

GATHERING MODULES

Word, Sacrament and Psychotherapy

This module will explore the intersections as well as the clear distinctions between spiritual care and Christian psychology in matters of diagnosis, treatment formulation and outcome evaluations. The unique roles and functions of the pastor will be examined from the perspective of the parishioner seeking care.

Pastors will:

- a. Identify unhealthy psychotherapeutic responses to real spiritual needs.
- b. Examine models of response to human pain and the desire for happiness.
- c. Review critical distinctions between care of the soul and cure of the soul.
- d. Identify unhealthy pastoral responses to real psychological needs.
- e. Explore how pastoral practice influences parishioners' willingness to seek individual care.

Shepherding Souls: The Classic Model for the Care of Souls in Contemporary Practice

The longer tradition of Lutheran pastoral work is called *see/sorge*, or “care/cure of souls.” This session explores the implications of the historic role of the pastor as spiritual physician for informed, attentive and intentional ministry to people who wrestle with the complexities of life in the 21st Century.

Pastors will:

- a. Grasp the essential components of the cure of souls in distinction from modern paradigms for pastoral ministry.
- b. Learn the fundamental components in spiritual diagnosis and cure.
- c. Explore some chronic spiritual ailments common in contemporary pastoral practice.
- d. Learn to design effective pastoral care plans and how to provide intentional intervention for spiritual problems.

The Noble Task: A Christ-centered Paradigm for Pastoral Self-Care

The nature of pastoral work often isolates the pastor spiritually and undermines his ministry from within. This topic examines the practice of meditation and prayer and how a pastor both cultivates and maintains a good conscience before God and man.

Pastors will:

- a. Review the essence of the pastoral office and the nature of pastoral work.
- b. Explore the Christocentric formation of a good conscience and its central role for spiritual health.
- c. Learn to prepare for spiritual attack as the natural consequence of ministry in Christ's name and stead so their joy is not undermined.
- d. Learn the essential components in the practice of prayer and meditation upon the Word of God.

Pastoral Ethics and Spiritual Care

Clergy will be challenged to participate in a review of key ethical concepts that influence the practice of spiritual care. Pastors will also participate in casuistry to explore specific ethical issues that underlie pastoral counsel. Matters addressed will include: mandatory reporting, confidentiality, professional boundaries and ethical decision making.

Pastors will:

- a. Acknowledge the importance of “mindfulness” in reviewing one’s own ethical practices.
- b. Appreciate how an inequity of “power” influences all interactions with parishioners.
- c. Examine the primary boundaries that are regarded as essential for ethical counsel.
- d. Consider their pastoral habits regarding routine confidentiality and privacy of the confessional.
- e. Review an ethical problem-solving template.

The Silent Epidemic: Compassion Fatigue

Pastors are accustomed to giving sacrificially of their time, love and energy. This module examines the necessity for pastoral self-care in light of research findings about the diminished health, well-being and capacity of “people who love too much.”

Pastors will:

- a. Become acquainted with the threats of compassion fatigue.
- b. Explore to what extent, if at all, their lives are challenged by work-related stress.
- c. Become familiar with signs and symptoms of burnout.
- d. Examine the impact that work environment may have on worker well-being.
- e. Review coping strategies essential for response to major stressors.
- f. Determine which resiliency-building options may be useful for personal and pastoral well-being.

Authority vs. Power: The Pastoral Pitfall

Improper wielding of power in the church is destructive, while proper exercise of divinely-given authority is edifying. This session helps the pastor to distinguish headship from dictatorship and to cultivate patterns of leadership that flow from God-given order and authority within the church.

Pastors will:

- a. Learn the crucial distinction between power and authority and the proper use of each.
- b. Learn to audit their subordination to God-given authority.
- c. Learn to evaluate the relational dimensions of their ministry.
- d. Learn to exercise authority with courage and sensitivity.

What Pastors Need to Know About EQ (Emotional Intelligence)

Pastors will participate in assessment of personal “EQ” before the training experience. They will examine the foundations of the concept, and will explore the application of EQ to one’s perceived effectiveness personally and professionally. Pastors will be challenged to complete ongoing EQ practice/study between DOXOLOGY training events in a 10 hour online training module.

