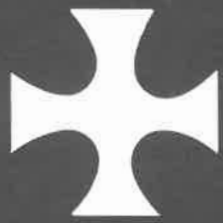


Faithful Leaders for a
Changing World:
Theological Education
for Mission in the
ELCA

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Study of Theological Education

Report to the
1995 Churchwide Assembly



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Faithful Leaders for a Changing World: Theological Education for Mission in the ELCA

Report to the 1995 Churchwide Assembly

This report to the 1995 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has two components. Part One presents an overview of the Study of Theological Education and recommendations for action by the Churchwide Assembly. Part Two contains appendices which provide background detail.

Part I: Overview of the Study of Theological Education and Recommendations for Churchwide Assembly Action

A. Challenges That Demand Study and Action

In April 1989, upon the recommendation of the Division for Ministry, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) approved a proposal for a study of theological education in the ELCA. The council appointed a task force to develop, in consultation with appropriate partners, a plan for a system of theological education which will:

- *prepare the leaders needed for the mission challenges facing the ELCA;*
- *be sustained financially by the ELCA through a combination of church grants and individual gifts; and*
- *be appropriately accountable to the ELCA.*

1. Leaders for Mission

The mission imperative to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is to proclaim the radical gospel of life and hope in Jesus Christ to all people. While overseas mission remains a high priority in this church, today the frontier of mission is at our doorstep. In the

United States ethnic and religious pluralism are replacing the cultural dominance of the Christian churches and Eurocentric values. A vast and growing segment of the population has no relationship with Christ and his Church. This society is increasingly stratified, both educationally and economically. Populations in the United States are moving south and west, and from rural to metropolitan areas. U.S. racial-ethnic composition by the year 2020 will be at least one-third people of color or whose first language is other than English.

The mission of the ELCA includes members of ELCA congregations who seek deeper connections between their faith and their daily lives. It encompasses their non-Christian neighbors, co-workers, friends and family members. The mission extends beyond traditionally Lutheran congregations or culturally compatible communities to Americans of many racial and ethnic groups, economic classes, and regional sub-cultures. It includes those who have drifted from the church or left in anger. The ELCA's mission is to people without any religious background is growing in an in-

creasingly secular society. (A description of the changing mission context from the 1993 report appears as Appendix A.)

To respond to this urgent mission the ELCA needs faithful leaders who can share the gospel with unbelievers and lead communities of faith. Many of these leaders will be parish pastors or ordained persons in specialized institutional ministries. Others will be associates in ministry, deaconesses, or diaconal ministers who bring professional competence and distinctive styles to their ministries in this church and in society. But the new mission challenge will not be borne by rostered leaders alone. Some communities will be served on a part-time or volunteer basis by designated leaders from among their ranks who earn their living in other occupations. And, most importantly, all the baptized are called to minister in the world where they live and work and form relationships.

Christian leaders are equipped for ministry first because they have personally experienced the presence of Christ in their lives and have come to faith through the working of the Spirit in Scripture and the sacraments. Whether lay or ordained, full-time or bi-vocational, rostered or volunteer, mobile or place-bound, all these leaders need appropriate forms of theological education. Their varied programs of preparation must ground them in Christian doctrine and tradition, teach them practical skills of ministry, and help them understand the lives of people and world events from a faith perspective.

Furthermore, this church and these times need lay and ordained leaders who have received a *Lutheran* theological education. Lutherans have a distinctive theological contribution to offer. As North Americans approach the close of the 20th century, they are immersed in a sea of human brokenness. They are bombarded by signs of the failure of human solutions to the human dilemma. The Lutheran confessional heritage emphasizes divine intervention into human existence by a God of compassion who literally suffers with us.

This emphasis has never been needed more. There is a hunger among North Americans today for a gracious God who can help people live together in communities of compassion and reconciliation. The conventional quest for success through material acquisition, dominance and control over others, and heedless exploitation of the creation is radically chal-

lenged by a theology of the cross, of Christ crucified and yet risen. For the Lutheran theological tradition, such a focus has been central. Lutheran Christians are called to proclaim it with a fresh and persuasive conviction as we enter the world of the new century.

At the heart of fulfilling the ELCA's mission is theological education that prepares faithful leaders. In the language of the 1993 report, the purpose of theological education is:

To foster faithful and informed discourse on God's saving activity in the world, and to equip lay and ordained leaders who, by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the gifts of grace:

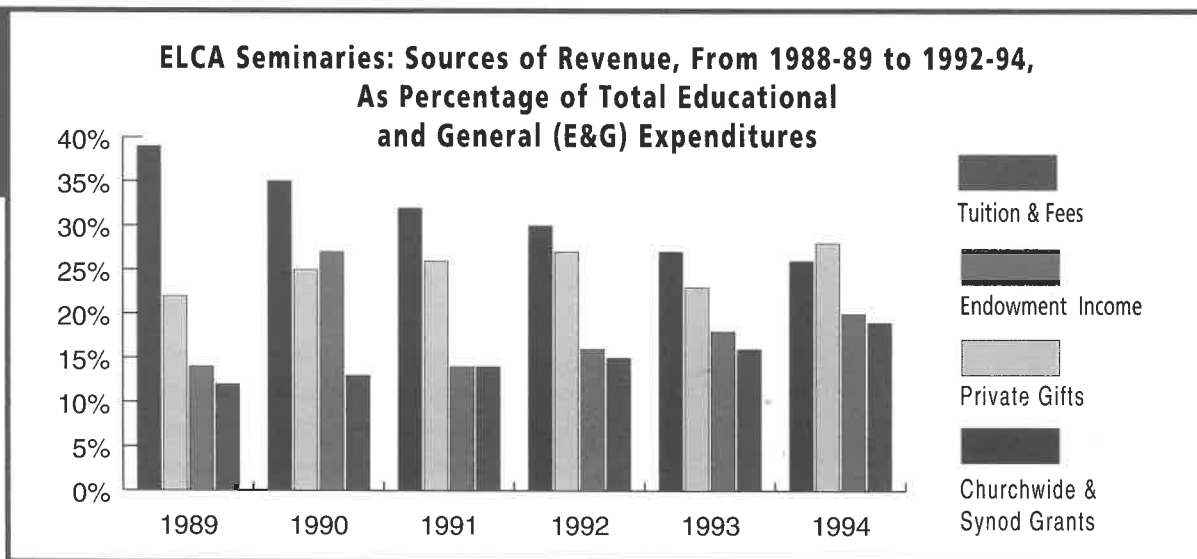
1. *Know and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and proclaimed in the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran confessions;*
2. *Witness to the Gospel by word and deed;*
3. *Reflect theologically on the mission of God's people in a pluralistic and secularized society;*
4. *Understand and creatively appropriate the various expressions of the Gospel by diverse cultures across the centuries and around the world;*
5. *Empower all the baptized members of this church to express the Gospel in their daily lives of witness and service in the world.*

2. Partnerships for Service and Support

A thorough study of theological education was necessary early in the life of the ELCA, not only to address new leadership challenges, but also to respond to patterns of financial support and institutional relationships that are changing rapidly in this and other denominations. Even though congregational giving is strong, funds are not flowing as they once did to synods and the churchwide organization for allocation to the broader ministries and institutions of this church. In relation to their own costs and the rate of inflation, ELCA seminaries are experiencing steady decline in financial support from synodical and churchwide sources. (See figure 1.)

While resources are diminishing, the need for high quality, diversified theological education is growing. Gifts from individual donors and increased tuition are beginning to replace and augment funds that formerly came through church grants. In this changing economic environment, decisions need to be made about how the churchwide organization, synods, congrega-

Figure 1



The Endowment Income Contribution Ratio represents Endowment Income and Appropriated Capital Gains as a percentage of Total Educational and General Expenditures

tions, and members of this church will each support the essential and expanding services they depend upon their seminaries to provide.

The seminaries inherited by the ELCA have long understood themselves to be seminaries of the church whose primary purpose is to serve the denomination as seed beds for its future leaders and centers for theological discourse. Each seminary was originally founded to serve a specific constituency which assumed responsibility for its support. Successive mergers of Lutheran seminaries and of Lutheran church bodies have resulted in eight seminaries serving one church body. Former constituencies overlap. Seminaries with similar programs compete for students, while other potential mission leaders are asking for new services.

The study has provided the occasion for the seminaries and this church as a whole to think through and decide for new patterns of relationship among seminaries and between the seminaries and the various expressions of this church. If they succeed, these patterns will honor the distinctive character of the seminaries and maintain their common Lutheran theological identity, their formative role in preparing leaders who know and love Christ and his Church, and their responsiveness to the mission needs of this denomination. At the same time, these new patterns must yield diversity of service, greater interdependence, wise stewardship of resources, and adequate financial sup-

port for the seminaries. If positive new patterns are not forged, the ELCA will be seriously hampered in fulfilling its mission in the 21st century.

In response to these challenges, the task force proposed to the 1993 Churchwide Assembly eight recommendations, all of which were supported by at least 90 percent of the voting members. (The full text of the recommendations appears in Appendix B.) Five of the directions set by that assembly will directly strengthen and diversify the education of leaders for mission. The other three actions are structural and funding initiatives intended to undergird the seminaries in fulfilling their educational mission within an intentional theological education system.

B. Strengthening Leaders for Mission

1. Imperatives for Theological Education

The 1993 Churchwide Assembly identified 11 challenges or imperatives requiring attention at this time. (See sidebar, figure 2.) These imperatives were established as goals for an ELCA system of theological education. They were affirmed as the guiding and planning focus for preparation of leaders for this church into the 21st century. Authority to make the necessary changes in campus life, academic curriculum, and financial priorities in the seminaries to meet these imperatives resides with the boards and faculties within the seminaries.

Figure 2

What do we want the seminary clusters to do?

The ELCA Task Force on Theological Education has developed “11 imperatives” to develop pastors and lay leaders who have:

1. **Deep faith rooted in the Scripture and a Lutheran understanding of the gospel, sustained by a disciplined devotional life.**
2. **The skills needed to share the faith with those who don't have it and to train others to share the faith.**
3. **Practical congregational skills in preaching, teaching, stewardship, evangelism and administration.**
4. **Knowledge of cultures of those they serve and the ability to adapt their ministry to their situation.**
5. **The ability to help church members connect their faith with daily life and relationships.**

The ELCA seminary clusters and their partners will:

6. **Identify and train African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American leaders in ways congruent with their cultural backgrounds.**
7. **Identify and provide training that is flexible and readily available to indigenous lay leaders.**
8. **Provide continuing education opportunities to continue to develop and equip lay and ordained leaders.**
9. **Support theological centers where doctoral studies may be pursued.**
10. **Provide options for training that meet the needs of those in particular circumstances—older, unable to move, little experience of the church, etc.**
11. **Build cooperative relationships with seminaries and colleges of other Christian bodies.**

The 11 imperatives raise up the need for pastors and lay leaders with greater spiritual and theological depth, passion for mission, practical congregational skills, and responsiveness to the context of their service. They identify the need for pastors and lay leaders from all the multicultural communities. The imperatives broaden the audience for theological education to include not only church workers of various kinds, but also laity for their ministry in daily life. The imperatives stress flexibility to make theological education more accessible for a variety of leaders in differing life circumstances. The need for continuing education over a lifetime is affirmed. Graduate theological education and scholarly discourse by seminary faculty are to be supported. The imperatives encourage ecumenical interdependence. (Complete text of the imperatives appears as Appendix C.)

Following the 1993 Assembly, the eight seminaries took immediate steps to utilize these imperatives in planning for the preparation of mission leaders. The faculties and boards of all eight have discussed the imperatives and their implications for curriculum revision. Each school has integrated the imperatives into its internal planning process. The seminaries and the Division for Ministry are developing programs and policies, are forging cooperative relationships and structures, and are committed to developing and re-allocating resources in order to fulfill the imperatives.

Recommendation #1:

To direct the Division for Ministry to report to the 1997 Churchwide Assembly Continuing progress of the ELCA seminaries toward fulfilling the 11 imperatives approved by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly.

