they maintain it

111 is all in good fun and I am not there to judge. I certainly do not think they participate in
112 them in a serious way, but sometimes you can participate in something in a non-serious
113 way that is pretty serious business.

114

115 [RESEARCHER]: It is also a matter of what you give your time and talents to.

116

117 [INFORMANT]: And I certainly have no objection to the Shriner's hospitals and all of
118 those and that is probably the way in which it was more often explained that the lodges
119 present a way of salvation through your good works because they really do emphasize
120 that they do a lot of good works and there is nothing wrong with doing good works, but if
121 you think of it in terms of earning some kind of salvation, that is another matter.

Appendix H

Transcript of semi-structured follow up interview of May 3, 2007

1 [RESEARCHER]: You have said that you rarely ever depart from the weekly readings of
2 the Lectionary as the focus for your sermons. Could you please expand upon that in
3 terms of how that discipline or routine developed?

4
5 [INFORMANT]: Well, it was something that was taught in seminary. There are
6 certainly advantages to using the Lectionary readings because they cover a pretty broad
7 band of Christian experience and Christian faith and life and how it can be lived. The
8 themes in them suggest a lot of different facets of what it means to be a Christian. And
9 they also bear down very much on the core of the Christian faith and that is our faith and
10 trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done for us and for our salvation. The
11 other thing is, a link to that, is that I have always found it to be important liturgical
12 churches or churches that use the lectionary – I think the use of the Lectionary is
13 broadening to a lot of faith traditions that previously did not use a structured Lectionary
14 thing, but have found a certain wisdom in the structure of it. And it lends itself toward
15 the church year because I think the church year is a wonderful device that over the
16 centuries the church has developed to outline the life of Christ in the first half of the year
17 and then make application during the Pentecost season to the life of the individual and to
18 the life of the congregation. At least for me these themes work very, very well. I think
19 the importance of being grounded in the Gospel, in the life of Christ, and then augmented
20 by the other two readings, ordinarily from the Old Testament and one of the Epistles. It

21 just seems so logical and a good pattern so that you do not get stuck on your own
22 personal axes to grind. That doesn't mean that they protect you from doing that, but if
23 you really follow the text, as I try to do, I know that I interject my own prejudices and
24 feelings in some of the things I say, but that is one of the way of grounding you in such a
25 way that prevents that to a certain degree where you are just grinding your own axe in the
26 sermon.

27

28 [RESEARCHER]: What is your guess as to what percentage of ELCA clergy share the
29 same commitment to the weekly readings?

30

31 [INFORMANT]: I frankly don't know any that don't. I am sure there must be somebody
32 out there among 17,000 clergy who doesn't do that, but it must be in the high 90%, and
33 maybe even, 100% just sounds ridiculous, but it's pretty strong.

34

35 [RESEARCHER]: So there is this very strong commitment to the church calendar of the
36 year and it also sounds like it is pretty standard in seminary.

37

38 [INFORMANT]: I am sure there are people that use so called "free texts" more
39 frequently than I do, but by and large, like I say, I really do not know of anybody in the
40 ELCA who does not use the Lectionary. It is something that has come down to us. The
41 Lectionary Readings, we recognize that over the years, have changed. We have been
42 using the three year lectionary only since the mid-70's or something like that. It used to
43 be that the Lectionary readings that we used, the pericopes, for the day, followed a one

44 year pattern. So they were from all the different gospels. I think the three-year system is
45 better because it allows you to bring out the theology from each of the Gospel writers in a
46 little different way and in perhaps something closer to what they intended and what the
47 Holy Spirit brought out from these particular people.

48

49 [RESEARCHER]: How do you feel that your seminary education prepared you for the
50 weekly task of preparing sermons?

51

52 [INFORMANT]: Seminary education enabled me to think of the... well, think a little bit
53 outside the box in terms of broadening my view of Scripture. I am by no means a
54 fundamentalist, but my love for Scripture and for what I feel that God does through Holy
55 Scripture has been greatly increased by seminary education. And I went into seminary
56 pretty sure with a very, well maybe not a fundamentalist view, but something very close
57 to that. That if the Bible is the Word of God then it must indeed be accurate in every
58 facet and in every view. Now, I think I could say that Scripture is true, but it may not be
59 scientifically accurate, may not always even be historically accurate, although it is
60 interesting how frequently it is a little more historically accurate than a lot of people have
61 viewed it in the past. I think, what I would say is, what I have found in Scripture and has
62 been helped through seminary education is how absolutely true Scripture is without
63 necessarily being factually accurate in every respect, how absolutely true Scripture is.

64

65 [RESEARCHER]: So if I can push you just a little further on that, you used the word
66 “fundamentalist” perspective of the Bible and you said not quite. So would it be fair to

67 say that you entered seminary perhaps with more of, of seeing the Bible as more literal
68 than you do know?

69

70 [INFORMANT]: Yes, that would be it. You know the old thing that it was important that
71 the six day creation was correct, that was the way it was done. That if you had a camera
72 there that is exactly what you would see, the way it is described in Scripture.

73

74 [RESEARCHER]: Last week, you spoke to your belief about the role of the Holy Spirit
75 in sermon preparation. You talked about letting the Word of God speak to you. Could
76 you expand on this a little bit more, especially in terms of how do you know it is the Holy
77 Spirit or the Word of God that is speaking to you?

78

79 [INFORMANT]: (chuckles) That is a tricky question. Because, we know from some
80 people who at least write about their experience, who have been way off the mark, who
81 nevertheless claim that the Holy Spirit led them in this direction or that direction. One of
82 the things that I feel is the principle that when you are dealing with Scripture, that
83 Scripture does interpret itself, you cannot take one passage there and run with it as such
84 in ways that are contrary to the spirit of the rest of Scripture. I would say that one of the
85 things about the Holy Spirit, one of the principles of Scripture and the teachings of Christ
86 is that the Holy Spirit will never allow you to run away from and that is the principle of
87 love. That as Scripture interprets itself, what is best for the neighbor, for that other
88 person, and that is the very spirit of love that brings that forth. So, how do you know, I
89 guess that is one of the great aspects of faith that there is also an aspect of faith that is

90 also uncertainty. Can I say that when I get a thought in my mind for a sermon that this is
91 absolutely the Holy Spirit speaking to me? Well, yes, I am convinced within myself that
92 the Holy Spirit does those things, but I am not so sure that I can categorically say that any
93 little thought that comes into my mind is of the Holy Spirit. The spirit has to be tested
94 against other aspects of Scripture and not only of Scripture but also of the basics of what
95 it is to be Christian.

96

97 [RESEARCHER]: So that when you say that Scripture interprets itself, could you tell me
98 what that process is in your mind, how that works? I want to make sure that I understand.

99

100 [INFORMANT]: Well, (pause) you can't take ... I guess ... I am going to try to do it by
101 example because I am not sure that I can do it by logical, straight forward thinking in that
102 way. But, say that for instance, that someone advocates that as God led the people of
103 Israel into Canaan and told them to just decimate everybody there and not leave a living
104 person. That this is God's command to us to go into the Middle East or whatever and
105 make that into a god-fearing, to take that land and do with it as God told the Israelites to
106 do and we have got all this trouble because they did not do what God told them, they did
107 not completely eliminate all the, uh. I think that Scripture would indicate that something
108 as blatant as that is not what Jesus commanded his disciples to do when he said to "Go
109 and make disciples of all nations." Because there it is by invitation and by discipling,
110 helping all people to understand this new covenant of God's grace and of God's love.
111 And that something like I used in the illustration is not a reflection of God's grace or
112 God's love or of God's intent for humanity.

113

114 [RESEARCHER]: So I am assuming from that example that before you would have gone
115 to seminary, that there would have been more of a conflict in how to reconcile that Old
116 Testament directive to wipe out the ...

