

Feedback from Conference of Bishops on TEAC Recommendation 1D

The Conference of Bishops had a conversation with seminary presidents and received an update on the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) working group's progress during its March 2016 meeting. The Conference of Bishops affirmed the following statement at its meeting:

The Conference of Bishops, at its March 2016 meeting, affirms the importance of continuing theological education for rostered leaders lifted up in the TEAC report and affirms the expectation that every rostered leader engage in "a minimum of 50 contact hours per year of intentional continuing education." (Lifelong Learning and Development for Faithful Leaders adopted by the Churchwide Assembly in 1997) The Conference of Bishops further recommends that the CSM Leadership Committee of the CoB study the 1997 document, consult with other bishops and propose a plan for giving the 1997 recommendation meaningful structures of accountability, in service to Christ's mission.

**LUTHER SEMINARY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
AND
FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES
RESOLUTION REGARDING
THE ONGOING WORK OF THE
ELCA THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (TEAC)
February 6, 2016**

WHEREAS, after receiving the TEAC Report in our October 2015 meeting, the Boards passed a resolution dated October 10, 2015, that stated, in part:

“...THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we as the Luther Seminary Board of Directors, and the Luther Seminary Foundation Board of Trustees, (the ‘Joint Boards’) are committing to engage the TEAC report’s three recommendations more deeply at our February meeting, which are recommendations are:

- *to create and sustain a network of theological education that’ serves the mission of the gospel’;*
 - *to link vocational discernment and theological education for specific target audiences in and beyond the church, particularly on those whose leadership will strengthen the ‘missional future’ of the ELCA; and*
 - *to ensure the mission vibrancy and financial stability of the ELCA seminaries as they serve ‘their crucial roles in our theological education network.’*
- and

WHEREAS, the Joint Boards have, at this February meeting, further discussed and engaged the TEAC report as well as the work of discernment and reflection that has been undertaken by the Conference of Bishops, the leadership of the ELCA, the other ELCA Seminaries as well as Luther’s own Administration and Faculty,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Joint Boards remain committed to and supportive of the recommendations in the TEAC Report as set forth in the October Resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the Joint Boards, do hereby direct Luther Seminary’s Faculty and Administration to continue their work throughout the remainder of the 2015-2016 Academic Year, and beyond, to identify, plan for and implement specific steps to achieve financial and operational sustainability, mission vibrancy, innovative and creative changes in theological education, and collaborative work with and among the ELCA Seminaries, Synods, and the ELCA Administration, national and international Lutheran institutions, and other organizations that support our mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the Joint Boards, do hereby commit:

- to support such work;
- to stand ready to undertake our fiduciary duties in overseeing, considering, evaluating and responding to such efforts; and
- to do so in the context of the vision, mission and strategic plan of Luther Seminary.

Becky Brown,
Secretary, Board of Directors

Michael Schwartz,
Secretary, Foundation Board of Trustees

Date

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**LUTHER SEMINARY FACULTY RESPONSE:
TEAC (THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL)
DECEMBER 16, 2015**

SUMMARY OF OUR FACULTY DELIBERATIONS ON THE TEAC REPORT:

Luther Seminary educates leaders for Christian communities called and sent by the Holy Spirit to witness to salvation in Jesus Christ and to serve in God's world.

With ever-new urgency Luther Seminary, as a learning community, recognizes the Holy Spirit's gift of apostolic opportunity throughout God's beloved world and indeed here in North America. We seek to embody together the characteristic ecumenicity of the Lutheran confessional witness, formed and normed by the Holy Scriptures in conversation with a long and fruitful tradition of theological and missional inquiries both local and global. As a learning community, we are dedicated to a theology of faith active in love. We teach towards the truth that God makes *promises* to the world that gather and form *Christian communities* under God's judgment and mercy within a *world of neighbors* both familiar and strange. The distinctive characteristic of our current curriculum centers on deep attention to the way our learning activities are integrated around *the formation of persons in communities* called, gathered, and sent by God's promises in Jesus Christ.

In light of these commitments, we as the faculty of Luther Seminary appreciate the TEAC Report's focus on *what God is calling us to be and to do* as seminaries at this time.

- We affirm its stress on the twofold task of (1) *developing leaders for the church* and (2) *strengthening partnerships* with the local contexts and constituencies in which those leaders are emerging.
- We value the Report's consideration of seminary systems within *the ecology of the whole ELCA* and commit ourselves to *ongoing collaborative efforts* to provide theological education in ways that are faithful, effective, and sustainable.

In addition, there is strong unanimity among us as a faculty on the following three points:

- First, while we affirm much of the Report's framing of its task, we think that it could be even more pointed in affirming that its task is not merely to save an existing system of seminaries, a system which may be outmoded and in need of radical institutional change, but rather to *discern the future God desires for us*, how we might discern it together, and how we might be accountable to it.
- Second, while we affirm *collaboration* with other seminaries and the ELCA, we strongly believe that *centralization and the addition of layers of institutional structure* are not the best ways to foster the kind of innovation necessary for discerning and responding to God's call on us in our current context.