2. Quality of Candidates for Ministry

Current mission challenges demand faithful leaders who are thoroughly prepared. The degree to which candidates attain spiritual depth and ministerial competence during seminary depends in part on their readiness as incoming students to take full advantage of the learning opportunities at the seminary. Due to changes in both church and society, today's students vary widely in their readiness to begin master's level theological studies. Many bring rich educational and life experiences. Some lack familiarity with the Lutheran church, understanding of ministry, and back-

ground in academic subjects upon which the study of theology builds. Others come burdened with personal or financial problems. To develop to their full potential through the formation opportunities and graduate level academic studies offered by the seminaries, students need to have achieved certain levels of readiness before they begin.

a. Ecclesial Readiness

The 1993 Churchwide Assembly recommended that the Division for Ministry “*develop churchwide standards for early discernment of ecclesial readiness of students entering master’s level programs in preparation for rostered ministries in this church.*”

After consulting with many partners, the board of the Division for Ministry in March 1994 approved changes in the candidacy process which give greater weight to the entrance phase. Beginning in fall 1995, potential candidates for rostered ministry normally participate in a formal period of discernment before enrolling in seminary. During this entrance phase, a candidate completes an application for candidacy, makes contact with a synodical candidacy committee, has an initial structured interview, receives psychological and career evaluation, and is registered by the home congregation. A minimum of one year of active membership in an ELCA congregation is required. Candidacy committees may schedule retreats or interviews with potential candidates as part of this entrance stage. The Division for Ministry also has developed a resource to assist potential candidates to understand the nature and varieties of ministry in the ELCA and, with their candidacy committees, to discern their call. Reflecting on all these factors, the candidacy committee makes a formal decision regarding the readiness of the applicant to begin seminary studies in preparation for rostered ministry.

b. Academic Readiness

Another recommendation approved by the 1993 Assembly called upon the eight seminaries “*to develop common standards of academic readiness for students entering master’s level programs in preparation for rostered ministries in this church.*” The seminary deans responded with a statement approved by the Division for Ministry Board at its March 1995 meeting. (The full text of this statement appears as Appendix D.)

The common standard for admission to all ELCA seminaries is a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, normally with at least a B average. Admissions decisions also take into account other relevant data, such as patterns of progress in the applicant’s academic history, the degree of difficulty of the undergraduate program, success in other graduate programs, performance in previous occupations, and academic references.

With regard to academic readiness, the seminaries of the ELCA recommend a broad background in the liberal arts, including English, history, modern languages, philosophy, Greek, communications, and the social sciences. The applicant should possess intellectual ability for critical and reflective thinking. Beyond this, seminaries provide reading lists and study guides to candidates prior to the beginning of their seminary education. The seminaries also expect that ELCA candidates will acquire basic acquaintance with the Scriptures and the catechism as part of their ELCA congregational involvement required in the candidacy process.

The welcome diversity among today’s seminary students makes it inevitable that there will be significant differences in academic readiness among entering students. Therefore the seminaries combine their stated expectations of academic readiness with introductory courses designed to bring students of varying academic backgrounds to a common level of readiness early in the program of studies.

3. Transition from Seminary to First Call

Ministry in the changing mission context requires faithful leaders with an abundant measure of the qualities outlined in the imperatives: depth in the faith, practical congregational skills, competence to communicate across cultures, capacity to reach out to unchurched people, and ability to make connections between faith and everyday life.

The foundations for these competencies are laid in the gifts people bring to ministry and the learning they receive in seminary. To a large extent, however, these ministry strengths are finally realized only in the practice of ministry in the setting of a specific congregation and its larger social, economic, and cultural context. Newly called leaders learn to do ministry and develop life-long patterns of theological reflection and

spiritual discipline during their early years of service. Their transition could be greatly enhanced by collegial support and a structure for learning.

In response to these needs and opportunities, the 1993 Churchwide Assembly directed the Division for Ministry to encourage synods to develop pilot programs of continuing education for first-call pastors. As of February 1995, 59 synods have responded to the invitation to begin pilot programs of first-call theological education. Of these, 51 are working in regional or multi-synodical groups. In 11 cases, an ELCA continuing education center is designing and administering aspects of the program on behalf of a group of synods.

Based on the experience of these pilot programs and the results of numerous consultations, the task force proposes that all pastors and rostered lay leaders participate in a synodically sponsored program of theological education during their first three years of ministry under call. In order to assist the transition from seminary to parish, these programs will give special attention to three goals:

- the personal development of leadership style, spiritual discipline, and ministerial identity appropriate to the respective rosters;
- competence in and overall integration of various aspects of the practice of ministry;
- discernment of the local and regional context of ministry.

First-call pastors or rostered lay leaders in consultation with synod and congregational representatives will develop individualized learning contracts to address these goals through a combination of four educational components:

- *Core program*, that is, the common events for first-call rostered leaders in a geographical area, with flexibility provided to meet the specific needs of persons on the respective rosters;
- *Electives*, that is, offerings directed toward areas of specific need or interest which are available through a wide variety of seminars, workshops, summer school classes, synodical or churchwide events, advanced graduate courses, and distance learning programs;
- Mentoring with an experienced colleague on an individual basis or in small groups that meet regularly;

- *Structured reading* designed to support and extend the other educational components in fulfilling the overall goals of the program.

In meeting the requirements of first-call theological education the new pastor or rostered lay minister will likely utilize the two weeks already expected and commonly used for continuing education each year. About half of this time will be spent in the common events for first-call leaders; the other half will be spent in individualized learning experiences.

Normally, expenses for first-call theological education will be met within the continuing education benefits included in the compensation package. Current guidelines suggest that congregations contribute \$550 for continuing education; the pastor or lay rostered leader, \$250. ELCA PACE Growth awards are available to rostered leaders whose congregations are not able to provide continuing education funds at the recommended churchwide level. Synods with responsibility for a disproportionate number of first-call rostered leaders will be eligible for subsidies during the initial years of this program through external grants managed by the Division for Ministry.

The first-call theological education requirement will be included as a regular part of the letter of call. Normally, completion of this program will be presupposed prior to the bishop's recommendation of a rostered leader to a new call.

The Division for Ministry has developed churchwide standards and guidelines which appear as Appendix E. Additional resources are available from the division to assist synods in developing programs of first-call theological education.

Recommendation #2:

To require, by the fall of 1997, that all newly rostered pastors and lay leaders participate, throughout their first three years of ministry under call, in structured programs of theological education, designed and supervised by their synods, according to churchwide standards.

4. Access to Theological Education

Faithful leaders in a changing world need to be equipped for ministry in forms that meet their varied life circumstances and educational levels. Many mission leaders will receive excellent theological education in residential seminary programs. Some, however,

will need to pursue at least part of their theological studies close to where they live and work and do ministry. In the changing economic context, more leaders will need to support themselves through secular employment, not only during their studies but also as they fulfill their ministries in congregations and in the wider society. Furthermore, some local leaders will be able to minister more effectively within their cultural contexts if they do not leave their communities for theological education. Many thoughtful church members seek to enhance their discipleship in the world through theological study at a level beyond what most congregations can offer.

These varied circumstances require more flexibility in the delivery of high quality, Lutheran theological education. New developments in interactive telecommunications provide practical methods for making theological education broadly accessible where people live and work, and appropriate to their cultural patterns and values. In response to these needs and technological innovations, the 1993 Churchwide Assembly directed the Division for Ministry “to facilitate development of models of theological education by extension and distance learning, and...to prepare a proposal for the 1995 Churchwide Assembly for a flexible system to make theological education accessible to a broader spectrum of people.”

a. Distance Learning Models

Lay and continuing education programs are available through a variety of distance learning modalities. SELECT is an ELCA continuing education program that utilizes videotaped presentations and small group interaction in the learner’s locale. Education for Ministry is an intensive program of theological education prepared for Episcopalian laity by the School of Theology at the University of the South. This four-year program involves the use of print resources and small group interaction with trained mentors. After initial review of these materials, the task force has recommended that the Division for Ministry explore the possibility of adapting and authorizing Education for Ministry for use in the ELCA.

The seminaries have responded to the need for greater accessibility by establishing extension centers, by providing courses at off-campus sites, and by adjusting calendars and schedules to accommodate commuters and part-time students. In 1994, the Division

for Ministry engaged Campbell Communications, Inc., to conduct an audit of the seminaries to evaluate their technical and human resources for venturing into distance learning through computer networks, and compressed digital, fiber optics, and satellite technology. As a result, agreement has been reached on common standards to assure technological compatibility among the schools and with the ELCA churchwide offices. All of the seminaries plan eventually to use interactive telecommunication technology to link campuses both for administrative purposes and for the delivery of educational programs.

b. Consulting Service for Distance Learning (Hub)

As these cutting-edge distance learning programs emerge, the seminary clusters each may find it useful to identify a center for distance learning for the cluster. Because this technology, and distance methodologies in general, transcend geographical boundaries, there is need for some overall technological support and coordination. A distance learning consulting service, referred to here as a hub, could provide these services for a communications network. Eventually, this network might offer ELCA members or other interested persons anywhere in the world the opportunity to pursue theological education for mission in community-based sites or at home on their own time. As programming is developed by the various educational entities, the hub would help students access degree programs, non-credit courses, and continuing education opportunities through cable television, satellite, videotape, and other communications technology.

The educational programming itself will be provided by seminary clusters, continuing education centers, colleges and universities, synods, and other educational partners. The educational providers will retain ownership and receive appropriate recognition and fees for their respective offerings.

Once established, the hub will seek to fulfill the following goals:

1. to assist theological education providers in the development of communications infrastructures for distance learning;
2. to encourage development of compatible distance education systems across this church;

3. to coordinate distance learning efforts of providers;
4. to provide consulting services to synods, seminaries, continuing education centers, and other providers that are interested in distance learning;
5. to serve as a distance learning resource and research center;
6. to coordinate workshops and conferences that will enrich teaching and learning on distance education;
7. to assist with student support services as desired by theological education providers.

The hub will require a well equipped office/studio and a small staff with expertise in distance learning technologies and educational methods. It could be located wherever technological access could be maximized.

Recommendation #3:

To request and encourage the Division for Ministry, together with the Department for Communication, the seminary clusters, and other interested partners, to develop an ELCA distance learning consulting service to be a technological, administrative, and faculty development resource for an ELCA theological education distance learning network.

C. Building an Interdependent Network of Theological Education Providers

1. The Vision

The task force identified a way of reconfiguring institutions and resources to meet the need for greater depth, variety, and accessibility in theological education. The following vision was central to the report affirmed by the 1993 Assembly:

The preparation of a wide variety of leaders, grounded in Scripture and the Lutheran confessional tradition and equipped for the church's mission in a rapidly changing environment, made possible through redeployment of resources in an interdependent network of theological education providers.

In this vision, the eight ELCA seminaries form clusters which relate to each other in a churchwide system. This system draws continuing education centers,

ELCA colleges, non-Lutheran colleges and seminaries, and other potential providers of theological education into an interdependent network that extends to every corner of this church. Each cluster with its educational partners develops a comprehensive plan for the delivery of programs needed to fulfill the 11 imperatives within its common service area. Planning and coordination of theological education involving all the clusters will be facilitated by the Division for Ministry through its Theological Education Coordinating Committee.

The vision calls for a very high level of cooperation among theological education providers and significant concentration of their resources in order to strengthen and diversify offerings. Partners will collaborate on ways to increase effectiveness and reduce duplication. (Definitions of terms related to the interdependent network are given in Appendix F.)

2. Timeline for Cluster Development

The timeline approved by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly allows for the clusters to develop in carefully planned phases between 1993 and 2003. It calls for seminaries to form cluster partnerships by formal action of the seminary and the Division for Ministry Board by the fall of 1994. The seminaries are asked to assess leadership needs on their territory, determine specializations within each cluster, explore possible structures for cluster governance, and begin developing relationships with other potential providers of theological education by the end of 1995. Between 1995 and 1999, the distribution of churchwide specializations among the clusters will be determined. The clusters will intensify cooperative planning and programming. The seminaries will determine appropriate structures for the governance and administration of each cluster for ratification by the Division for Ministry by 1999. These new structures will be implemented no later than 2003. (The full timeline appears in Appendix G.)

3. Cluster Formation, Activity, and Plans

The seminaries are responding energetically to the challenge to meet the mission imperatives as an interdependent system. All eight seminary boards have taken action to join clusters which will cooperate in comprehensive planning and program delivery and develop appropriate governance and funding struc-

tures according to the timeline. These actions were ratified by the board of the Division for Ministry in December 1994 and March 1995. (See figure 3.)

a. The Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries: Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary

The boards of Gettysburg, Philadelphia, and Southern seminaries voted in the fall of 1994 to form an Eastern Cluster comprising the three schools. Interim structures have been put in place for coordinating and governing the Eastern Cluster, with binding decision-making powers on matters designated to it by mutual consent of a majority vote in each seminary board. A committee of the deans and faculty representatives from the cluster schools oversee academic planning for the cluster. In addition, the seminary presidents have appointed from their respective schools a person in each major area of administration, such as admissions, business, and development, to assure ongoing three-way consultation among administrative personnel to seek greater coordination and cost-effectiveness.