Pastors will:

- a. Become acquainted with traditional definitions of EQ (emotional intelligence).
- b. Examine the component parts of EQ.
- c. Review the scores from their personal EQ survey and will be given interpretive information.
- d. Consider how EQ influences the nature of their ministry and their spiritual care effectiveness.
- e. Explore the opportunities to establish personal goals and work on an EQ development program.

Out of the Depths: Sadness, Despair and Recovery

Recurrent bouts with sadness and occasional or chronic depression are rampant among clergy. This session examines the environmental and spiritual factors that exacerbate pastoral sadness and explores spiritual resources that lead to stability and recovery for fulfilling ministry.

Pastors will:

- a. Explore the occupational hazard of loneliness and its impact among clergy.
- b. Identify the warning signals that indicate spiritual and emotional depletion.
- c. Learn to lament before God as a means of dealing with spiritual hurt.
- d. Grasp the unique dimensions of marriage, friendship, collegial relationships and a brother/father confessor in combating spiritual isolation.

Depression, Dysfunction and Despair

This conversation will explore how the biology and emotional states of depression can work to separate parishioners from an ability to take possession of God's good gifts. Clear discussion of depression and suicidal thinking equips pastors to detect how they can best bring the Word of God to people who suffer.

Pastors will:

- a. Understand the common features and causes of depression.
- b. Examine spiritual myths that often surround mental illness.
- c. Review important ways of supporting individuals who are depressed.
- d. Consider pastoral responses to best serve those who are depressed.
- e. Become familiar with signs and symptoms that invite immediate referral.

Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct is an ever-present temptation for all people. This module explores the specific personal and situational circumstances that increase one's vulnerability to sexual misconduct, identifying warning signs and suggesting pre-emptive strategies. The conversation will also examine the phenomenon of pornographic reliance/addictions. Pastors are invited to do a personal self-assessment to both create mindfulness about their vulnerability to those temptations and to inform their counsel for others who struggle.

Pastors will:

- a. Understand the scope of behavior regarded as "sexual misconduct."
- b. Examine specific risks and warnings about what increases one's risk of engaging in misconduct.

- c. Review explicit prodromal characteristics identified with vulnerability to misconduct.
- d. Determine what proactive practices may help to defend boundaries in this area.
- e. Become familiar with characteristics of sexual addiction.

Deliver Us From Evil: A Christ-centered strategy for exploring and fighting the devil's schemes

Flesh and blood are not the real enemy of Christ's church and her ministers. This session presents a Scriptural and Confessional paradigm for discerning and healthy ministry in the face of the attacks of the Evil One.

Pastors will:

- a. Learn to handle conflict with discernment and tact.
- b. More fully appreciate his identity as a steward of God's sacred mysteries.
- c. Become more alert to common spiritual attacks on his ministry.
- d. Explore Scriptural and Confessional strategies for spiritual protections and joyful ministry.

ENCORE MODULES

Healthy Relationships with Difficult Souls

Christians who want to serve their Lord in His church may find that not everyone shares their opinion and perspective about matters important to them. This module explores the reality that even well-intentioned souls can collide unhappily in the service of the church. The presentation points to insights regarding what underlies and perpetuates the behavior of difficult souls. Choices about personal response styles are surveyed and strategies that may move individuals beyond hurt to hope and from paralysis to possibility for both spiritual and interpersonal renewal are offered.

Pastors and Laity will:

- a. Review Biblical roots, guidelines and realities informing our relationships with others.
- b. Examine models that are often used to bring about change in the behavior of a difficult soul.
- c. Be encouraged to adopt a compassionate view of the other.
- d. Review habitual response styles to difficult souls.
- e. Consider strategies that move difficult souls beyond relationship paralysis to hope.

I Will Build My Church (Part 1): Church and Ministry in essence

"Thank God, even a seven-year-old child knows what the church is." The Lutheran Confessions provide a clear and concise vision for the nature of the church and her mission (Smalcald Articles, XII) hinging around the preached Word of Christ. Current views of the church and pastoral work, in contrast, seem to lean heavily on secular business and industry models. This module reviews essential definitions for the church and her ministry on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions, then explores the practical implications of these definitions for the relationship between pastors and laity in the contemporary church.