117

118 [INFORMANT]: Well, I am not sure that I would ever have embraced that idea. I think
119 that I would have seen some holes in that idea before it even developed. But I would say
120 that there was a lot of confusion in my mind between what is law and what is gospel and
121 the importance of the two. And that seminary helped me to clarify in my own mind and
122 in my own life that the law while important and also a part of the Word of God, that it has
123 no power to save, it is only the Gospel that has the power to save.

124

125 [RESEARCHER]: When I asked this question I was thinking especially in the Old
126 Testament some of the different schools who had their own agendas: the Yahweh school,
127 the Elohim school, and those sort of contradict each other sometimes or are at least at
128 odds with each other at times. And so that is why I was asking this about how Scripture
129 interprets itself. Because I don't know how those two ever would. But when you say
130 Scripture interprets itself, you are really saying that the Gospel is the bar.

131

132 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, in some respects, I would say the Gospel is the bar for me and in
133 dealing with the Scripture you are always dealing with the Gospel because the Gospel is
134 the power of God unto salvation. And while the law has a different purpose and that is to
135 show us a need for God to act for our salvation and that we cannot do it by our own

136 because if we stack up our lives against the standard of the law, we ain't gonna make it.
137 The Gospel only is what is ultimately the power of God for salvation. The law has only
138 that in my mind that function of driving us to see the futility of what we can do for
139 ourselves and to drive us to understand the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

140

141 [RESEARCHER]: So in the worship service each week, the Gospel lesson is always
142 actually read even though you might not actually preach from the Gospel, but how often
143 do you feel that you do not preach on the Gospel?

144

145 [INFORMANT]: On one of the other texts? Oh, I would say maybe once in every ten
146 times. It is ordinarily the Gospel that I preach from and the Gospel also ... things are set
147 up so that there is something of a theme, but particularly in the first part of the church
148 year it is important that the Gospel and the story of the life of Christ, this tremendously
149 powerful story of the Son of God coming to us and dealing with us and dealing with the
150 human problem of alienation from God and calling us back. That story, I think, is
151 extremely important and particularly in the first half of the church year, I would say
152 perhaps one in ten times I preach on one of the other texts, but for the most part it is from
153 the Gospel. From the Gospel and enlightened, maybe, some of the things the other texts
154 say because ordinarily those Sundays are somewhat thematic. All of the lessons, or at
155 least two of the lessons fit together. Usually the Gospel and one of the other lessons very
156 definitely fit together. And then I think in order to relieve people who do not want to
157 preach on that particular theme that day, they throw in the other one (laughs).

158

159 [RESEARCHER]: Well, to go back to the work of the Holy Spirit, would you describe it
160 using the word “revelation”?

161

162 [INFORMANT]: (pause) Well, it is in the sense if we take “revelation” as the unclouding
163 or revealing, yeah, I think there is a certain unveiling. As you go into a text you can feel
164 it kind of unfold for you. That as you study it more, it becomes richer, it becomes a
165 deeper, maintains or acquires a deeper meaning. I think there is a certain unveiling.

166

167 [RESEARCHER]: It sounds to me though, what I am hearing you describe, is that the
168 Holy Spirit, the Word of God, comes to you as you are studying the Scripture. It is not
169 like as though ...

170

171 [INFORMANT]: Like a bolt of lightening from outside? I don't say that the Holy Spirit
172 never works that way. I think there are some aspects of my life that have done that, but I
173 think in the context of when you take on the responsibility of speaking what you certainly
174 hope is the Word of God to other people, you certainly need to be grounded in what you
175 feel is the Word of God or what you accept as the revealed Word of God because
176 otherwise then you get back to the other problem of how do you know it is the Holy
177 Spirit. I think it needs to be grounded in Scripture so that you have a pretty good clue
178 that that's grounded in the Holy Spirit.

179

180 [RESEARCHER]: So the other side of this notion of whether it is the Holy Spirit I was
181 thinking earlier this week about C.S. Lewis's book “The Screwtape Letters” – are you

182 familiar with that story? Okay. And so, you know, you just expressed a vigilant guard,
183 the need to be vigilant in making sure that it is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. And I
184 know that you had a continuing education event planned that is not going to happen now
185 for you, but what do you do in your academic discipline and in your spiritual life to keep
186 vigilant in that way, in that responsibility that you were talking about if you are going to
187 stand in the pulpit, how do you maintain that, keep in shape, I guess, spiritually?

188

189 [INFORMANT]: Well, there is a certain amount of exercise that is required and sermons
190 begin, I guess, with prayer and with a discipline that says “I am subject to the word of
191 God and this is what I will preach based on a particular text for the day”. It becomes
192 important to do the research that says “what did this text say?” What does it, what do you
193 maintain is an honest way of bringing this forward to the present time? Because many of
194 the texts deal with human nature, which really doesn’t change. We are still in the matters
195 of sin and grace. Sermon structure is still based along the idea of reaching a goal, which
196 is spiritual development of all of us, of the church. In seminary we learned a method of
197 thinking in terms of sermons. I have to admit that I do not use it quite like I used to, but
198 it was a method that was called Goal, Malady, and Means. The goal is to, well, that
199 something in a Christian’s life be made better: that their faith is deepened, or awareness
200 of human need is sharpened, or some kind of goal. But the malady is always sin, our own
201 selfishness or pride or our own self-concern or whatever it may be. The problem, the
202 malady is always sin and the Means of getting to the Goal is the Gospel that puts sin
203 aside and overcomes that sin that prevents any human being from reaching the goal. For
204 many years in my early ministry I found that to be a helpful guide, (laughs), you know

205 there is the three part sermon: there is the goal and they can be switched around, here is
206 the malady, here is the goal and here is how to get there. You know, stuff like that, but it
207 is by Christ who has overcome sin and who gives our lives not only the forgiveness for
208 the times we have failed to reach the goal, but also becomes the power of God to reach
209 the goal or at least become closer to it.

210

211 [RESEARCHER]: As clergy members, speaking for myself, I know that I was always
212 very concerned about how the sermon was received each week. I was thinking about
213 how you would have a sermon that you thought was wonderful and people walk out and
214 never say a word about it and then one you just sort of blew off and they say it was the
215 best sermon you ever preached. And yet at the same time, too, there is the opinion of
216 another that we think about, too, The Holy Spirit. I was just wondering is there in general
217 or a particular example of a time when you had second thoughts and wondering about
218 what you had done especially in light of your words of being held accountable for the
219 message that you were going to give. Is that a part of a self-debriefing process at all?

220

221 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, there is an accountability. I tell you, once I preach a sermon, I
222 don't go back ordinarily. Doing what we are doing, I always hate to listen to myself
223 preach. I find the impetus before hand to be greater, that is where the struggle comes. I
224 guess it is the philosophy of that once it is out there, it is out there and there is no going
225 back and there's no use. It's not that I never (emphasis) go back and re-evaluate and
226 sometimes my wife and I will on a Sunday afternoon will talk about the sermon and how
227 it was preached and what it said. But I don't spend a lot of time thinking about sermons

228 once they have been preached. Because there is in some respects so much that goes into
229 putting it together that by the time you get there you are almost tired of your own sermon.

230

231 [RESEARCHER]: Do you think that is more the case for you today than when you were
232 first in the ministry?

233

234 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, I think so. I think have preached long enough that I know there
235 are some clinkers out there and there is also some fairly good stuff that has helped people
236 and has edified and again, you know, even the sermons that were not all that great, there
237 is still the hope that by the Holy Spirit somebody got something out of it.

238

239 [RESEARCHER]: When you think about how your sermon is going to be received on
240 Sunday morning, what do you think is the biggest challenge that you have to overcome in
241 terms of the congregation?