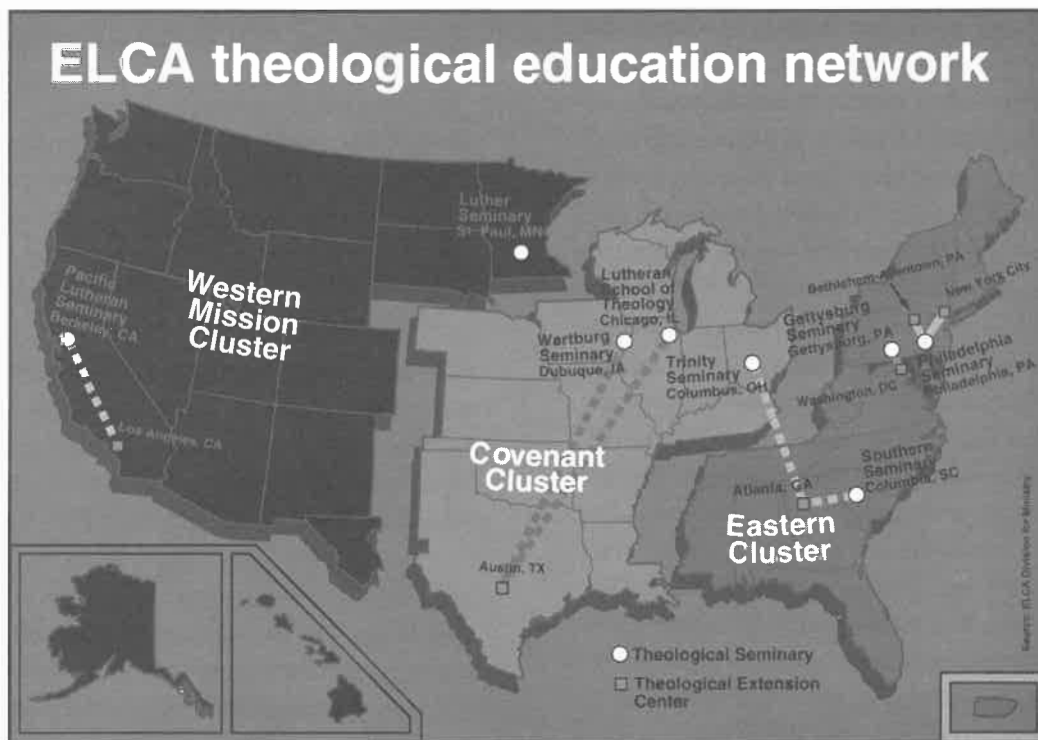
Student recruitment and continuing education are being done cooperatively. Compatible computerization at the three seminaries is already underway; it can use common software for development, business management, and registration. A consultation with the bishops and other synodical leaders of Regions 7, 8, and 9 is being planned for fall 1995.

In August 1994, the Division for Ministry assigned primary churchwide responsibility for developing educational programs for the newly created lay roster of diaconal ministers to Gettysburg Seminary, utilizing the resources of the entire Eastern Cluster. This is the first instance of a churchwide specialization being formally designated in the emerging ELCA system of theological education.

b. The Covenant Cluster: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, and Wartburg Theological Seminary

In February 1995, the joint planning committee of the three seminaries passed formal recommendations regarding the formation the Covenant Cluster as a means of responding to this church's need for greater

Figure 3



variety and accessibility in theological education. Mission, as informed by the 11 imperatives, will guide future strategic planning for the proposed cluster. The recommendations commit the three schools to develop whatever common administration and governance structures are needed to implement and sustain their shared programmatic endeavors and further their common mission as the cluster evolves. The cluster partners will develop and deploy financial resources to undergird their shared programs. The Division for Ministry Board ratified the formation of the Covenant Cluster in March, pending action by the respective seminary boards in spring 1995.

The proposed Covenant Cluster has developed concrete plans to link the three seminaries and the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest through interactive video by the fall of 1995. This technology will greatly enhance the cluster's capacity for collaboration, for sharing academic and administrative resources, and for providing programs of distance learning. The advanced graduate programs of the three schools will be structured so that they are fully compatible with each other. Action teams will be appointed to explore and propose ways to further cooperation and reduce duplication in various areas of joint work, beginning with field education and admissions.

The recommendation to form the Covenant Cluster builds upon earlier cooperative arrangements. Wartburg and LSTC, working closely together since 1988, took action in May 1994 to form the Heartland Cluster. Conversations among the leadership of Wartburg, Chicago, and Trinity during spring 1994 led to actions by all three boards to form a covenant relationship as a first step in collaborative planning and implementation in order to respond more effectively to the imperatives.

Throughout 1994, the LSTC/Wartburg cluster consulted individually with its supporting synods in Regions 4 and 5 regarding their specific leadership needs in relation to the 11 mission imperatives. Surveys of laity at all 18 synodical assemblies in spring 1994 assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the preparation of ordained ministers. Analyses of findings were shared and recommendations developed at a major consultation in October 1994 involving the two seminaries, their Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, and their supporting synods. Trinity plans to pursue a similar strategy of consultation with the synods of Region 6.

c. *Western Mission Cluster: Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and Luther Seminary*

The boards of Pacific Lutheran and Luther seminaries approved "Principles and Strategies toward Clustering" in fall 1993, pledging their respective seminaries to work together in the formation of a cluster. This plan outlines some of the first steps these two cluster partners intend to take as they jointly develop an integrated service network across the West. One immediate challenge they face is how to extend services to the Northwest, a region which supports both seminaries but has no Lutheran theological center of its own.

Because their area of shared responsibility is so vast and comprises so many distinct cultures from the Upper Midwest to the Southwest, the Western Mission cluster will utilize satellite and other interactive communication technology to deliver resources in ways that maximize flexibility, accessibility, and cost effectiveness.

Each of these seminaries has historically taken major steps to decrease cost and duplication through creative partnerships. Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary pools academic resources and jointly provides many academic services through the 10-member Graduate Theological Union (GTU). Because of previous mergers, Luther Seminary is considerably larger than the other ELCA seminaries and thus can realize certain economies of scale.

Recommendation #4:

To direct the Division for Ministry to report to the 1997 Churchwide Assembly continuing progress by the seminary clusters in meeting the timeline approved by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly.

4. Churchwide Coordination of Theological Education

The need for a new structure to enhance collaboration and coordination among the clusters was cited in the 1993 Report. In October 1994, the board of the Division for Ministry acted on the recommendation of the Task Force on the Study of Theological Education to establish a Theological Education Coordinating Committee, advisory to the division. This group of 14 or less will include Division for Ministry board members, seminary representatives, and others. Members were appointed by the Division for Ministry in spring 1995. The initial meeting will be held in fall 1995.

This committee will give advice and serve as a resource to the Division for Ministry in carrying out the Division's constitutional responsibility for coordination and planning for a system of theological education in the ELCA. Through this committee the Division for Ministry will provide leadership for a strategic planning process which integrates the activities of the seminary clusters as they develop and implement plans in accordance with the imperatives and the timeline outlined in the 1993 Report. (The specific functions and composition of the Theological Education Coordinating Committee are provided in Appendix H.)

D. Supporting Theological Education as a Priority for Mission

1. Churchwide Discussion of Seminary Funding

The 1993 Churchwide Assembly overwhelmingly affirmed theological education as "a foundational priority, recognizing that the preparation of leaders for mission is essential to all the ministries of this church." It directed the Division for Ministry to promote study and discussion throughout the ELCA of proposals for funding theological education as a foundational priority of this church's mission, and to prepare funding proposals for recommendation in 1995.

Between January and June of 1994, synod and seminary leaders were invited to discuss and respond to a resource prepared by the Task Force on the Study of Theological Education: *A New Look at the Total Financial Support of Theological Education in the ELCA*. Synod councils or other leadership groups in 37 synods reported holding such discussions. Task force members attended 16 of these meetings personally. A total of 444 response forms was received. While the interest was encouraging, no clear consensus emerged. Commitment to strong churchly support for the seminaries was offset by concerns about the limits of synodical and churchwide resources and about the likelihood of the clusters actually achieving the efficiencies envisioned.

Based on the thoughtful reactions from seminaries and synods, the task force revised its funding proposals and presented them for response in its September 1994 Draft Report: *Theological Education for a Church*

in Mission. These proposals included strategies for enhancing all revenue streams to the seminaries: grants from mission support (churchwide and synodical), support from private donors (gifts and endowment income), and income from students (tuition and fees), offset in part through a churchwide scholarship program for ministry candidates. These proposals anticipated that about half of seminary income will come from endowment income and gifts from individual donors. The ELCA Conference of Bishops took action in October 1994 to support the general directions proposed.

The 1994 draft also proposed that beginning in 1997 churchwide and synodical funds would be directed to the clusters. A further proposal called for the development of a new formula for the distribution of churchwide funds to be phased in between 1997 and 2001. The formula was to be developed in such a way as to further cluster goals.

2. Need for Comprehensive Strategic Planning: Programmatic and Financial

At the request of seminary leadership at the annual consultation on theological education in November 1994, the task force agreed to postpone final proposals for financing theological education for at least one year. It was agreed that the seminaries and the Division for Ministry needed this additional time and outside facilitation to bring their strategic planning process to the point of programmatic and financial specificity. These added steps will help them make informed estimates both of the costs involved in providing greater access and quality through an interdependent theological education network and of the savings to be realized through clustering. This information then will provide the basis for the appropriate assignment of financial responsibility for the various components of the system.

The Division for Ministry has engaged Growth Design Corporation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to conduct the financial planning phase. Costs for this process will be borne through a combination of external grants, contributions from the seminaries, and the remainder of Division for Ministry funds reserved for the study.

A period of intensive activity beginning in mid-December produced the following planning components for the use of the seminary presidents at their annual meeting in April 1995:

- an information system for regular reporting of comparable data regarding seminary programs, finances, and personnel;
- the compilation and analysis of such data to date;
- a financial model which enables individual seminaries, clusters, and the overall system to budget strategically on the basis of programmatic and financial projections;
- results of external market research testing assumptions and support for directions set by the 1993 assembly (clustering, the imperatives, distance learning, priority of theological education, etc.); and
- a method for quantifying the 11 imperatives to make them more effective as measurable goals in a strategic planning process.

Using these tools at a professionally facilitated session in April, the seminary presidents will make initial proposals regarding programmatic initiatives to address the 11 imperatives within the seminary system and strategies to develop and redeploy the needed human and financial resources.

During July 1995, a larger group with a wide range of perspectives and expertise will evaluate and refine the proposals from the presidents. Action teams will be assigned to further develop the most promising proposals. These groups will determine implementation steps, estimate costs, and project revenue streams related to each proposal. Such a process pursued continuously will enable seminary leadership and the Division for Ministry to determine where savings can be realized; which initiatives will have to be self-supporting; which programs have priority in receiving direct church funding; where programs can be strategically abandoned to make resources available for new projects; and how needed new initiatives should be prioritized.

The study to date has built consensus in the church and commitment in the seminaries for new directions in leadership education. The question now is how to turn those commitments into action. Action takes money. Based on the results of this comprehensive programmatic and financial planning process, the Division for Ministry and the seminaries will be prepared by 1997 to present to this church and to individual

donors a case for the financial support of theological education which will prepare faithful leaders for mission in a changing world.

Recommendation #5:

To affirm the decision of the Division for Ministry and the seminaries regarding the expansion of the Study of Theological Education to include programmatic and financial planning for an ELCA system of theological education; and to request that the Division for Ministry prepare by 1997 a case and strategies for this church's increased financial support of a system of theological education.

3. Enhancing Essential Revenue Streams: Initial Funding Proposals

Revenue comes to the seminaries primarily from endowment earnings, gifts from private donors, student tuition and fees, and churchwide and synodical grants. (See figure 4.)

a. Endowment Income and Gifts from Private Donors

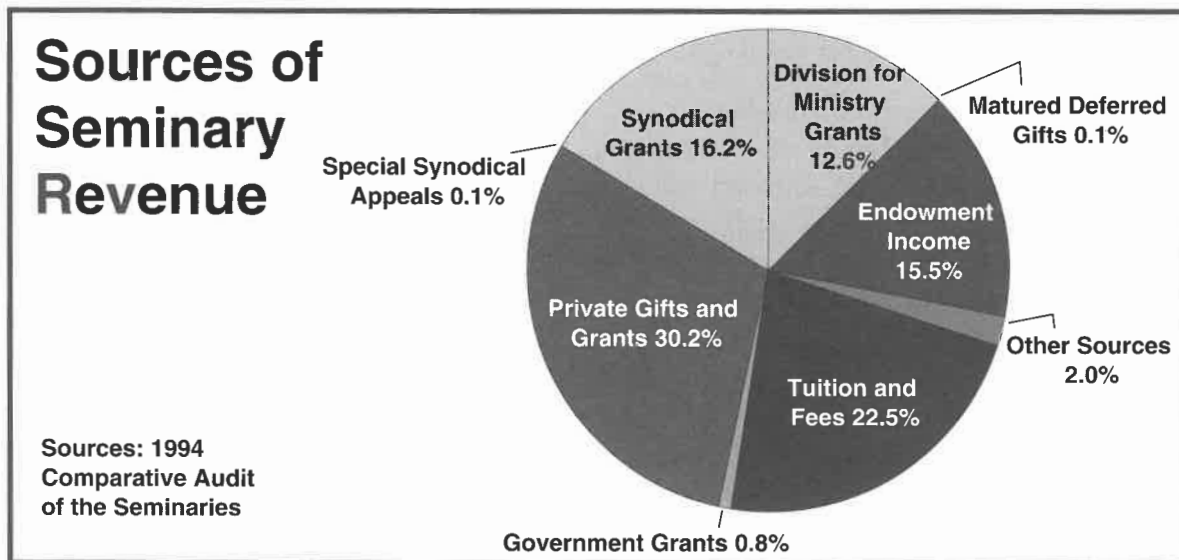
Current gifts from ELCA members and the return on past gifts accounted for 48.26% of the combined revenues of the seminaries in 1993-94. Revenue from these sources of income must continue to grow.