Pastors and Laity will:

- a. Gain deeper appreciation for the church as God's own creation, created and nourished in Christ Jesus.
- b. Grasp more clearly the nature and work of the God-given Office of the Public Ministry.
- c. Explore the implications of the Lutheran doctrine of vocation and the priesthood of all believers for life in the church in the contemporary context.
- d. Review and evaluate alternate understandings of the church and her ministry.

Valid and Certain in Heaven Also: The cure of souls through individual Confession and Absolution

“Absolution, or the Power of the Keys, is an aid against sin and a consolation for a bad conscience; it is ordained by Christ in the Gospel (Matthew 16:19). Therefore, Confession and Absolution should by no means be abolished in the Church.” (Smalcald Articles, VII [1]) The conscientious use of Confession and Absolution is rare among contemporary evangelical Lutherans. Yet Luther himself regarded it as part of the ordinary care of souls. How should the pastor use this long-neglected pastoral gift in his ministry to the burdened souls under his care? This module reviews the theological foundation and practical use of the Keys in the contemporary context.

Pastors will:

- a. Review the Biblical and Confessional framework for the practice of Confession/Absolution (C/A).
- b. Explore the spiritual benefit of C/A in the Christian life.
- c. Examine the logistical aspects of teaching C/A and incorporating it into the normal life of the parish.
- d. Develop greater sensitivity toward the natural apprehensions of first-time penitents.
- e. Develop greater appreciation for the relational and experiential dimensions of C/A.
- f. Appraise their personal role as both confessor and penitent.

Caring for Brother Pastors: Traditional Care and Crisis Care

(A Reprise of the Template for Attentive, Intentional Pastoral Work)

Case studies are routinely regarded as the very best way of moving from theory to application. In this module, pastors will be invited to examine their responsibility to care for brother pastors. They will also be challenged to review the tools of spiritual diagnosis and ethical problem-solving. Final group discussion will allow an opportunity to discern that very often there are multiple and reasonable approaches available in service of their brother's needs.

Suicide: Detection, Prevention and Responses

This module will examine the extremely challenging pastoral care approaches to individuals who are having suicidal ideation. It will assist pastors to detect signs and symptoms that merit immediate referral. It will also increase pastoral confidence in responding to people who have found comfort in embracing the myths of suicide. Finally the module will point to matters of pastoral sensitivity and advocacy as one may need to provide care for survivors of a suicide.

Pastors will:

- a. Understand the stunning prevalence of suicidal ideation and behavior.

- b. Become familiar with strategies to identify dangerousness.
- c. Review important pastoral responses to individuals who are at risk.
- d. Examine and confront the myths that often surround suicidal thinking.
- e. Consider the needs of and pastoral responses to the survivors in the event of a suicide.

I Will Build My Church (Part 2): Church and Ministry in Mission

“The Kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer...” The Catechism’s simple faith seems radical when compared to the massive amount of energy expended in support of the church’s mission in our time. Where is the fine line between such confident faith and lazy indifference? How do congregations set about their work in their local community, neglecting neither the flock already gathered around Word and Sacrament and those “other sheep” the Good Shepherd bled and died to save? Is the care of souls a myopic focus on church members, or does it also include outreach to unbelievers? This module applies our Biblical and Confessional understanding of the church and her ministry to outreach in the light of the theological and cultural trends of our time.

Pastors and Laity will:

- a. Gain a fuller appreciation for the efficacious Word of the Gospel as the sole means by which the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies His church on earth.
- b. Grasp more clearly the distinctive and complementary roles of both preachers and hearers in the outreach of the Gospel.
- c. Evaluate some of the trends in contemporary media Christianity in light of Scripture and the Confessions.
- d. Explore the impact of growing secularism and the contemporary worldview among our unbelieving neighbors.
- e. Review some of the connections between Lutheran doctrine and historic practice in terms of outreach in the contemporary context.