242

243 [INFORMANT]: Can you elaborate on that just a little bit?

244

245 [RESEARCHER]: What would be in your mind in terms of how thoroughly you have to
246 explain something?

247

248 [INFORMANT]: Okay, well, I think one of the biggest problems when I think of any
249 congregation and sometimes myself is the tendency to kind of ... to go into an uh ... that
250 most congregations you have people sitting out there who still are coming to church to

251 find out what they have to do for their salvation. Therefore they are approaching the
252 thing from the wrong angle. It is like the question “what must I do to be saved?” which is
253 very Biblical. But it is first of all a belief or trust in God and that your salvation is
254 accomplished so now, as one who has been saved, you know, how does one who has
255 been saved and is in line with God and is living a life reflecting our gratitude to God for
256 that salvation, now where do we go with that life, which becomes much more freer and
257 joyful way of living. People still, and this is true for Lutherans, too, still tend to keep
258 putting themselves under the law and asking “what must I do for my salvation?” rather
259 than recognizing and glorifying God for the fact that they are saved and now since I am,
260 what do I do with it?

261

262 [RESEARCHER]: I am curious as to your perception or description of the relationship
263 between ELCA pastors and the congregations they serve? When we first started talking
264 about doing this research project you told me that you were nine years in your first
265 pastorate and thirteen years in the second. In the United Methodist Church those would
266 be pretty long “appointments” is the term that we use. Is this pretty typical for the
267 ELCA? And I am just wondering what that might mean for the relationship between the
268 pastor and the congregation. I have heard or read studies saying that a pastor’s most
269 effective years are years four through seven. And also in the United Methodist Church
270 because it is an appointment system and like I said I was eight years at my last
271 appointment and I would imagine that over the years of the history of that church the
272 average was probably three or four. So there was a fair amount of turnover. And I have
273 always wondered what that does to relationship between pastor and congregation.

274
275 [INFORMANT]: Well, for one thing ELCA congregations by and large are relatively
276 small congregations. We are not mega-church type of people. We have a few. We have
277 a couple up in Lutheran country which are quite huge, with 17,000 members, I think that
278 is our largest congregation, but it is not one of the newer style mega-churches, it is just
279 that all those Scandinavians live in south Minneapolis all joined Mt. Olivet. So, for the
280 most part the congregations are small and congregations do tend to adopt their pastors
281 rather readily into their group. The other thing is that I believe that when a pastor is
282 assigned to a congregation, there is a fair amount of trust. I am sure this is not unique to
283 ELCA, but the job of a pastor coming into a congregation is just an amazing thing. You
284 are given people's trust. They trust you with their kids, they trust you with money,
285 although in the ELCA we try to stay away from money as much as possible because it is
286 all done by the lay people. But they will, they give you ten bucks in cash when you go to
287 give a private communion to some little old lady and she will give you ten bucks and say
288 "put this in the offering plate" and trust that it will get to the offering plate. When you
289 come in as a pastor, you come in with a congregation giving an awful lot of automatic
290 trust to you. There is that relationship that you are kind of "in" right away. Partly on the
291 theory that this is "the pastor" and I know that this is changing in our society because the
292 pastor is not considered one of the most educated people in the community. Partly
293 because some pastors in various denominations sometimes have very little education. It's
294 becoming more and more difficult for small congregations to support pastors because
295 pastors comes to them with eight years of seminary and eight years of (laughs) education
296 to pay off and all of that kind of stuff that creates some problems. We have a growing

297 clergy shortage. I am not sure where I am going with this thing, but one of the things that
298 does impress me when you come into a congregation is how much automatic trust you
299 have. In a sense it is a thing of, you know, how that trust must never be violated.

300

301 [RESEARCHER]: Is the small congregations by chance or design?

302

303 [INFORMANT]: It is almost by tradition I think and also because (laughs) we cannot
304 make more Lutherans than what we have. It is somewhat by tradition because a lot of
305 Lutheran churches still come out of that European tradition of small, you know never had
306 more than every three miles or six miles by buggy ride to the church. In Europe, the
307 salaries by the clergy were all paid by the government. No problem with the people
308 supporting, having to do that. When we attend church in Denmark, there is no offering.
309 You paid your church tax and if you wanted to pay something special like the
310 congregation we were visiting, they had an organ project and you could always contribute
311 an additional amount or to Lutheran Hunger Relief or that sort of thing, but your basic
312 support of the local church was all out of your taxes.

313

314 [RESEARCHER]: Wow, so there is not a separation of church and state.

315

316 [INFORMANT]: No pretense of it. Now Sweden has disestablished the Church of
317 Sweden and so they have the shock now of having to support their own churches and that
318 may be good for them, but because there is a certain laxness or just taken for granted in
319 that Christendom concept of church and state being so buddy-buddy. But anyway that is

320 why, I think, there may be tradition of relatively smaller congregations. The other thing
321 is that the Lutherans came to this country came for land, they were agricultural people so
322 churches were small. They did the same thing, every so many miles. When you go to
323 Minnesota, every so many miles there is a Lutheran church.

324

325 [RESEARCHER]: One more question. Is seminary education required, is 100% of ELCA
326 pastors seminary educated? And also you said, eight years, that sort of blew me away.
327 Does that count undergrad and seminary as well?

328

329 [INFORMANT]: Yeah, four years of undergrad. When I went through it was virtually
330 required that you go to a church school because you got the languages starting off from
331 the very beginning. And even the large universities, most of them, did not teach the
332 languages that were required. That's changed a little bit since I went through. I do not
333 know of any ELCA clergy who are not seminary graduates. May not all be graduates of
334 an ELCA seminary. I know of some who have graduated from seminaries, does Yale still
335 have a seminary? And there are a few who are graduates of some other seminary, but we
336 have a number of seminaries ourselves and that is, by far, the usual for the bulk of ELCA
337 clergy. I don't think you can be ordained as an ELCA clergy person without seminary.
338 Now, what we are doing and finding what we have to do is with some of the really
339 (emphasis) tiny congregations we are training lay people who work in those
340 congregations and in this particular area we call them parish ministry associates. And
341 that is something brand new. A few of them are even authorized to celebrate
342 communion. But it just becomes a necessity, we just do not have enough seminary

343 educated clergy to go around if we are going to keep those tiny congregations doing their
344 little ministries and so forth. They cannot afford a regular pastor.

345

346 [RESEARCHER]: So the Master of Divinity degree is that the seminary degree?

347

348 [INFORMANT]: I think that it is now. It used to be, I had to do four years of college and
349 four years of seminary and I ended up with a Bachelor of Divinity and then had to write a
350 thesis in order to obtain a Master of Divinity, which came a year after seminary
351 graduation.

Appendix I

Transcript of semi-structured followup interview: May 7, 2007

1 [RESEARCHER]: I had some follow up questions and I think I will just ask them now.
2 Sort of more clarification kind of things. The languages requirement for college and
3 seminary, you said Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. Was there a certain number of required
4 credit hours or years for each of those?

5

6 [INFORMANT]: Study of Greek began with freshman year in college and continued
7 through all four years of college. By the time you get to seminary it is more a matter of
8 using it. You do not have a Greek course, but you do study various books of the Bible
9 and the Septuagint, though I was never terribly fond of Septuagint studies. Somehow
10 studying the Old Testament as it was translated into Greek and then translated into
11 English just never appealed to me (laughs) I failed to see what the point of that was for
12 the average parish pastor. But anyway, study of Hebrew began in the junior year of
13 college so that you had two full years of Hebrew study before taking Old Testament
14 classes in seminary with your background.

15

16 [RESEARCHER]: So four years of Greek and two years of Hebrew and so, was Latin
17 just something extra?