Annual gifts from tens of thousands of individual donors provide regular operating support for the institutions that prepare leaders for mission. Seminary development staffs continually add to the number of donors and encourage donors to increase their gifts and develop patterns of annual giving.

Deferred giving programs in the form of wills, insurance policies, or life income gifts have the potential for producing the greatest source of funds. Through these major gifts and bequests, donors make a profound impact upon the future of the seminary. Their gifts, deposited in the seminary endowment reservoir, provide increased flow of revenue for theological education of leaders for this church.

Growth in endowment funds is essential for a stable future for the institutions that prepare leaders for mission. In 1994, the eight seminaries held over \$93 million in their endowments. The endowments of the individual seminaries ranged from a high of \$22.9 million to a low of \$3 million. To protect the value of the endowments for the future, financial counselors to aca-

Figure 4



demographic institutions recommend that annual spending from investment returns not exceed five percent. In recent years most of the seminaries have been spending at a higher rate.

This church and its seminaries need to coordinate their fund raising efforts and work in partnership to increase the flow of revenue both for theological education and for the overall mission of the ELCA. Seminary education should prepare leaders who inspire stewardship and promote connection with the larger church.

Church leaders are encouraged to foster a climate in which the fund-raising programs of the seminaries are welcomed and encouraged. Pastors and bishops play a key role in identifying potential donors and commending the cause of theological education to them. Donors need to hear that their gifts to theological education serve this church and honor the priorities it has set.

Recommendation #6:

To urge ELCA congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization to support the efforts of the seminary clusters to increase financial support by granting access to seminary representatives and commending the cause of theological education to potential donors.

Recommendation #7:

To encourage seminary clusters to invest significant time and resources for cultivating participation in deferred giving programs that will build endowments for the future.

b. Support from Students

Student tuition paid for 19.4% of the total educational and general expenditures of the ELCA seminaries in 1993-94. Costs to students are offset in part through financial aid. The major cost of theological education is provided through grants from synods and the churchwide organization, gifts from individual donors, and return on endowment investments. It is expected that tuition will rise over the next several years until tuition and fees support about 25% of the seminaries' budgets.

As costs to students increase, major initiatives must be undertaken to build endowments which can provide the financial aid needed to allow qualified ELCA ministry candidates to attend seminary without incurring crippling levels of indebtedness. Concrete proposals for such a fund are anticipated in the current financial planning process.

As part of an overall revenue strategy, many programs of continuing education, lay education, and extension education will have to be planned and priced in such a way as to be self-supporting or income-producing.

c. Grants from Mission Support: Synod and Churchwide

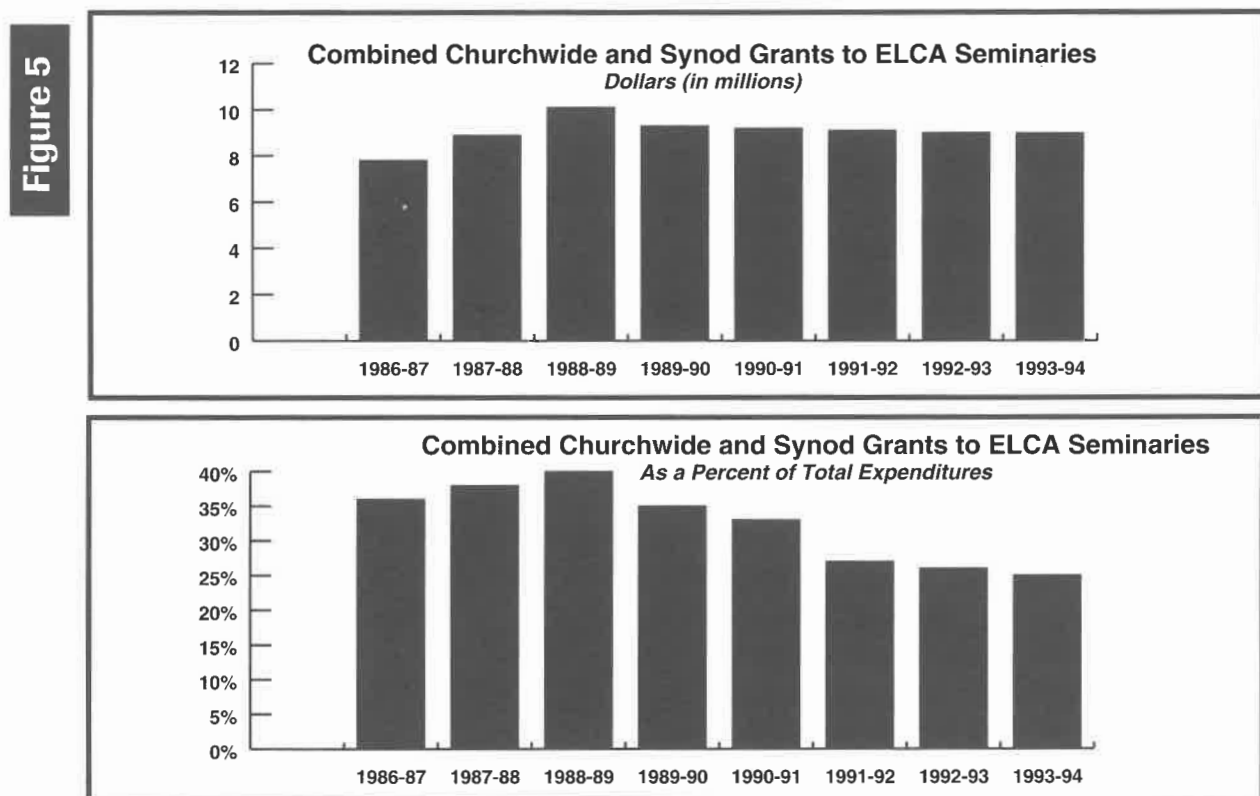
While support to seminaries from combined churchwide and synodical sources has remained relatively stable since the formation of the ELCA, such income represents a diminishing proportion of the overall income of the seminaries. Over this period of time, churchwide funding has decreased in terms of actual dollars and as a percentage of total theological education expenditures. (See figure 5.) Synodical support on average increased slightly between 1988 and 1993. For the sake of adequate support for theological education and appropriate accountability between church and seminaries the flow of funds from churchwide and synodical sources must be addressed rationally, realistically, and missionally.

The decision to undertake a process of system-wide financial planning, however, has postponed until 1997 any actions to change the existing formula for raising and distributing churchwide and synodical funds for

theological education. Implementation of a new distribution formula will be phased in not later than 1999. The expanded process will provide the necessary framework for devising a funding system that ultimately will further mission goals and enhance giving through synodical and churchwide channels.

During the interim period from 1995 to 1999, stable income is needed from synodical and churchwide sources. In the current economic environment, the churchwide organization can demonstrate its commitment to theological education by maintaining seminary grants at not less than current dollar levels. The Division for Ministry will continue to ask synods to increase giving to the seminaries they support by 3 percent annually according to the existing Fair Share formula.

Building the relationship between seminary clusters and their supporting synods becomes a priority at this time as constituencies are shifting and financial support tends to follow those causes which are personally known and valued. Through a regular consultation process, synods and seminary clusters can begin to explore and negotiate the real needs, costs, and possibilities in leadership education on their shared territory. It is in the context of such direct conversations that seminaries can base appeals for increased fund-



ing on factors such as the quality of their graduates, programmatic improvements, increased services valued by the synods, proposed expansion in response to mission needs, and anticipated major expenditures. Synods can give realistic projections of their capacity to support such initiatives.

Recommendation #8:

To encourage the seminary clusters, with the support of the Division for Ministry and in coordination with other churchwide units, to initiate regular consultations with their supporting synods regarding program and funding.

E. Conclusion

Since 1993, the groundwork has been laid for building an interdependent network of theological education providers that can prepare a variety of leaders, grounded in Scripture and the Lutheran confessional tradition and prepared for this church's mission in the rapidly changing environment of the 21st century. Goals for this mission-oriented system have been identified and are being quantified. The scope of theological education has been expanded to serve more kinds of ministers, both lay and ordained, full-time, bi-vocational, and volunteers. Theological education is becoming more flexible and accessible through distance learning methods. Helping people make the connections between faith and daily life is becoming a major focus of theological education.

Congregational needs for competent, missional leadership are being addressed. Standards and procedures have been established to ensure that persons considering rostered ministries in the ELCA have ample opportunity to discern their call and prepare to begin theological studies. Seminaries are committed to preparing pastors and lay leaders in ways that enhance their spiritual and theological depth, their passion for mission, their practical congregational skills, and their attentiveness to the cultures and contexts in which they serve. A three-year program of required continuing education will help pastors and rostered lay leaders move more effectively from seminary into ministerial roles and responsibilities.

The eight ELCA seminaries have formed three clusters that are planning and delivering services on their shared territories in ways that maximize resources. Structures have been put in place to facilitate the over-

all strategic planning and coordination of theological education in the ELCA. Recommendations are proposed for enhancing the various revenue streams to the seminaries for the preparation of mission leaders.

The Division for Ministry and the seminaries are committed to an intensive financial planning process in 1995-96, which will enable them to anticipate costs, set priorities, effect savings, and assign responsibilities. Based on this deliberative process, the Division for Ministry will bring to the church in 1997 a clear case for an ELCA system of theological education that is adequate to prepare mission leaders for the 21st century. With that case will come a comprehensive plan to enlist the members, the congregations, the synods, and the churchwide organization of the ELCA in providing the necessary financial support to undergird the preparation of faithful leaders for a changing world.

F. Acknowledgments

The Task Force on the Study of Theological Education recognizes with gratitude grants from the Lilly Endowment, Lutheran Brotherhood, and Aid Association for Lutherans which have enabled this study and some early phases of its implementation. The approach of the study has depended upon the active participation of many partners in the seminaries, the synods, and the churchwide organization in identifying issues and developing and testing proposals. Regular support and advice from the board of the Division for Ministry, the Church Council, and the Conference of Bishops have been appreciated and liberally utilized. Special thanks go to Rev. Phyllis Anderson, staff director for the study, and to Rev. Joseph Wagner, Executive Director of the Division for Ministry. The task force also commends Chris Alexander and Pat Wilder for extraordinary administrative support. The seminary presidents have served as our chief critics and closest allies in responding to the mandates of this study and finding a way toward the future to which we believe God is calling this church.

The Task Force for the Study of Theological Education

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G. Recommendations

1. To direct the Division for Ministry to report to the 1997 Churchwide Assembly continuing progress of the ELCA seminaries toward fulfilling the 11 imperatives approved by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly.
2. To require, by the fall of 1997, that all newly rostered pastors and lay leaders participate, throughout their first three years of ministry under call, in structured programs of theological education, designed and supervised by their synods, according to churchwide standards.
3. To request and encourage the Division for Ministry, together with the Department for Communication, the seminary clusters, and other interested partners, to develop an ELCA distance learning service center to be a technological, administrative, and faculty development resource for an ELCA theological education distance learning network.
4. To direct the Division for Ministry to report to the 1997 Churchwide Assembly continuing progress by the seminary clusters in meeting the timeline approved by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly.
5. To affirm the decision of the Division for Ministry and the seminaries regarding the expansion of the Study of Theological Education to include programmatic and financial planning for an ELCA system of theological education; and to request that the Division for Ministry prepare by 1997 a case and strategies for this church's increased financial support of a system of theological education.
6. To urge ELCA congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization to support the efforts of the seminary clusters to increase financial support by granting access to seminary representatives and commending the cause of theological education to potential donors.
7. To encourage seminary clusters to invest significant time and resources for cultivating participation in deferred giving programs that will build endowments for the future.
8. To encourage the seminary clusters, with the support of the Division for Ministry and in coordination with other churchwide units, to initiate regular consultations with their supporting synods regarding program and funding.

Part II: Appendices

Appendix A: Context for Mission

This contextual analysis as described in the 1993 Report of the Task Force on the Study of Theological Education reflects several recent studies that describe the contemporary context and project future trends. In developing proposals for a system of theological education that will prepare leaders for mission, the task force was mindful of the following aspects of the contemporary religious and social context.

A. Demographic Trends

By the middle of this decade, the population of the United States will be growing at a rate of less than one percent per year. Population will decrease steadily around the middle of the 21st century. Along with this slow growth, the population is aging.

Where population is growing rapidly, the increase results more from family unit relocation and immigration from abroad than from birth rate. Families have been moving from rural to metropolitan areas. In 1950, 30 percent of the population resided in metropolitan areas of 1,000,000 or more. Today that proportion has grown to 50.2 percent. In major metropolitan areas population is shifting from the central cities to suburban fringes.

Only 25 percent of the population in the United States lives in rural areas, but 45 percent of ELCA congregations are located there. Consequently, a number of pastors are being asked to serve in rural areas which are unfamiliar to them by virtue of their own background. Only 55 percent of ELCA congregations are located where 77.5 percent of our population now lives. There is a significant under-supply of calls available in more populated areas where most pastors are interested in serving.

Residential moves are concentrated in the sunbelt regions of the West and South. The population increase over the past decade in these two areas has been 22.3 percent and 13.4 percent respectively. In contrast, population in the Northeast has increased by only 3.4 percent and in the Midwest by 1.4 percent. Within the latter areas significant declines in population have occurred. Currently, 76 percent of ELCA members are concentrated in the Northeast and North Central

regions of the country. The ELCA's resources for theological education are located primarily in areas which have a high concentration of Lutheran members, rather than in the areas where population growth is most rapid.

The racial and ethnic composition of the United States is changing. The change results both from immigration from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and from the relatively high birth rates among women from these areas and women of African American and Native American descent. It is projected that African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Eskimos, Aleuts and Hispanics will grow from one-fifth of the population in 1980 to one-third by 2020. Currently 98 percent of the ELCA membership is white. To be in fact the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, this church must find ways to proclaim the gospel to all Americans.

The face of the American work force is changing. By the year 2000, over 80 percent of all new labor force entrants will be people immigrating to the United States from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean region and Africa, or native born African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Eskimos and Aleuts, and women. This is the pool from which the church will increasingly draw its leadership.

Over the last decade there has been a 6.1 percent decline in mainline Protestant church membership. During the same period Southern Baptist membership grew 16 percent and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints increased 30 percent. Reflecting the general decline in membership among mainline Protestants is the fact that

Lutheran membership in the United States decreased by 500,000 persons between 1970 and 1990. The single fastest growing group in America is the unchurched population.

All Christian groups combined continue to claim a majority of the population. Apart from the Christian groups, the American Jewish community is the most prominent religious community in the country. Major influx of population from Asian and Middle Eastern countries since the mid-sixties, however, has led to greater religious pluralism in this country. As a result of immigration and significant support among African Americans, the Islamic community has grown rapidly and now virtually equals the Jewish community in size. Eastern religions have extended their presence

in America through both first generation immigrant organizations and the conversion of thousands of young adult Americans to both Buddhism and guru-led Hindu religions. The Buddhist and Hindu communities each claim from three to five million adherents. The rate of growth of these two communities continues to be among the highest in the country.

Demographic trends will radically affect the future of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, its mission, ministry and institutions of theological education. To minister effectively as a national church on the North American continent, it will have to relate to the entire geographical area, become inclusive of the growing populations of the United States, and communicate the Gospel to people unrelated to any church. At the same time, it will need to be concerned about retaining membership and providing leaders for ministry in areas of diminishing population and economic resources.

B. Global Interdependence

The global scope of contemporary economic, political, environmental, and social issues underscores the complexity and interdependence of the human family. The implications of global realities in the area of religion alone are staggering.

Over two-thirds of the world's five billion people live outside the Christian faith. Many of these people live in the highly secularized Western World where there are large numbers of nominal church members and large numbers of persons with no religious commitment. That two-thirds majority also includes 800 million Muslims; 750 million Hindus; 350 million Buddhists; and 1 billion Chinese who are Confucianist, Buddhist, Taoist or Marxist.

The Christian population is shifting from North to South. As recently as 1900, 87 percent of all Christians lived in Europe and North America. By the year 2000 as much as 60 percent of the Christian world will live in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

A global perspective leads North American Christians to greater awareness of the need for evangelization and re-evangelization at home and abroad. It also opens the way for greater interaction with southern hemisphere Christians. It reveals the need for inter-faith understanding and cooperation. Theological education for the church's mission in this global context needs to prepare leaders who are able to work with

and learn from people of many faiths and with Christians whose faith is shaped by very different cultural realities.

C. Economic Factors

While Americans continue to be among the most economically privileged people in the world, rapid economic growth is not assured in an increasingly competitive global market or in the midst of an increasingly needy world and endangered environment. Both business and non-profit sectors in this society are under pressure to improve productivity and cost effectiveness in their operations. Church bodies are not immune to this economic stress.

There is strong evidence that since the 1960's people in the lowest economic brackets have steadily lost purchasing power while the wealthiest segments of society have gained it. For each year between 1967 and 1987, the percent of all income received by families whose income is in the bottom 20 percent has slipped by at least two-tenths of one percent. At the same time, families in the top 20 percent bracket have gained as much as one percent. Women who are single parents, their children, and elderly people living alone will form the new class of the poor in the United States. Leaders are needed who can address the problems and minister within an increasingly economically stratified society.

Economic realities affecting the larger economy also affect ELCA congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. While congregational giving increased 3.5 percent in 1991, a larger proportion is staying at home to fund local ministries and meet local expenses, including the rapidly escalating cost of health insurance. Operating budgets of congregations increased 5.5 percent in 1991. Congregational support of synodical and churchwide ministries increased by only 0.5 percent. These factors make it progressively more difficult for synods and the churchwide organization to maintain support for seminaries and other institutions of this church. As a consequence, total synodical and churchwide grants to seminaries dropped from \$9,559,042 in 1988 to \$8,812,528 in 1991.

Growing numbers of congregations will find it increasingly difficult or impossible to support even their own pastor. Out of the eleven thousand congregations in the ELCA, more than one third have fewer than 175 confirmed members. The average size of these four

thousand small congregations is 100 confirmed. The ELCA's Division for Outreach estimates that 2,500 rural congregations have fewer than 70 persons at worship each Sunday. An additional 900 urban congregations are in similar situations. If present demographic and economic trends continue, within five to ten years these congregations will be seeking alternative forms of leadership or cooperative arrangements with other congregations to secure the ministry they need.

The general economic realities become personal for individuals preparing for leadership in the church. According to a recent study of US seminaries, the average debt of the graduating seminarian is approximately \$10,000. This debt may be much higher for a student with responsibility for family living expenses. Older graduates and graduates with significant indebtedness will find it difficult to accept calls to smaller congregations which cannot pay adequate salaries.

As the flow of funds from congregational offerings diminishes, this church and its institutions are turning more and more to individual church members for support in the form of major gifts or bequests. The majority of those who make major gifts to charitable institutions are now more than fifty-five years old. Twenty-two trillion dollars will be left in bequests in the next 30 years by persons currently in that age group. According to present projections, however, subsequent generations will not enjoy the same level of disposable income and assets; nor will they share the same loyalty to the church and its institutions that marks the current older adult generation.

These sobering economic realities must be taken into consideration in responsible planning for theological education. Such planning must be responsive to the financial burdens of students, the economic stratification of the society that seminary graduates will serve, and the changing forms of ministry that are being shaped in part by economic conditions. Furthermore, such planning will have to be fiscally realistic about any proposed expansion of theological education services.

D. Communications Technology

We live in the "information age," where the now commonplace miracles of telephones, public access television, audio and video tape players are being superseded by interactive systems. These developments

have changed how people think, learn and communicate. They present three challenges to theological education.

First, advances in communication technology present challenges to a church and educational system that has been highly dependent on reading and writing and deeply committed to personal interaction and community. These advances change the whole context of theological education because this pervasive communications technology impacts and changes people. In a church which historically has sought to be aware of its context in the world, the changed context today calls us to approach the people of our culture differently. In preparing people to communicate in a post-literate environment we need both new teaching methods and an awareness of the communication culture.

Second, new communication technologies afford new possibilities as tools in the educational process. They offer unprecedented opportunities for communicating the gospel and for making educational resources, including theological education, widely accessible.

Finally, the new communication culture is a mixed blessing. It demands critical evaluation by the church. Mass media and the information industries are structures of power. These structures often unjustly affect the basic human right to communicate and reduce people to the status of media consumers. This church needs to prepare leaders who can advocate in the public arena for fairness and right to access in the realm of mass media.

E. Cultural Pluralism

The demographic, economic, global, and technological developments described in this section all contribute to a pervasive sense of cultural pluralism, which is among the most distinctive characteristics of the current context for mission. Cultural pluralism shapes the context in two ways.

First, cultural pluralism presents itself as sheer diversity. It is manifested in the diversity of races, genders, ethnic groups, religions, life styles, and values in this society. Demographic factors indicate that we are experiencing the influence of an increasingly broad spectrum of people from other cultures and ethnic groups with all their attendant values and life styles. Economic conditions mean that the context of Ameri-

can life crosses various class boundaries, from the very rich to the very poor, and includes a wide range within a large middle class. Communications technologies make this demographic and economic diversity a part of our everyday lives.

Secondly, cultural pluralism represents an approach to this diversity. It argues for the peaceful coexistence of those various groups, insisting that every part contribute equally to the functioning of a vital and newly configured whole. In this regard, cultural pluralism supports the access of each group to the public forum and champions individual rights and responsibilities and equal opportunity for all.

Cultural pluralism has a critical impact on theological education. The fact of diversity is both indispensable and irreversible. More difficult is the question of how to regard such diversity — as opportunity or threat? On one hand, cultural pluralism has meant radical shifts in the composition of seminary student bodies, with all the attendant impetus for change in the curriculum, pedagogy, and character of the institution. Over 30 percent of all students in theological schools in this country are women. In the 1992–93 academic year, 43 percent of Master of Divinity students at ELCA seminaries were women. Feminist principles and pedagogies are increasingly reflected in the curricula and character of many American seminaries and divinity schools. To meet the increasing demographic diversity, theological schools have worked to attract a broader ethnic and racial range of students. The language of instruction has changed. These factors have diversified and enriched theological schools and now present an opportunity and challenge to theological education itself.

On the other hand, cultural pluralism may be seen as a threat. Diversity brings with it a variety of truth claims. Within such diversity it is difficult to make absolute statements or to engage in prophetic critique. The threat of pluralism is demonstrated by the difficulty of forming theological consensus among so many competing claims to truth without privileging one or another claim. In this sense, the problems created by cultural pluralism have often been pitched in terms of a dichotomy between diversity and unity or relativism and absolutism. Debates between these two poles wrack seminary campuses and divide student bodies and faculties.

While acknowledging the challenges cultural pluralism presents, it is possible that these perceived poles are false dichotomies. The ability to hold the poles in tension may be a distinctive contribution of the Lutheran theological tradition which began as a protest against long-held traditions of theological discourse and practice and sees itself as continually being reformed. Lutheran theological education is one arena in which the dynamic exchange between the Word of God and the world should be nurtured and encouraged.

F. The Ecology of Education

One last aspect of the context of theological education is the network of educational institutions and the values which surround and support the work of the seminaries themselves. Dorothy Bass, a researcher for the study of theological education in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), employs Lawrence Cremin's concept of an "educational ecology" to describe this larger educational context. She indicates how radically that ecology has changed since most American seminaries were founded in the mid-nineteenth century.

...the secularization of the common school, the privatization and fragmentation of family life, the reported weakness of Christian education in the congregation, and the near-demise of the religious publication, the student Christian movement, and the recognizably denominational college have made it far more difficult for theological schools to do their job. Vast networks of spiritual formation, leadership recruitment, and pre-seminary academic preparation have dissipated. Those responsible for the theological education of clergy are now charged with accomplishing many tasks and dimensions of preparation that were once shared within a vital configuration. (Dorothy C. Bass, "Historical Context of Presbyterian Theological Institutions", 1990)

As a result of these changes in the educational ecology, we no longer have a general population that has absorbed Christian literature and history as a part of its cultural heritage. Children are not exposed to Bible stories and prayer in public school. Young people are not groomed for leadership in the church through Christian student organizations and congregational youth groups to the extent that they once were. The

influence of Sunday school and confirmation has diminished in many places. Few parents see themselves as teachers of the faith for their family.