18

19 [INFORMANT]: Well, Latin was the church language and so... See this was sort of the
20 classical, when I went through college and seminary, it was the kind of classical training

21 that you studied Latin because it was the basis of so many other things and it was the
22 language of the church for centuries and in some respects still is. German for two
23 reasons: one because it was the language of the Reformers or at least the early Reformers,
24 Luther and his colleagues, but it was also the language of Zwingli and I think Calvin, I
25 am not sure. But anyway from Switzerland on up to Germany, that was the language of
26 the Reformers so you could read their writings in the original language. And the other
27 thing is that a lot of the current theological, what I am trying to say here, a lot of the
28 people who are prominent in modern theology, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, are
29 German. So it enables you to read things that may not yet be translated. I don't think I
30 can do that any more, but I could when I graduated from seminary.

31

32 [RESEARCHER]: Last week in our interview you talked about how Scripture interprets
33 itself and I was wondering is that something that was also taught in seminary or is that
34 something that you developed on your own?

35

36 [INFORMANT]: No, that is in fact one of those things that is almost a cliché' in terms of
37 theological principle. You don't find a great revelation in one passage of scripture that
38 seems to be at odds with many other passages of scripture. You temper that with what
39 you know about all the rest of Scripture. You don't, I think I gave you an example there
40 and I don't even remember what it was now, but you go off the deep end by thinking that
41 you have made some great discovery by reading something from the Book of Daniel or
42 Revelation or whatever else and then running with it, you know, in that sense. It's
43 tempered by the fact that Scripture interprets Scripture.

44

45 [RESEARCHER]: Also last week you said one of the benefits of going to seminary for
46 you was that you started to be able to think outside of the box in terms of scripture,
47 moving away from more of a literal reading of the scripture, talking about the difference
48 between the scripture is true if not exact. And I was a little intrigued by that in that you
49 did attend a Missouri Synod seminary as well?

50

51 [INFORMANT]: Uh-huh.

52

53 [RESEARCHER]: And my impression is that the Missouri Synod emphasizes more of a
54 literal reading of the Scripture and if so...

55

56 [INFORMANT]: That was not true when I went there.

57

58 [RESEARCHER]: I see, okay. (surprise)

59

60 [INFORMANT]: But in 1976 there was a split within the church and the faculty that was
61 at [name of seminary] in [name of town] was basically no more. One of the finest
62 theological faculties that had ever been assembled and because they were beyond the
63 restrictions, they were out ahead I guess of much of the administration of the Synod, that
64 there was disciplinary actions and so forth that resulted in the closing of the seminary and
65 that later because the Seminex – the seminary in exile – which then for the most part
66 became the [name of seminary] in [name of town]. Some of the profs went to other

67 seminaries. But [name of seminary], it is really kind of unfortunate, because [it] was a
68 large seminary, one of the largest seminaries in the country, and it had a truly outstanding
69 faculty and one which I feel was very much devoted to and guided by Scripture, but not
70 by a literal interpretation of Scripture. And I would say that my theological training was
71 very much guided by that. I am quite (emphasis) conservative in terms of that I feel that
72 we need to be guided by Scripture, but by the same token there is a lot of people who
73 would say, "That guy is very liberal in his view of Christianity and so forth." But my
74 respect, my awe of Scripture is, at least I am very satisfied with the fact that I regard
75 Scripture very highly and use it to guide my life and my preaching and whatever else, but
76 not on a literal basis.

77

78 [RESEARCHER]: Was there any struggle then, I mean having come from a Missouri
79 Synod congregation as a teenager and moving, was there a sense of struggle?

80

81 [INFORMANT]: Oh there was much schurom and frong (?), yes. It was both emotionally
82 and just, yeah, it was in one respect an awful time for me and to make that decision to
83 leave the Missouri Synod and yet it was also a very freeing thing to just be away from all
84 of that strife and discord and you know. I mean at that time there was literally people who
85 would attend the services of some churches because they had heard that a pastor is not
86 preaching according to the stated line and they would make tape recordings as evidence
87 of heresy and things like that. It was just a bizarre, bizarre time, and something I think,
88 perhaps, in this day and age would be almost hard, not that it was that long ago, but I
89 mean that was just something that was weird. The Missouri Synod seems to repeat this

90 every thirty years or so, they go through something like that. At the 9/11 service or right
91 after 9/11 there was a big to do about the fact that, I think it was the President of the
92 Atlantic District or one of the districts of the Missouri Synod that includes New York
93 City prayed with other clergy from that area and there was a big fluff. The only thing is
94 that there was a little bit of a different reaction to that situation. The very rigid
95 conservative element beat a little bit of a retreat.

96

97 [RESEARCHER]: One more follow up question. Again, reflecting on or at least stating
98 the context of what your life has been like the last couple of weeks. So that last week your
99 wife had surgery, then coming home, and so I am wanting to ask a question in that
100 context of the routine that we also talked about once before about how your schedule and
101 how the Spirit works with you in sermon preparation. Any reflection on any thoughts
102 about that last week?

103

104 [INFORMANT]: I had more time. There was a lot of sitting around time during the time
105 of her surgery and that sort of thing and time to reflect. While I was waiting in the
106 hospital one of the representatives from the Bishop's office came by the hospital to talk
107 with me and pray with me, and that was a good thing. When you are just sitting around
108 alone at a hospital it is nice to have someone around. I don't know particularly that that
109 reflected directly on the sermon and in fact I don't think it does. And I am not sure that
110 for this particular week that the experience of all that chaos really figured into the sermon
111 other than the fact that I had a lot of time when I may not have had notes and things like
112 that laying around or books to read, but plenty of dead time to reflect and think about

113 what the week ahead. Because I knew that when I finally got home that things would
114 pick up, that the pace would pick up and I had to get a lot done in a relatively short
115 amount of time. Yesterday, or Saturday, I had to do a presentation up in [name of nearby
116 city] because I am on the stewardship committee for this part of [the state] and they had
117 to do a couple of workshops on Saturday so I was getting ready for that also.

118

119 [RESEARCHER]: One of the things that occurred to me was that you mentioned an
120 evangelism event recently that you had attended. Maybe you could just fill in a little
121 more about what that is, what that was.

122

123 [INFORMANT]: Well, it was probably the typical kind of evangelism event. We talked
124 in terms of the local congregations and what can be done. In my perspective, [name of
125 local community] is one of those communities that is changing, and I think that I talked
126 about that at one time or another that while this community does not grow very much
127 population wise, the ethnic distribution of the population continues to change. It was an
128 event that we talked about in terms of approaches to evangelism. How to reach out into
129 communities that you really don't orient toward and really are not your kind (laughs).

130

131 [RESEARCHER]: Was this a district, just ELCA pastors?

132 [INFORMANT]: Yes, and just a very small event.

Appendix J

Transcript of semi-structured follow up interview: May 22, 2007

1 [RESEARCHER:] This is Tuesday, May 22, 2007, 9:30 a.m. This is the fifth interview
2 with the informant. A follow up interview, this is not in following a sermon presentation
3 of the previous Sunday.

4

5 [RESEARCHER:] Do you ever confer with other clergy members in the sermon
6 preparation process? Either in person or by e-mail, ever have a sermon study group in the
7 past?

8

9 [INFORMANT: 1] In the past I have, I have not since I came to [name of city]. We had a
10 group in [Name of the community in which the informant served immediately prior to the
11 current community]. One of the guys moved away and one came down with Lou
12 Gehrig's disease which broke it up. We would get together and do text studies and stuff
13 like that. One was a Disciples of Christ guy and the other was an Episcopalian. We did
14 some text studies together.

15

16 [RESEARCHER:] Was that a weekly get together?