While the influence of many institutions that once undergirded the seminary in its specific task has been weakened, the influence of the secular college or university has increased. More people in this society go to college. In 1988, 75 percent of persons aged twenty-five and older were high school graduates and 20 percent were college graduates compared to less than 25 percent high school graduates and 4 percent college graduates in 1940.

The highly educated population is balanced by a large population that cannot read. Twenty to 30 million U.S.-born citizens are functionally illiterate, that is, read at a fifth grade level or below. An additional 35 million function at a second grade reading level.

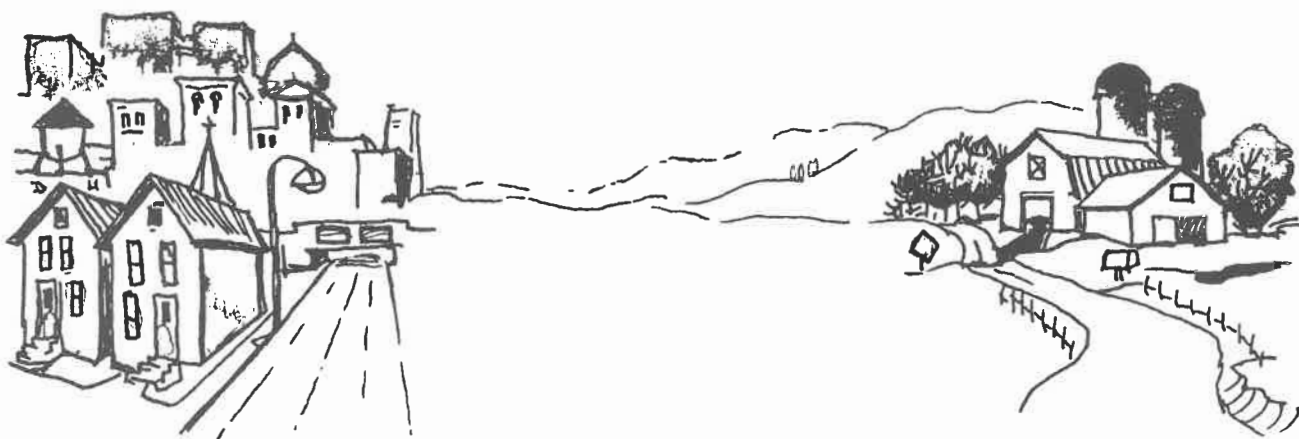
These issues in the broader educational environment impinge upon the task of seminaries in several ways. First, the mission context is changed. Seminaries now need to prepare candidates to minister both to the increasing number of highly educated men and women

in the population and to a large sector of functionally illiterate people.

Second, the changed educational environment affects the readiness of candidates to engage in theological studies. They come to seminary with widely divergent academic and ecclesiastical experiences. There is no assurance that even a student who has grown up in a Christian congregation and has a college degree will have a basic understanding of biblical content and the teachings of his or her church.

Third, seminaries are now playing a larger role in providing educational opportunities for the laity. Today some adults look to seminaries for nurture in the faith which earlier generations found more frequently in youth and campus ministries, denominational colleges, and congregational adult education.

This study proposes new approaches to a wide range of theological education tasks. Although once shared by many partners, in recent times these tasks increasingly have fallen to seminaries, sometimes diffusing the focus and over-extending the faculties of the seminaries.



Appendix B: Recommendations Approved by the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly

The Task Force on the Study of Theological Education proposed eight recommendations to the 1993 Churchwide Assembly. All were approved by margins of 90% or more.

1. **Foundational Priority.** To affirm theological education as a foundational priority, recognizing that the preparation of leaders for mission is essential to all the ministries of this church.
2. **Eleven Imperatives.** To adopt the eleven imperatives for theological education, as presented in the Report of the Study of Theological Education for Ministry to the 1993 Churchwide Assembly, as the planning and guiding focus for preparation of leaders for this church into the 21st century. (The full text of these imperatives is given in Appendix C.)
3. **Seminary Clusters.** To call upon the eight seminaries of the ELCA to form by the fall of 1994 three to five clusters for leadership education, each cluster (a) providing a full range of theological education for mission on its territory and (b) developing a consolidated governance structure for decision-making that can plan and implement a comprehensive program of theological education, in consultation with the Division for Ministry and in accordance with the timeline contained in the Study of Theological Education for Ministry, which provides for cluster governance and administrative structure recommendations to be developed out of a planning process for approval by the boards of the seminaries involved.
4. **Academic Readiness Standards.** To call upon the eight seminaries of the ELCA, during the 1993–1995 biennium, to develop common standards of academic readiness for students entering master's level programs in preparation for rostered ministries in this church for recommendation to the Division for Ministry.
5. **Ecclesial Readiness Standards.** To commend to the Division for Ministry, as it reviews the ELCA candidacy process in consultation with seminaries and synods, the development of churchwide standards for early discernment of ecclesial readiness of students entering master's level programs in preparation for rostered ministries in this church.
6. **First-Call Theological Education.** To direct the Division for Ministry, during the 1993-1995 biennium, to encourage synods and other providers to develop pilot programs of structured theological education in the first three years of ordained ministry; to monitor such programs in order to develop churchwide standards and guidelines; and with the Task Force on the Study of Theological Education for Ministry, to prepare a proposal for churchwide implementation of a first-call education requirement for the 1995 Churchwide Assembly.
7. **Theological Education by Extension (TEE).** To direct the Division for Ministry to facilitate development of models of theological education by extension and distance learning, and with the task force to prepare a proposal for the 1995 Churchwide Assembly for a flexible system to make theological education accessible to a broader spectrum of people.
8. **Funding.** To direct the Division for Ministry, through its Task Force on the Study of Theological Education, to promote study and discussion, throughout the ELCA during the 1993–1995 biennium, of proposals for funding theological education as a foundational priority of this church's mission, and prepare funding proposals for recommendation to the ELCA Church Council for consideration by the 1995 Churchwide Assembly.

Appendix C: Imperatives for Theological Education

These 11 imperatives for theological education were approved by the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as the planning and guiding focus for preparation of leaders for this church into the 21st century.

(Note: These imperatives, prepared between 1991 and 1993, do not reflect the present reality of three lay rosters—associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses—officially recognized by action of the 1993 Assembly on the Study of Ministry. In most instances, where *associates in ministry* is used, all lay rosters can be assumed.)

1. Depth in the Faith

This church needs pastors and lay leaders whose various ministries are rooted in the Bible, history and theology, and shaped by the Lutheran confessional heritage. We seek men and women whose personal faith in Jesus Christ is nourished and renewed through a disciplined devotional life. No longer can we depend on a Christian culture to transmit basic Christian knowledge and values. Leaders must be competent to teach and preach the truth of the faith with accuracy and clarity. Secular ideologies, spiritual movements and world religions offer competing faith claims to which Christians must be prepared to respond out of the depths of their tradition. People look to their lay and ordained ministers for theological and spiritual leadership that is based on an intimate knowledge of scripture, a distinctively Lutheran theological understanding, and contemporary methods of theological reflection.

2. Mission Outreach

God's mission requires leaders in all the ministries of the church who are prepared and committed to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Evangelical outreach by faithful and articulate leaders is obedient to Christ's Great Commission and essential to the identity, vitality, and continuity of this church. Approaches in theological education are needed which help pastors and other leaders recognize and respond to the spiritual hunger of people in their congregations and in the communities beyond their congregations.

Pastors must themselves be equipped so that they can equip others to join with them in sharing their faith with those who have never heard, those who have not believed, and those who are out of touch with the means of grace within the community of faith. They must learn to lead congregations which serve as mission outposts for the faith.

3. Practical Congregational Needs

Congregations are asking for leaders with a high level of competence in the practice of ministry. Practical competence includes not only specific skills of ministry, but also the integration of practice with spiritual and theological depth, sensitivity to interpersonal relationships, and beyond that an overall capacity for leadership. If congregations are going to become mission outposts for the renewal of the faith in our secular context, they need pastors who inspire through their teaching, preaching and leadership at worship, who empower members for their ministry, and who provide vision and direction for the ministry team. They need associates in ministry and other lay leaders who provide expert leadership in specific areas such as education, evangelism, music, and youth ministry. In order to meet the demands of congregational ministry today, leaders need both the gifts that come from the Spirit and practical competencies that must be learned. Seminary education provides an introduction to basic ministry skills and the art of theological and practical integration. These must be refined and expanded through continuing education, practice, supervision, and reflection. Most seminary graduates need to develop competence in a variety of practical areas, including evangelism, stewardship, and administration.

4. Cultures and Contexts

With the growing diversity and interdependence of cultures that increasingly mark contemporary American society, we need lay and ordained ministers who are sensitive to and knowledgeable about the cultures of those they serve and who are able to adapt their ministry to different contexts. Global economic, political, and cultural realities shape the overall setting of contemporary

ministry. At the same time, ministry is always carried out in a particular culture and a local context. The practical demands of ministry are more complex and difficult to meet when one is ministering in cultures and contexts other than one's own. This church needs leaders who can minister effectively with people from a diverse range of life situations including ethnic origins, vocational and educational experience, family situations, regional variations, types of community, and political value systems. Awareness of cultures and contexts should also lead Christian leaders to speak out against trends in society that are contrary to the faith they hold.

5. **African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American Candidates**

This church needs to invite Christian leaders from the African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American communities to consider service in the church as pastors or associates in ministry. It also must provide these candidates with theological education that is congruent with their varied cultural perspectives and that prepares them for rostered ministry throughout the ELCA. Mission in North America requires that the ELCA learn how to relate the Gospel to the growing number of African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American persons who live here. These communities are often better served by pastors and associates in ministry from these communities. Furthermore, people from all communities will be nurtured in the faith more effectively within the ELCA if this church body recognizes the particularity of each community and becomes more inclusive of a variety of cultural values and styles. This second task belongs to this whole church, but it will not happen without the leadership of a growing number of pastors and associates in ministry who are themselves Asian, African-American, Native American, and Hispanic.

6. **Indigenous Lay Leaders**

This church needs to find appropriate ways to provide indigenous lay leaders identified by their communities with the basic theological education they need for ministry in their settings. Many of those

with potential for being effective ministers in their communities are not able to leave their communities for extended periods of time for training. Furthermore, there may be ways in which their effectiveness for certain ministries is enhanced by their continuity in their community. Some indigenous leaders are already being licensed for local service by their bishops. Various training programs are being developed locally and synodically to serve them. If the ELCA authorizes a wider range of ministries, such as lay catechists and evangelists, the demand will increase for approaches to theological education that are highly accessible, adaptable, and portable.

7. **Life-Long Learning**

Because of the changing, diverse context of our mission, it is necessary that leaders continually grow in faith, expand their skills and increase their knowledge through continuing education. Even at their very best, seminary degree programs cannot teach all one needs to know for the practice of ministry. While continuing education is expected of all pastors and associates in ministry, it is certainly needed during the early, formative years of ministry in a specific context. Continuing education is critically important at other points of personal and professional transition which call for fresh theological reflection, refinement of skills, response to changing societal issues, or orientation to new ministry contexts. This church must encourage and provide resources for its lay and ordained leaders to continually develop and renew their gifts for ministry through disciplined patterns of life-long learning.

8. **Ministry in Daily Life**

The education of ordained pastors and other leaders in the church should prepare them to assist the people of the church to integrate their life and faith. In addition, an increasing number of Christians who are not pursuing a church occupation seek intellectual exploration of their faith and theological reflection on their ministries in the world. Many have the time and interest to study theology with the same academic thoroughness that they apply to secular and professional fields

of study. These lay members live on the cutting edge of mission. They engage structures of society and are in regular contact with people of other faiths and with people scarcely related to organized religion. Their faith and ministry could be enhanced if, in addition to congregationally based adult education, they had access to programs of theological education at an advanced level. Such programs would have to relate to their ministries in the world and be adaptable to the demands of their primary commitments to family or work.

9. Scholarly Discourse and Reflection

How the church engages its mission is constantly challenged, focused, and refined by lively and critical theological reflection. Since their origin in a sixteenth century university context, Lutherans have been committed to preparing pastors, teachers and other leaders to engage in theological reflection in congregations, colleges, and seminaries. The seminaries of the Lutheran church have had a special responsibility for transmitting the Lutheran theological tradition to successive generations of leaders. For the sake of the integrity and vitality of the Lutheran theological tradition and the contribution it makes to the ecumenical church, it is essential that all Lutheran theological faculties not only prepare leaders, but also serve as communities of theological discourse, which are a resource to this church in the development and review of theological positions. Furthermore, to ensure the continuation of a strong Lutheran theological tradition, this church needs to encourage and support some centers where theological education at the doctoral level can be pursued: major divinity schools where a strong Lutheran presence is consciously developed and maintained, ecumenical consortia in which a Lutheran institution collaborates with institutions of other denominations, seminary-based academic doctoral studies which may draw in scholars and expertise from neighboring academic institutions.

10. Life Circumstances of Candidates

Just as the context of the ELCA's mission is diverse, so also are those who come to be prepared to serve that mission: candidates young and old; candidates just out of college and candidates with a variety of work and life experience; single candidates and candidates with families; candidates who carry high debt loads and work to support themselves and their families while they prepare for ministry; candidates with advanced degrees and candidates who lack academic preparation for theological study; candidates steeped in the Christian tradition and Lutheran ethos and new Christians with little experience of the church; candidates who are mobile and candidates who are bound to particular places and communities; candidates who bring a variety of perspectives as women and men, as members of the dominant culture, and as members of various racial and ethnic communities. Some within this diversity have experienced systemic discrimination. This church needs to provide options in theological education that are responsive to the varied circumstances in the lives of ministry candidates.

11. Ecumenical Interdependence

Since a diversity of religions and Christian communions is part of our context for mission, people preparing for leadership in the ELCA need to learn how to work and study together with people of other traditions. It is vital that theological education in the ELCA build ecumenical understanding and model patterns of dialogue and cooperation among Christians and adherents of other faiths. Wherever possible, cooperative relationships and scholarly exchange programs should be fostered between Lutheran seminaries and those of other traditions and among Lutheran seminaries around the world. Major ecumenical seminaries which prepare some leaders for service in the Lutheran church play a role in fostering ecumenical interdependence.

Appendix D: Statement on Academic Readiness

In response to the call of the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly for the seminaries to develop common standards of academic readiness for students entering master's level programs in preparation for rostered ministries of this church, the deans of the eight ELCA seminaries prepared the following statement for recommendation to the Division for Ministry board the following statement.

With regard to common admissions standards, as these pertain to academic prerequisites, the seminaries of the ELCA, in accordance with ATS standards, require a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, or its equivalent, for admission to the M.Div., M.A., M.T.S., M.R.E., M.A.R., AND M.S.M. programs.

The standard of academic performance at the undergraduate level that normally obtains an admissions decision is a "B" average (2.5 or above on a 4.0 scale). However, admissions decisions also take into account patterns of progress in an applicant's academic history, the degree of difficulty of the undergraduate program, the standards of the school attended, performance in course-work most relevant to theological studies, academic letters of reference, success in other graduate programs, performance in career life, and other measures such as Graduate Record Exams, where these become a factor.

With regard to academic readiness, the seminaries of the ELCA recommend a broad background in the liberal arts, including such courses as English, history, modern languages, philosophy, Greek, communications, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. The applicant should possess intellectual ability for critical and reflective thinking.

The seminaries also expect that ELCA candidates will acquire basic acquaintance with the Scriptures and the catechism as a part of the experience of ELCA congregational involvement that is anticipated in connection with ecclesial readiness, as defined in the ELCA candidacy process.

Furthermore, the seminaries desire to build upon the candidates' knowledge of the Bible and catechism by incorporating biblical introduction and theology of the catechism into their various programs of the introduction to theological study. In this way, the biblical

and catechetical components of ecclesial readiness are joined to academic readiness in the initial stages of theological study.

Beyond this, seminaries provide reading lists and study guides to candidates prior to the beginning of their seminary education, and usually incorporate these pre-seminary academic preparations into their introductory level course work.

The welcome diversity of today's seminary student bodies makes it inevitable that there will be significant differences in academic readiness among entering students. Therefore, the seminaries pursue a pattern for insuring academic readiness that blends stated expectations, assessment in key areas of competence, and a strategy for introductory studies which brings students with different academic backgrounds to a common level of participation in theological discourse early in the program of studies.

It is also important to note that introductory courses offered for credit are, in all cases, genuinely masters level courses. Even when they incorporate remediation, they do so in the context of developing the base of seminary theological studies. Furthermore, all seminaries of the ELCA provide opportunities for well-prepared students to test out of introductory requirements, gain advanced standing, or enter into an honors program.

Both the seminaries and the Division for Ministry stand ready to provide advice on specific resources to candidates, congregations, and candidacy committees.

Appendix E: First-Call Theological Education Churchwide Standards and Guidelines

Preface

First-call theological education was introduced in the Report on the Study of Theological Education to the 1993 Churchwide Assembly. That assembly directed the Division for Ministry to encourage synods to develop pilot programs of structured theological education in the first three years of ordained ministry. The 1995 Churchwide Assembly took action to require all pastors and rostered lay leaders, during their first three years under call, to participate in structured programs of theological education. These programs are to be designed and supervised by the synods, following churchwide standards. On the basis of broad consultation and the experience of pilot programs sponsored by more than forty synods, the Division for Ministry has prepared these churchwide standards and guidelines.

The *churchwide standards* define what is required of all programs of first-call theological education. They describe common outcomes to be achieved, the essential elements in the program design, and the administrative flexibility and responsibility necessary for the program to be effective. The standards do not prescribe specific courses or procedures. The *guidelines* which follow offer concrete examples and practical advice for those responsible for developing programs of first-call theological education.

First-call theological education needs both churchwide standards and synodical flexibility. Agreement on overall purpose and intended outcomes is essential for churchwide coherence and for the general compatibility of the various synodical or regional programs with one another and with basic seminary education. Synodical flexibility is essential for local initiative and for genuine contextualization, which is one of the principal values of the program. Every phase of implementation should thus attempt a creative balance of churchwide coherence and local variations.

Part I. Churchwide Standards

All newly rostered pastors, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will participate in

structured programs of theological education during their first three years of service under call. Qualified programs of first-call theological education will meet the churchwide standards promoted here.

A. Goals

The common purpose of first-call theological education is to enhance the transition from seminary to parish. The desired outcome is that during their first three years under call, pastors and rostered lay leaders in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will have made the initial transition into their respective leadership roles and will have grown in knowledge of God's Word and the Lutheran confessional witness, in love for Jesus Christ and his Church, and in commitment to its mission.

In order to address this common purpose, ELCA programs of first-call theological education will give special attention to three goals:

1. The personal development of leadership style and collegiality, spiritual discipline, and ministerial identity appropriate to the respective rosters;
2. Competence in and overall integration of various aspects of the practice of ministry;
3. Discernment of the local and regional context of ministry.

B. Design

1. Components

Every ELCA program of first-call theological education will include the following four learning components:

- a. *Core program*, that is, the common events designed for and by all rostered leaders in a geographical area: synod, multi-synodical, regional. These events are to total approximately one week per year (i.e., 25 contact hours). Core programs should provide the flexibility to meet the specific needs, patterns, and geographic distribution of persons on the respective rosters: ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, associates in ministry, diaconal ministers, and deaconesses. First-call rostered leaders should participate in planning the core programs.

- b. *Electives*, that is, offerings directed toward areas of specific need or interest which are available through a wide variety of seminars, workshops, summer school classes, synodical or churchwide events, advanced graduate courses, distance learning programs. These programs are to total approximately one week per year (i.e., 25 contact hours.)
- c. *Mentoring* with an experienced colleague on an individual basis or in small groups that meet regularly. In consultation with the synod, new pastors will establish a relationship with a mentor or a colleague group.
- d. *Structured reading* designed to support and extend the other educational components in fulfilling the overall goals of the program.

2. Integration

First-call theological education programs will include a balance of contextual awareness, theological analysis, and action/reflection methodology. Theological study is to be integrated with reflection on the practice of ministry.

3. Individualized Learning Contracts

First-call pastors or rostered laypersons in consultation with synod and congregational representatives will develop individualized learning contracts to achieve the stated purpose and goals through the four educational components. Programs will vary according to the creativity of the planners and the possibilities of the context.

C. Administration

Every synod is responsible for providing a program of first-call theological education, either alone or with other synods, in which all first-call pastors and rostered lay leaders participate for three years. The synod or synods working together are free to create and adapt specific programs as they see fit, within the stated standards regarding the goals and the design. Synods are encouraged to call on seminaries, continuing education centers, and/or churchwide units as partners in providing the first-call theological education programs.

As synods develop programs of first-call theological education, they should consult regularly with ELCA seminaries in order to assure that this phase of minis-

terial formation is in continuity with and complements the degree programs offered by the seminaries in preparation for rostered ministries. These conversations will provide data and insight for the ongoing curricular adjustment at the seminaries.

Part II. Guidelines for Implementation

These guidelines provide a commentary on the standards and offer fuller explanations and examples of the goals, design, and administration of first-call theological education programs. The guidelines are intended to stimulate thought and provide practical advice, not to impose restrictions upon local flexibility.

A. Goals

First-call theological education programs focus on three dimensions of developing leadership of pastors and rostered lay leaders. To assist synods in their planning, each dimension has been developed in greater detail by a working group, including representatives from synods, seminaries, continuing education centers, churchwide units, and first call-pastors.

1. Ministerial Identity

- Believing in God and living from the promise that God's Word will accomplish God's purpose in the lives of people and congregations.
- Moving from being a ministerial candidate to being a pastor or rostered lay leader involved in lifelong learning.
- Articulating a vision of evangelical pastoral or diaconal ministry.
- Balancing ministerial and personal identity through the development of appropriate boundaries and an understanding of appropriate and inappropriate conduct.
- Collegiality in ministry, accountability, and mutuality of the various rosters.
- Developing spiritual discipline that deepens one's relationship with God.
- Learning to wrestle with the complexity of demands, expectations, challenges, and disappointments of ministerial leadership.
- Finding fulfillment and joy in ministry.
- Addressing one's own personal, emotional, physical, and interpersonal health.

- Learning to live in the conversation between God's Word in scripture and human life in the concrete context of one's ministry.

In addition, an in-depth study specifically related to Pastoral Identity, is available through the Division for Ministry.

2. *Discernment of Context*

Listening, respecting, and attending to the following contextual realities:

- the history and present character of the congregation and its members
- the neighborhood and wider community
- the state and region
- the nation and the world
- synodical, churchwide, and ecumenical expressions of the church

Bringing the following factors to bear in the consideration of these contextual realities:

- interpersonal relationships
- cultural/ethnic presence
- socio-economic conditions
- historical and contemporary dynamics
- geo-political issues
- religious pluralism

Giving special attention to the outcast, the unbeliever, and the spiritually impoverished.

3. *Ministerial Skills and Practice*

Integrating ministerial skills and practice with the gospel.

Assessing and developing capabilities in the following specific areas of congregational ministry:

- preaching
- worship leadership
- teaching
- evangelism and intentional outreach
- stewardship
- community building in the congregation
- encouragement and support of the laity in ministry
- administration
- work with conflict
- youth and family ministry
- social ministry
- ecumenical dialogue and cooperation

Learning to understand and implement these various capabilities as dimensions of apostolic ministry within the ministry of the whole people of God, by bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world and by showing concern for the poor.

B. *Core Program Participation*

Some core program events could integrate persons from several roster groups in order to explore shared areas of concern such as faith issues and spiritual development as well as the complementarity and interdependence of ministries. In order to honor the particularity of the rosters and to meet practical needs, core programs may be offered for each specific roster group:

a. *Ministers of Word and Sacrament*

Core programs will normally include all the first-call pastors within an individual synod or a group of synods working in cooperation with each other, sometimes on a region-wide basis.

b. *Rostered Lay Ministers*

Diaconal Ministers. As an alternative for diaconal ministers, synods might utilize a core program provided to one common site for one week during the summer, in conjunction with the ELCA formation program for diaconal ministers. A summer program for all new ELCA diaconal ministers would enhance their group identity within the ELCA. Even where attendance may involve considerable travel costs, it is expected that at least one such week will be part of every diaconal minister's three-year plan.

Associates in Ministry. For first-call associates in ministry, some core program events could be part of the annual synodical or regional events provided for all associates in ministry in the area.

Deaconesses. The core program for deaconesses could be tied to their biennial assembly.

Because of the geographic distribution of rostered lay ministers, it may be difficult in some cases for synods to provide them with core programs that are appropriate and accessible. In such cases the entire first-call requirement (two weeks or 50 contact hours) could be met through electives,

designed by consultation among the first-call rostered leader and representatives of the synod and the congregation.

Participation in an area's core program of first-call theological education for several days each year will provide a context for developing mutual collegiality. The core program is intended to enhance the relationship of new pastors and rostered lay ministers with one another, with their mentors, with synodical staff and with the leaders provided by a continuing education center and/or seminary. The fresh perspectives, insights, and discoveries of the recently rostered ministers can be shared with their more experienced colleagues in the core events to enrich the ministry of all.