17

18 [INFORMANT:] We tried to make it a weekly, but you know how schedules go. We
19 would try to get together on a Tuesday after we had had a chance to look at things on
20 Monday. Then come together on Tuesday and talk about them and see what we were

21 gonna, by that time we maybe did, maybe didn't have an idea what route we were going
22 to take. But since I have come to [name of city], I have not worked with anybody on text
23 studies or anything like that.

24

25 [RESEARCHER:] So all three of you were preaching from the Lectionary. Any sort of
26 impressions about how that was beneficial to you as an individual? Or in light of the
27 previous conversations we have had, any?

28

29 [INFORMANT:] Oh, I think it is always, uh, interesting to get other peoples perspectives
30 on, uh, and I don't know, maybe you are experiencing some of that because you said you
31 did not know anything about Lutherans when you came here, Lutheran theology and our
32 perspective on the Christian message. And so, uh, it was an interesting thing to meet with
33 others. I would say that in the Episcopal church, at least as I understand it, there is kind
34 of different levels and different perspectives. The Episcopal Church is more organized
35 around a hierarchy that kind of holds the idea of the church together. Lutherans are more
36 organized around a theology and probably the way Tracy would say it, the Disciples are
37 not even organized (laughter). But they are much more open, in fact they are not a
38 confessional church. You know, part of the Campellite (?) heritage (?) a lot of the
39 problems came about in Christianity because of the creeds and a definition of the
40 Christian faith and so forth. And while they certainly have a, uh, definition of the
41 Christian faith, it is a little lighter than what Lutherans theologically would describe as an
42 orthodox, uh, to us the definition of orthodox would be adherence to the three creeds and
43 the Lutheran Confessions. So, the Disciples, the perspective I got on that was a much

44 freer church and then in terms of openness to different interpretations probably from what
45 we would come up with guided by the Lutheran Confessions. So it was kind of an
46 interesting perspective on things. Particularly the Episcopal guy, extraordinarily
47 conservative, which I found kind of interesting. But he was very much, very
48 conservative in a lot of different ways. So it was kind of a, a good cross-section I think, I
49 usually found myself kind of in the middle of things. And that is always a comfortable
50 position for Lutherans because we are kind of a middle line, uh, group, in spite of the fact
51 because we have the Lutheran Confessions to go by we probably consider ourselves quite
52 conservative. But when you look at American evangelicalism then they kind of put the
53 Lutherans in a more liberal category, which to me those designations, liberal and
54 conservative about what? You know.

55

56 [RESEARCHER:] So how long did that last?

57

58 [INFORMANT:] Well I was there for thirteen, fourteen years. And that went on
59 probably for eight years.

60

61 [RESEARCHER:] So I was hoping that as much as possible, you could please recall and
62 relate details of your personal struggle in the move from a literal interpretation of
63 Scripture to your current position that Scripture is true, if not factual. The main things
64 that you can recall when your position might have been challenged, your responses to
65 that, and who might have helped you, you know, what helps you found along the way to
66 deal with this struggle and to come to where you are?

67

68 [INFORMANT:] I am not sure that I can exactly give you a pinpoint answer because I
69 might answer this in different ways at different times as I think of different things. But
70 one of the things that brought that about occurred in seminary. Through an Old
71 Testament professor there, [THE INFORMANT NAMES THE PROFESSOR] and in that
72 experience out of a study of Genesis right from the very beginning, uh, we had already
73 read thing like Tillich's [THE INFORMANT NAMES A WORK BY PAUL TILLICH
74 IN THE GERMAN] and previously in college. But when I got to seminary, the study of
75 Genesis, I guess it was then that most clearly that I saw that line of division between the
76 story in the first chapter is not the same story as in the second chapter and that there is no
77 way of reconciling those two. So what is Scripture telling us, you know? That here are
78 two important stories, but they are not there to increase our scientific knowledge of
79 creation, but they are to help us to understand not only the origin of the earth or for, the
80 Jewish people, the origin of the seven day week, and the importance both of worship and
81 of rest and that in the rhythms of life, rest becomes a very, a day of rest becomes a very
82 important concept, an [?] concept. The Jews would not even work their animals seven
83 days a week, no slave had to work seven days a week. It was that important to them that
84 rest is just built in by God in that lesson of the first chapter of Genesis. And then in the
85 second chapter this, kind of this tenderness of God, God's spirit coming into the human
86 being as God breathed the breath of life into the human. The aspect of how important the
87 human creation, the creation of the human, how important that is to God and provides a
88 whole background for the redemption. Why is God even concerned? Why didn't he just,
89 you know, abandon everything? But that breath of life, that specialness of the human

90 creation provides a backdrop for why the redemption is so important and why God
91 doesn't abandon humanity, or doesn't abandon his creation, just let it go.

92

93 [RESEARCHER:] So you have described a very academic process of this realization that
94 there are different schools that had an authorship in the Genesis story.

95

96 [INFORMANT:] And getting back to the point of, you know, I would say this is
97 probably, at least in my thinking right now, a good portion, partly because the Professor
98 in that instance was very influential in my way of thinking and I think, uh, the kind of
99 Professor who has that tremendous reputation both for his intellect, but also for his
100 toughness in the course and then finding that as I was taking the course it was just an
101 absolute joy in finding him to be a much more open and, for want of a better word, kinder
102 guy than his reputation was. You know, when people, when you really like people and
103 find them to be very companionable, that certainly influences your thinking and so forth,
104 too. And I found this sort of thing in this and some other Professors by which I was able
105 to discover a deeper faith because all of those details of actualities and things like that
106 became less important and what is important and what is actual became more important.
107 And that the whole process of understanding that history is an extremely important part
108 of the Christian faith because it is a historical faith. We believe, I realize that not
109 everybody that calls themselves Christian says that, but as Lutherans, we believe in Jesus
110 Christ and in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension as being a historic reality. And
111 that God's actions through history and through the Jewish people in the Old Testament
112 was a historic reality, but that within that historic reality there were the traditions and

113 those stories that were passed on, particularly in that early part of the Scripture, these
114 things that were passed on as part of the heritage of the Jewish people, that teach and
115 preach important lessons, but often we miss what the lesson is by concentrating on
116 whether this happened in reality, you know, in history or not. And so, the other thing was
117 that there is a difference between history as reality and history as a pattern or a reality.
118 Again I have to go back to German words because there is a difference between history
119 and geschichte, both of which in English are translated “history”, but the Germans had two
120 words for history. One of them is the snapshot kind of thing and the other, the geschichte,
121 is more the unfolding of patterns and of things that are realities only in a different sense
122 from a historic reality, a snapshot picture of reality.

123

124 [RESEARCHER:] I am having a mental image of my Old Testament professor who used
125 that word, but I cannot remember his name for anything. So what I hear you saying is
126 that you came to a realization that by letting go of a literal interpretation of the Scripture,
127 you realized you were not losing (emphasis) something as much as you gaining
128 something.

129

130 [INFORMANT:] Gaining, yes.

131

132 [RESEARCHER:] But perhaps to back away from that and perhaps to reflect and recall,
133 what brought you to prior to seminary, perhaps prior to college, what were the things that
134 made that literal interpretation something important to you to hold on to?

135

136 [INFORMANT:] Well, it was, I would say that having received instruction from the
137 pastors in the Missouri Synod. As I say, they tended more toward the literal
138 interpretations and stressed the fact that it was important that we consider that if this is
139 the Word of God it must be correct and true and accurate in every (emphasis) respect.
140 Not just in a spiritual way, but it must be true also in a scientific way and everything else.
141 I think that that is probably the same approach that many people, Biblical literalists and
142 American evangelicals must follow that line of thinking. If you give on one point that it
143 undermines the whole structure of the authority of Scripture. And authority of Scripture
144 is pretty important (emphasis) to Lutherans. I would say that the Missouri Synod has a
145 little different understanding of authority of Scripture and what it's based on than does
146 the ELCA. There is a theological difference there in authority. Scripture is authoritative
147 to both groups of Lutherans, but I think the basis of that authority is a little bit different in
148 Missouri Synod than what it is in the ELCA.