C. Accountability and Supervision

This entire process of first-call theological education involves a consensus among the individual, the congregation or agency, and the synodical representative. The mechanism or leverage to require participation in this program must be found within the ongoing life of the synod, since a seminary has already granted its degree and a candidacy committee has given its final approval for rostered ministry. Following direct discussions with the calling body and the candidate, the bishop will make sure that support for such a program is written into the letter of call. Once an individual plan is agreed upon within the terms of the call, a person designated by the synod has the responsibility of overseeing its progress. Upon completion of the program there could be a certificate or other formal recognition by the synod.

Normally, participation and completion of this program by the first-call pastor or rostered lay minister will be presupposed prior to the bishop's recommendation for a new call to a congregation or specialized ministry. A few bishops have expressed an interest in linking this three-year program with a three-year term call. Whatever the specific mechanism, this program involves mandatory participation, just as the M.Div. is a normal requirement for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. In extreme cases, willful disregard of the letter of call could occasion the process of discipline according to the governing documents of this church.

1. The First-Call Pastor or Rostered Lay Leader

In accepting and signing the letter of call, the first-call pastor or rostered lay leader expresses her/his commitment to involvement in first-call theological education.

The pastor will make use of the time provided by the congregation for participation in all components of the program.

The pastor will contribute PACE funds as fully as possible, and will apply for ELCA Growth in Excellence in Ministry PACE Growth Awards should that assistance be needed.

The pastor will work with the congregation's Staff Support Committee (or other designated group) and the synodical representative to develop the learning contract or continuing education covenant, and to provide periodic reports of progress toward the goals of the contract or covenant.

2. The Congregation/Institution/Agency

The congregation (or other calling body) will express its commitment to providing both time and financial support for first-call theological education in its call documents.

Time will be provided for the first-call pastor to participate in all components of the program.

Financial support will be provided to the best of the congregation's ability. It is hoped that in most cases PACE standards can be met. Where this is not possible, the congregation will support the pastor's application for an ELCA Growth in Excellence in Ministry PACE Growth Award.

The congregation's Staff Support Committee, or other designated group, will work with the pastor and synodical representative to develop the learning contract or covenant, and to provide periodic review of progress toward the goals of the contract or covenant.

3. Synod

The initiative and responsibility for this program will reside with the synods. A synodical program should focus on the particular needs and strengths of that synod. The new pastors assigned to a given synod will have been educated at many different seminaries and approved by the candidacy committees of many different synods. The rostered lay ministers will also vary in educational background, number, and distribution from synod to synod.

The synods may delegate responsibilities for the core program to another entity. Pilot projects have shown the complexities in developing core programs, especially in the second or third year when multiple groups are involved. Potential administrators or providers for a given area's core program include an ELCA seminary, a specialized unit of an ELCA seminary cluster, and the continuing education center(s) related to that area. Actual staffing of the sessions could come from many sources, such as local pastors or laity with special expertise, churchwide or synodical staff, and the staff of social service organizations.

Flexibility in planning and the maintenance of churchwide standards for theological education are two basic values to be considered by the synod in designing and administering first-call theological education.

Synods are encouraged to work together to develop inter-synodical or regional programs, especially for the "core program."

The Leadership Support Committee or its equivalent may be assigned the responsibility for all components of the program. Consultation with first-call pastors, providers, synod staff, churchwide units (Division for Ministry and Division for Congregational Ministries), experienced pastors, and others (e.g., community resources) should be an integral part of the planning. Decisions regarding the development of the program shall be lodged with the synod.

Below is a suggested list of steps a synod may follow in the start-up of the program and its implementation in congregations.

- a. Develop the synodical or multi-synodical planning group.
- b. Invite and train mentors or colleague leaders.
- c. Integrate newly rostered ministers into the program.
- d. Initiate, within 3 months of installation, a consultation among the pastor or rostered lay leader and the congregational representatives, to approve an overall covenant or contract.
- e. Receive the annual continuing education report.
- f. Assess the results of their program, in consultation with their providers, other synods, and the Division for Ministry, in relation to these standards and guidelines.

4. Churchwide Organization

The Division for Ministry, in consultation with the Division for Congregational Ministries and other churchwide units, assists in the overall implementation, research and evaluation of the program. This includes:

- a. Appointing and staffing an advisory committee.
- b. Preparing these standards and guidelines and distributing them to synods, congregations, and rostered leaders.
- c. Distributing information about the program to seminaries and seminarians.
- d. Serving as a consultant and communications link with those administering the program throughout the ELCA.
- e. Assessing the results of synodical programs in relation to these standards and guidelines.
- f. Reviewing these churchwide standards and guidelines.

D. Timeline

The requirement for all rostered ministers to participate in first-call theological education programs will become effective in fall 1997. Synods are encouraged to begin planning in the fall of 1995 and, where possible, to have programs in place for first-call rostered leaders in the fall of 1996. Most of the synods that are participating in pilot programs will begin holding events for first-call pastors in the fall of 1995. The pilot programs demonstrate that it takes considerable time, energy, and long-range planning for a synod or group of synods to launch such a program.

E. Costs

The costs for first-call theological education should be distributed among several parties:

1. The first-call pastor or rostered lay leader (\$250 annually is expected, but not always possible given their indebtedness and low starting salaries);
2. The congregation's compensation package (\$550 annually is expected, but not always possible since many first calls are carved out of small budgets);

3. Grants from ELCA PACE Growth funds administered by the Division for Ministry are available to rostered leaders whose congregations are not able to provide continuing education funds at the recommended churchwide level;
4. Subsidies from the synod for administrative costs, need-based scholarships, and travel equalization, as determined by the synod;
5. Churchwide subsidies for administrative, travel, and program costs for those synods with a larger than average number of first-call pastors and rostered lay leaders.

Subsidies are necessary and appropriate since this program is assisting leaders not only within the first call, but for future calls throughout this church. It would be unfair for the graduates and the first-call congregations to shoulder a churchwide responsibility on their own. Therefore, churchwide and synodical support will be provided as needed and possible.

F. Further Development and Resources

As with any new program, this initiative will need considerable creativity. It will require periodic review and adjustment. There should be substantial latitude for regional variations and attention to specific contexts. Even the nomenclature used in this proposal (e.g., “first-call theological education” or “core program”) is intentionally generic rather than specific, in order to leave room for regional creativity also in the names chosen. The Division for Ministry should monitor all programs carefully, facilitate an exchange of insights, and conduct a general review by 1999.

As resources for those who will be planning and administering these programs, the Division for Ministry is preparing a number of documents:

1. Churchwide standards for first-call theological education;
2. Guidelines, which contain ideas and examples for planning and administering the program;
3. Questions and options for synods starting a first-call theological education program;
4. A substantial study regarding the meaning of pastoral identity and the experiences which may enhance its development;
5. Information regarding resources available from other churchwide units;

6. Appropriate programs that can be accessed electronically; and
7. Reports of learnings from pilot projects.

These resources will be available upon request from the Division for Ministry following the 1995 Assembly.

Appendix F: Cluster Terminology

The various structural relationships and components of the interdependent theological education network envisioned in the Study of Theological Education and affirmed by the 1993 Churchwide Assembly are defined as follows:

A “**seminary cluster**” is an interdependent educational entity comprising formerly independent seminaries which function corporately to provide the needed range of theological education for mission in their common geographical area. By deploying resources and specializations among cluster members and through cooperative relationships with other providers of theological education on the territory, a cluster is expected to meet a wide variety of needs for professional degree programs, continuing education, and degree and non-degree training for indigenous lay leaders, pastoral assistants, and for the baptized for their ministry in daily life. In addition, a seminary cluster may provide an educational program or service as a specialization on behalf of all the clusters for the sake of the whole church.

“**Cooperative relationships**” as used in this report means the partnerships being developed between a seminary cluster and other providers of theological education on their common territory in order to provide aspects of needed leadership education from their respective resources.

“**Interdependent theological education network**” is the comprehensive term that includes the seminary clusters and the various educational partners with which they have formed cooperative relationships in order to meet overall needs for leadership development.

Appendix G: Timeline for Cluster Development

The 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly called upon the ELCA seminaries to develop into fully functioning clusters with common governance and administrative structures in place no later than the year 2003. The timeline referred to in the 1993 Assembly action outlines the major tasks and dates by which they are to be completed.

a. 1993–1995

1. Cluster Formation

By the fall of 1994 cluster alignments are to be approved by the respective seminary boards and ratified by the board of the Division for Ministry according to Criteria for the Formation of Clusters. These criteria were formulated in consultation with seminary faculties and boards and affirmed in spring 1994 by the division board.

2. Leadership Needs Assessment

Seminaries working with potential cluster partners are to assess needs for new or improved theological education offerings to meet emerging leadership needs on their common territory. Consultation with synodical and churchwide leadership is expected.

3. Specializations

By the spring of 1995 cluster partners are to determine specific programs and specializations to be offered by their cluster and a plan for deploying these responsibilities among the cluster partners. The Division for Ministry will initiate a process for identifying churchwide specializations to be offered on behalf of the entire theological education system by one seminary or cluster and not duplicated elsewhere.

4. Exploration of Appropriate Structures for Governance

Potential cluster partners are to begin exploring possible forms of joint decision making and governance which would provide the necessary legal

framework to allow for and support the accomplishment of cluster goals. Decisions about such structures must be made no later than fall 1999.

5. Cooperative Relationships with Other Theological Education Providers

Conversations should begin among cluster partners and other potential providers of theological education on the territory to see how responsibilities can be shared and what resources can be contributed toward fulfilling the imperatives.

b. 1995–1999

1. Churchwide Specialization

By 1997, specializations offered by one cluster for the sake of the whole church will be negotiated through the Theological Education Coordinating Committee and assigned by the Division for Ministry.

2. Cooperative Relationships with Other Theological Education Providers

Efforts will be intensified to identify and prioritize theological education needs and work with partners to design and implement plans to provide needed services and programs on the territory.

3. Formation of Cluster Governance and Administrative Structures

Decisions regarding cluster governance and administrative structures are to be made by seminary boards by spring 1999 and by the Division for Ministry by fall 1999.

c. 1999–2003

1. Implementation of Cluster Governance and Administrative Structures

Seminary boards and the board for the Division for Ministry will take all necessary actions regarding academic programs and structures of cluster governance and administration no later than the spring of 2003.

Appendix H: Functions and Composition of Theological Education Coordinating Committee

The Theological Education Coordinating Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Division for Ministry in the coordination and planning for a system of theological education.

a. Functions of the Theological Education Coordinating Committee:

1. Keeping before the ELCA and the seminaries a vision for a system of theological education which is open to meeting new needs and opportunities in the preparation of ordained and lay leaders for mission;
2. Advancing strategic planning by identifying and analyzing needs, conducting inventories of the entire system of theological education on a regular basis, evaluating resources, assessing new opportunities, and proposing strategies for action;
3. Monitoring the responsibilities and timelines assigned to various partners in the 1993 Report of the Task Force on the Study of Theological Education, including the progressive stages of cluster development, and reporting on progress made;
4. Advising the Division for Ministry regarding the funding of the ELCA system of theological education, giving special attention to the allocation of funds to the seminary clusters;
5. Identifying the needs for churchwide specializations and negotiating their placement among the seminary clusters for recommendation to the Division for Ministry board;
6. Initiating and coordinating conversations between and among seminary clusters and other theological education providers with a view to promoting cooperation;
7. Identifying issues related to educational standards and other policy issues affecting theological education within the ELCA and advising the Division for Ministry in addressing these issues;

8. Advocating for theological education as a foundational priority for the ELCA and articulating the seminary clusters' contributions, aspirations and needs in preparing ordained and lay leaders and as centers for theological discourse and research;
9. Assuming other functions as assigned by the Division for Ministry.

b. Committee Membership

Members of the Theological Education Coordinating Committee will bring experience in theological education and competence in dealing with issues and trends in theological education, in the ELCA and in society as they affect the preparation of ordained and lay leaders. For the 1995–1997 biennium, 12–14 persons will be named to the committee by the Division for Ministry board. During this initial two year period, as the clusters begin to function, each seminary will be represented on the committee. Other committee members will be persons working in continuing education, in ELCA related colleges and universities, and in non-ELCA theological institutions. Two members will be from the Division for Ministry board currently serving on its theological education committee, with one serving as chairperson of the coordinating committee. A staff member from the Division for Ministry will serve in an advisory capacity.

At the close of the 1995–1997 biennium, one representative will be named from each seminary cluster rather than from each individual seminary. The overall size of the committee will decrease accordingly.

c. Evaluation

In recognition of the ongoing evolution of theological education in the ELCA, the continuing need for this committee, its specific functions and composition shall be reviewed each biennium by the board of the Division for Ministry.