149

150 [RESEARCHER:] So given that, on the one hand there is this firm holding, can't give an
151 inch to this realization that by letting go we are also gaining, (chuckles) I am not sure
152 how to ask this question, what saves you then as a denominational pastor or the
153 individual seeker, from anything goes kind of ...

154

155 [INFORMANT:] Well, some folks in the Missouri Synod would say that we have gone to
156 "anything goes" in the ELCA. One of the things is a faith and trust that the Holy Spirit
157 guides the church in the first place. The other thing is that, you know, what are the
158 important things? And there again, it is the historic confessions of the church, which

159 would be starting with the three creeds and the Lutheran Confessions. And the Lutheran
160 Confessions don't deal with a lot of the issues that are very prominent in American
161 discussion of religion and so forth today. It has to do with the Biblical themes of
162 justification by faith, sin and grace, and you know these themes that have historically
163 been important to Lutherans and you are held to that standard. So you have a very
164 definite standard. Because we believe that the Book of Concord or the Lutheran
165 Confessions is an accurate description of what the Scripture teaches concerning our
166 salvation and concerning the human condition and any number of topics, but nowhere in
167 the Scriptures do you find some of the things, we mentioned homosexuality and stuff like
168 that, it doesn't deal with that. That's not a gigantic issue to the church as far as what has
169 been historic, Biblical teaching. Whereas, how many times is the concept and the word
170 "justification" mentioned in the Scripture one way or another compared to how many
171 times is homosexuality?

172

173 [RESEARCHER:] You have mentioned the creation story a couple of times in the
174 context of this literal interpretation and I was wondering perhaps about other issues and
175 one that comes to mind would be for instance St. Paul's perspective on the role of women
176 in the church and, I can't quote Scripture or anything on that, but I know that is
177 something that Missouri Synod and ELCA has struggled with. And I am wondering if
178 there were female students in seminary with you and was this an issue at the time?

179

180 [INFORMANT:] No, because it was a Missouri Synod seminary.

181

182 [RESEARCHER:] Okay, right.

183

184 [INFORMANT:] So there were, I will take that back because there were female students
185 who were studying religion and would receive a degree in that but could not be
186 candidates for ordination and still cannot be candidates for ordination. Whereas in the
187 ELCA it is nowhere near half, but there are a number of, a sizeable number, of female
188 clergy. I guess I never really had to struggle all that much with that because, again, you
189 have some of those as you study what Paul had to say, but also how Paul acted, uh, the
190 other thing there are some questions as to authenticity to some of those Pauline comments
191 on the role of women in the church. So when you look at the women he called his co-
192 ministers, co-evangelists, and so forth, that it is kind of hard to square the exact words
193 with Paul like not letting women speak in the church and whatever when there are
194 indications that in the early churches they certainly did. And it would be hard to imagine
195 a woman as influential as Lydia in her professional life and so forth, not being a pretty
196 potent, not having a pretty potent role in the church in Philippi. So, you know, there are a
197 lot of things that would seem to me that the exact words of Paul may not be quite the
198 open and shut case that [?]. The other thing is that just like, uh, we are now coming up
199 on Pentecost, I have been thinking about it terms of the early church, that as the Holy
200 Spirit has worked in the church, there seems to be greater and greater understanding in
201 the church about how broad the love of God really is. And that, you know, the early
202 issues about whether Gentiles really belonged or not among the faithful, is now just
203 beyond comprehension with most Christians that that was ever even an issue. And, then
204 to, uh, to study church history and to see that period of time in the early church as they

205 said in Acts “they are turning the world upside down”. And how the role of women and
206 the equalization of women in the early church must have been one of those things that
207 was turning the world upside down because it was a concept that was unheard of, not
208 necessarily in Roman society, because there were a lot of women who exerted a lot of
209 power, but in the Jewish society and the church was primarily a Jewish society and how
210 that must have turned that thinking upside down as women became very influential
211 among that early church, and then to study church history and then to see how the doors
212 began to close as the influences behind that closing of the door and the creation of a male
213 hierarchy in Roman Catholicism.

214

215 [RESEARCHER:] So, again, just to clarify, you’re sort of implying there is a bit of a
216 disconnect between like the history that we read in the Book of Acts of the Apostles and
217 some of the letters attributed to Paul that there might be questions whether or not those
218 are really his words.

219

220 [INFORMANT:] It makes it at least in a couple of occasions, I mean how many verses
221 are we talking about, maybe five? That in at least two of those instances there is a real
222 question as to whether there is an insertion there and, uh, or whether it was an authentic
223 Pauline quote. Certainly it has Pauline theology in it, but there are some of those books,
224 the pastoral epistles and so forth, not quite so sure that Paul was the author of those or
225 whether it was somebody strongly influenced by Paul.

226

227 [RESEARCHER:] So then to refer again to the period of your life before college and the
228 influence of pastors in the Missouri Synod, uh, so this particular issue of the role of
229 women in the church connected with a literal interpretation of Scripture was or was not
230 much of anything...?

231

232 [INFORMANT:] That was not any great thing for me, any great obstacle for me to cross.
233 It was more, in some respects you might even view it as a cultural thing because that was
234 my milieu, that was where I operated and so forth, it was the people I knew primarily. In
235 fact, almost exclusively, I did not know any of these folks from what was then the
236 American Lutheran Church or the Lutheran Church of America. The Missouri Synod
237 was pretty much apart from that and those of us who came out of Missouri Synod were
238 part of the AELC and, uh, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and even
239 that was not by design, but simply because we had come out with a common experience
240 that kind of held the AELC together and then when the three churches came together the
241 AELC was such a small part of that, whereas the ALC and the LCA were much larger
242 church bodies. And, you know, the ... so there was that tendency to just, just did not
243 have the same common heritage that the other folks in these other much larger church
244 bodies had, you know, so didn't know whether to trust them or not (laughs) that sort of
245 thing. But, like I said, the ordination of women was never a big issue for me.

246

247 [RESEARCHER:] Well, after our conversation last week or whenever that was, I wanted
248 to do some broader investigation and was looking on the ELCA website and found the
249 2005 Report and Recommendations from the Task Force for ELCA Studies on Sexuality.

250 Which seems to recommend a continuation of current policy and position, but also
251 advocates refraining from disciplining clergy who, in good conscience, bless a same sex
252 union, is that impression of what in your experience with this document?

253

254 [INFORMANT:] Yeah, and what it means then with regard in not recommending any
255 change in policy, the policy they are referring to is the policy that we do not ordain gay or
256 lesbian clergy. Whether they are in a so-called relationship or whatever, because this was
257 kind of the impetus behind the study was the desire to ordain gay or lesbian clergy as
258 long they remained in a committed relationship. And, uh, the blessing of gay couples is a
259 little, I am not sure that was ever envisioned when the so-called rules when the principles
260 and expectations were laid down. I am not sure that was ever even envisioned so they
261 make a recommendation that, that, that if a person was conscience bound to say that they
262 will bless such a relationship that they should not be disciplined. And there is that
263 recommendation and I don't think that any action has been taken on it that I am aware of.
264 And I know that there are some Lutheran clergy who do, who will bless a same-sex
265 relationship, most will not.

266

267 [RESEARCHER:] Okay. So the date on that was January 2005 and then there was a press
268 release, I think it was March of that same year, where I think it said a group of 17
269 Lutheran theologians urged a rejection of this report. And it seems that this issue, this
270 report and its recommendations have been put on hold until the year 2009 when there is
271 going to be a denominational world meeting that is going to take place. Is that accurate
272 in your mind?

273

274 [INFORMANT:] To my memory, it is, yes.

275

276 [RESEARCHER:] So, I guess, and I did not know if you were aware of the press release

277 and the 17 theologians and all, and you have already spoken to this, but your impression

278 of both of these documents and the current situation of where the ELCA is on this issue?

279 I know that in Chicago in August you have a denominational meeting so it sounds like

280 this is not going, they are going to try to avoid this summer, is there another report being

281 prepared?

282

283 [INFORMANT:] Well three years ago they, uh, ... Lutherans are great at making

284 theological reports (laughter) so there is, uh, ... [INFORMANT TURNS TO

285 BOOKSHELF TO LOOK FOR A DOCUMENT AND THEN TURNS BACK TO THE

286 RESEARCHER], maybe I have it, maybe I don't, but anyway, three years ago there was

287 a lead up to the meeting that was the church wide assembly, there was a tremendous

288 [with emphasis] amount of theological study and books written, and whatever else from

289 both perspectives. Which, ultimately, resulted in the no change (laughs), uh, decision.

290 But like many topics that are such a part of our culture nowadays, that issue is not going

291 to go away. I think there has been something of an agreement that since it was so heavily

292 (emphasis) studied and so heavily debated and fought over at the last assembly, I think

293 (emphasis) there is a general agreement that we are not going to bring this up as a major

294 change this time, but, you know, we realize it is going to remain part of the theological

295 discussion for a long, probably, for a long time, because it is part of our culture. And,

296 you know, there are those who are getting very impatient with that. There are factions
297 within the ELCA that say “We are not (emphasis) going to keep to discussing this thing”
298 threaten to go off on their own way or something. So, you know, there will probably
299 always be those kinds of issues anytime that the church is expected to make some kind of
300 pronouncement one way or another on a current hot issue, there is going to be people
301 who agree and there are going people who disagree; unless you have a very small number
302 of people who you are trying to get to agree on something. At the moment we are at that
303 stage where the vote was very close on that and that upset some people that there were
304 that many Lutherans who think that maybe we should make the change because it was a
305 very close vote. So you find people who are just upset about the fact that it was that
306 close. There are all kinds of things within church denominations I think and within the
307 church itself that prompt people to not trust one another and not trust the Holy Spirit as
308 much as perhaps we should. It gets to be that point in which people play power politics
309 and I find that really disgusting within the church. And, uh, by the same token I have
310 some questions about do we decide issues just on majority votes of assemblies and things
311 like that? I think through the history of things some mistakes have been made along
312 those lines, too. And, that, uh, we might be better off . . . and I don’t know, I don’t have
313 any practical model for this, but how does the church let the Holy Spirit, let God through
314 the Holy Spirit, guide us? If we follow Christ’s injunction, what is our guide? It is love
315 for one another and that is the only standard and guide that replaces, in a sense, it
316 replaces the Ten Commandments because the great commandment is to love, to love the
317 Lord your God with all your heart, love your neighbor as yourself, which even in the Old
318 Testament was supposedly the standard, but it was not the way the people of God acted in

319 those days, just like the people of God don't always act the way God seems, would prefer
320 to see them act. I have been watching those programs on the Inquisition and stuff like
321 that. Goodness, how unchristian the church can get at times when dealing with [?]

322

323 [RESEARCHER:] Well, given that, uh, ... let me ask you this as a preliminary to my
324 next question, but uh, are you familiar with this group of 17 theologians and I wanted to
325 ask how much weight you think that carried with the denomination? How influential is
326 that?

327

328 [INFORMANT:] Potentially, theologians in the Lutheran church, because we are a
329 doctrinal church, carry a fair amount of weight. Because, more in terms of over long
330 periods of time because they are the ones who train the clergy and that sort of thing so
331 they have a large influence that way. Not so much in terms of making pronouncements
332 and whatever else, but I would say that theologians have a lot of influence within the
333 Lutheran church. You know the Lutheran movement began as a university movement,
334 uh, out of the University of Wittenberg. And, uh, in that respect and some of the seminary
335 and theological schools in Germany and Scandinavia still have tremendous amount of
336 influence and certainly seminaries in the United States have a certain influence because
337 we are not a hierarchical church, but we do have bishops in the ELCA, Missouri Synod
338 does not, they call them by different names, but we do have a political format, but it is
339 not like the political format in the Roman Catholic or the Episcopal Church. We are not
340 arranged hierarchically like that. So, professors and theologians and writers of theology

341 probably have a much greater influence among Lutherans than they do in other church
342 denominations.

343

344 [RESEARCHER:] So given that, in your personal struggle with this issue, and I
345 remember last time you said you do want to go there, you would like to have an answer,
346 to know what to say. How much weight in your heart and conscience would a decision
347 by the denominational assembly in either way, how much would that carry with you or is
348 it going to be a personal struggle for you?

349

350 [INFORMANT:] Well, okay, I guess I am conservative enough to say that when I look at
351 what I would want in a clergy person, that I think I would have a lot of problems in
352 relating to a person who was gay and was practicing their homosexuality, certainly if they
353 were celibate or whatever else, that is, I guess, a totally different issue. But, and yet,
354 when I ask myself “why?”, I have difficulty answering that question. Why would that
355 make any difference? Because that is not an issue of salvation, you know. But, uh, from
356 last week’s lectionary the jailer asked “what must I do to be saved?” Believe on the Lord
357 Jesus Christ, you and all your household will be saved. And that’s, that seems, and that is
358 the standard that God’s grace extends to all people. And when I answer, when I think of
359 the gay people I have known and some of whom have ministered to, I think in terms of
360 their faith and their grasp of the Christian faith and how they practice it and what it
361 means to them and so forth and I know that they are Christian brothers and sisters and
362 that they are saved as much as anyone else and that I am not sure that it is my ... that it is
363 my responsibility how another Christian must live out their Christianity. And then I hit

364 that schizophrenic moment in which I say “And yet, I feel uncomfortable.” And that’s
365 where I am, just kind of feeling uncomfortable with the whole concept, not
366 uncomfortable particularly with the fact that God accepts gay and straight, male and
367 female, Greek and Jew, and everything else that he has created. But, like I say, I come
368 down to that intellectual inconsistency of not feeling totally comfortable and is that
369 because of all of my training or because there are a couple of verses in Scripture that talk
370 about it or is it a cultural thing? I am not sure, but I also know that Christianity in some
371 respects is a lot more fun when you have to struggle ... to understand God’s will and to
372 understand, uh, you know if everything was just cut and dried... I think God intended for
373 us to struggle, both in understanding and in those times when our faith, at least in our
374 emotional makeup, our faith seems to be weak, uh, but also those times in which you just
375 say [?] and to have to struggle with what I think we are meant to do. After all, the
376 meaning of Israel is to struggle.

377

378 [RESEARCHER:] I guess, I wanted to take this back to that struggle on a denominational
379 level, on a church doctrine level, uh, since you mentioned you had some question perhaps
380 the church is not always, I mean you used the phrase “power politics”, uh, and expressed
381 some level of disgust when that happens and so in that light, if a decision was made, a
382 doctrine was articulated in one way or another, how would you deal with that if you had
383 some question as to whether it was a political decision, was it really the guidance of the
384 Holy Spirit? How would you deal with that?

385

386 [INFORMANT:] Oooohkaaay (ponderous). ... I am, sometimes, you don't know until
387 you are actually confronted with the situation. I have, of course, some principles with
388 regard to the authority of Scripture that the authority of Scripture stands above any
389 church council or any decisions that any body of human beings make or anything else,
390 but then you have the issue within our own church where you have people with different
391 interpretations of Scripture who are obviously struggling from both ends of the thing and
392 then a whole bunch of us in between trying to find our way. And ... I ... my principles
393 that the unity of the church is an extremely important (emphasis) matter. Even if you
394 consider, where do Lutherans come from? Well, we exist as Lutherans only because the
395 Roman Catholic Church would no longer tolerate us. Neither Luther nor any of the other
396 reformers ever left the church. It was that the papal bull "Arise O Lord, a wild boar is
397 loose in your vineyard" (laughs) and the wild boar was Luther and the Reformers and the
398 doctrine of justification by faith and the edict came down that anyone who preached
399 justification by faith alone is automatically ex-communicated, you know, and Luther
400 burned the papal bull and declared "We are justified by the grace of God by faith alone."
401 That was the break, but the Reformers never considered themselves outside of the
402 Catholic Church, and uh, it was only because they were ex-communicated and that they
403 were given the derisive name of Lutherans that the Lutheran Church exists. So now we
404 accept the fact that we can be called Lutheran and we call ourselves Lutheran, but it
405 wasn't the idea in the first place. So the unity of the church is an important matter. I
406 pray that we might be one and we are not and that's an unfortunate thing. Would I leave?
407 I cannot foresee any decision that the church would make that would cause me to leave
408 this little chunk of the church. Because I think that would be schismatic. So how come I

409 left the Missouri Synod? Uh, partly because I was younger then and looked at things in a
410 little different way and the other thing was that I am a fairly peaceful person and I really
411 did not care to always being in opposition to the administration besides the fact that on a
412 personal basis some of those professors and some of those friends who were pastors and
413 so forth were very deeply hurt in that whole issue. When [name of the seminary he
414 attended] was just wiped out and all of the faculty were replaced with people who toed
415 the administration line and that pastors whom I knew were persecuted or hounded out of
416 their parishes and things like that. I just did not see that as something I wanted to
417 participate in and, uh, I don't find that same spirit in the ELCA. What I do find in the
418 ELCA is a spirit of acceptance of one another and a spirit of desiring to seek the will of
419 God. And I am sure that exists in many other denominations, but this is my orientation. I
420 like the approach of the Lutheran Church, kind of like the Lutheran Church is, in my
421 opinion, truly free in the sense that the Scripture talks about: guided by a standard, but
422 within that standard very free to express Christian faith as we feel called by the Spirit to
423 do the faith.

424

425 [RESEARCHER:] You mention the history of ex-communication, uh, you've also said
426 that you know there are clergy who have blessed same-sex unions, I am assuming
427 without consequence, but I am not sure, so is there an air of tolerance or sort of case by
428 case ...

429

430 [INFORMANT:] There is an air of wanting to be tolerant, there have been some clergy
431 who have been disciplined in one way or another. Another thing that is, uh, ... difficult

432 to explain ... the problem with the Lutheran Church because as I said we are not
433 hierarchical. We are congregational. People within the church, clergy within the church,
434 who get on the wrong side of the members of their congregation will probably find life
435 very uncomfortable, in fact, I know that has happened. But there is just this odd balance,
436 you and I talked about this once before, when we talked about how you get moved
437 around. I have pretty much complete say in whether I stay or whether I go and you know
438 there is a place to go and that sort of thing, but nevertheless, uh, the ... there is that ... it
439 is just really a tricky balance. In terms of no hierarchy in that we are basically
440 congregational, and yet the bishop of the, uh, both the bishop of the whole church and the
441 bishops of our synods have tremendous influence, but they have no power (laughs). It is
442 one of those odd, they just literally, a bishop when you look at what they can do in regard
443 to a congregation it's not much but because they are respected they have a good deal of
444 say about it. And it's just, ... to write a book on the policy of the ELCA would be very
445 difficult to do.

446

447 [RESEARCHER:] But to go back to these two documents again. What intrigued me in
448 reading them was the use of the word "conscience". The report advocates for a freedom
449 from disciplining for those pastors who have prayerfully searched their conscience and
450 have reached the conclusion that God or the Holy Spirit is leading them to bless a same-
451 sex union. The theologians on the other hand have articulated that such a decision would
452 be evidence of a "weak conscience" and therefore a mistake. One document seems to say
453 "Trust the individual clergy member to make the right decision" and the other document
454 seems to say "There is only one right decision and unless the individual clergy member

455 decides this way, then that clergy member has a weak conscience and cannot be trusted to
456 make the right decision". That's my interpretation.

457

458 [INFORMANT:] That's probably ... I have not read those documents and whatever, but I
459 would say that would not be inconsistent with the way I know Lutherans think (laughs).

460

461 [RESEARCHER:] Okay, and so what struck me about that was that it sort of goes back to
462 our earlier conversations about the role of the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation. It seems
463 to put the clergy member on the slippery slope that unless the message reflects the
464 denominational position, then the Holy Spirit is not really involved and the clergy
465 member has been fooled. So we have sort of talked around this topic of do we not give an
466 inch or do we step out on that slippery slope and see what happens? I don't know, that's
467 not really a question, but perhaps your response to that observation on my part?

468

469 [INFORMANT]: Well, my observation of how things work within the church with regard
470 to so many issues and I have been in the ministry long enough to see some issues come
471 and go even going back when I first started out as a young pastor and confronting a little
472 group of John Bircher's and that sort of thing. How things that are such burning issues at
473 one point become lesser and lesser issues. And that ... in the history ... you know
474 Americans are so insistent on having immediate satisfaction and immediate decision on
475 things and the church just works very, very slowly. And I think God works pretty slowly,
476 in human terms. And with regard to some of the things that just in my ministry have seen
477 change and certainly over history have seen change and even how Roman Catholicism

478 changes. It may take 500 years, but there are changes that are made and even under such
479 a strict hierarchical and an almost dictatorial format. I think change maybe happens a
480 little faster among Lutherans and yet when you look at our roots and our basic theology, I
481 guess that doesn't change very much because if you are a theology based on the
482 undeserved grace of God and I don't know that that really has changed. Attitudes
483 certainly have with regard to what is right and what is wrong and some of those
484 peripheral things, but not in regard to the theology. It's God has loved us so much that in
485 spite of ourselves, uh, that he desires us and like I say, I find a Lutheran approach to
486 theology to be a very freeing thing. There are an awful lot of things that don't make
487 whole lot of difference and there are issues that I may think about politically and there are
488 things that I may think about morally and I am certainly not saying that politics and
489 morals are not important because they are extremely important, but by the same token
490 they are penultimate and not ultimate. The ultimate thing remains the grace of God as
491 expressed in his Son, Jesus Christ and that, uh, that we preach Christ crucified for our
492 sins and that all of those times that we are totally baffled or those times when we either
493 willfully or unwittingly do that which is contrary to the will of God, there is nothing that
494 God is waiting there to crush us under his thumb, but his redemptive work in Jesus Christ
495 brushes off and we can start over again. Sometimes he corrects us rather harshly
496 (laughs), but, uh, and sometimes it is not that he corrects us harshly but we screw it up so
497 bad that we cannot get out of the mess, but that this ... grace of God that is the ultimate,
498 the other things are not quite as important as we sometimes think they are.
499

500 [RESEARCHER:] That sounds like a great way to end this interview and really I see this
501 as the end of my data collection process and all and you have summarized, in my opinion,
502 your mission I think as a pastor.

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Daniel Roland

Signature of Author

April 15, 2008

Date

Interpreting Scripture for contemporary times

Title of Dissertation

Way Cooper

Signature of Graduate Office Staff member

4-16-08

Date Received

2016