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- Lastly, and perhaps most importantly since this is the component of the TEAC Report that most directly affects our shared work as faculty, we have concerns and questions about simply sharing online courses on a common platform. Our ***Distributed Learning Program*** is one of our greatest assets as a seminary and its success has largely been due to the strong relationships within cohorts and between professors and students. Moreover, we would not want to lose the deeply interpersonal and communal aspects of formation that are a central component of Luther Seminary's curriculum.

RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC SECTIONS WITHIN THE REPORT: What follows are specific responses to each section within the TEAC Report:

Response to TEAC's Introductory Section:

- The TEAC Report rightly attends to the task of discerning God's call on us as theological educators. It rightly focuses its attention on the distinctive contributions of the Lutheran movement and on discerning the kind of public witness and service to which God is calling us. However, we think that it could be both more sharply focused and more expansive in its description of that task. For instance, what is the role of the ELCA seminaries within a wider ecumenical context?
- First, our focus as seminaries cannot merely be on saving existing institutional structures. Rather, we must focus on discerning God's future for us and having institutional structures emerge from that discernment. This may mean closing down some structures even as we invest resources in others.
- Second, although the document addresses the following two questions, it could be more pointed in highlighting them as the central questions we need to address as theological educators and seminaries: (1) what kind of leadership is the church (and society) going to need in the next few decades? And (2) how can we deepen our partnerships with the local contexts (i.e., local churches and other institutions) in which that leadership is emerging?
- In asking these questions, the document could be much broader in its scope. In an age when denominational loyalties are not as strong as they once were, we need to expand the scope of our reach in recruiting leaders for the church and cultivating partnerships with locales in which those leaders are emerging—beyond those seeking ordination and even beyond the ELCA.
- Third, the document could be more pointed in describing our current situation and the challenges it raises for us. Our current situation is not best described by contrasting the ELCA with conservative Christian groups but rather by bringing to the fore the profound cultural shifts that now affect the ELCA and other mainline, Roman Catholic, and evangelical churches. These shifts are noted on p. 7 of the document: "religious belonging and participation" are much less of a norm, resulting in "unprecedented decreases in mainline denominational membership, reductions in numbers of congregations, and reductions in those seeking careers in ministry and related fields." These shifts could be highlighted and expanded upon so that we have a clearer, shared understanding of the common challenges theological education faces.

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- Related to this point, the document could be more pointed in describing the two most concrete issues facing individual seminaries: (1) decline in enrollment and the concomitant need for more creative and expansive modes of recruitment and (2) financial sustainability, both with regard to the loss of revenue and with regard to the profound reality of student debt.

Response to TEAC Recommendation 1:

- We welcome a renewed emphasis on the support of theological education by the church (see 1B). We also recognize that using resources more effectively is an issue for theological education at all levels in the ELCA. Our comments focus on the specific proposals on how to do that.
- First, the scope of the recommendation is very broad and needs focus. 1A and 1B refer to a “network” of theological education, and it is not clear whether that refers mainly to the seminaries (1C) or to “all theological education activity across the church” (1D), which is much broader. It seems clear that the recommendation is that the ELCA make more effective use of existing resources, which is commendable. The question is whether the specific action steps will do that well.
- Second, we wonder whether forming a new committee (see 1A) would be helpful or effective. Would the group mainly be advisory? How would it actually implement the TEAC recommendations, since the ability to make changes often relies on specific institutions and agencies within the ELCA? Another concern here is that a new committee would add a layer of layer of administration removed from the actual instructional work of the church.
- Third, we question whether mapping “all theological education activity (see 1D) across the church” is feasible or sustainable. We affirm the value of more effective communication and of coordinating educational opportunities but care would need to be taken that the expected results of the mapping would be worth the effort required to do the work and to keep it current over an extended period of time.
- In sum, although we affirm collaboration, we do not think that centralization or adding additional layers of bureaucracy will enhance our work as a seminary. There is no evidence that such additional layers will enable us to reach out to new populations or new funding sources. In fact, in addition to being a drain on already scarce resources, such additional layers of bureaucracy could have a deleterious effect on morale and our capacity to innovate and respond quickly to changing circumstances. Any ventures or partnerships we seek to cultivate in the future will need to be agile and locally initiated.

Response to TEAC Recommendation 2:

- The report rightly identifies leadership development as an issue for the church’s future. However, the document could be more explicit in naming the concerns that are presupposed but not explicitly stated in the report. They include the changing patterns of affiliation with churches, which has led to fewer people entering rostered ministry. Changing demographics show declines in the ELCA’s traditional constituencies. Manifestations of the issues are that the ELCA seminary system does not provide enough graduates to meet synodical requests, and many candidates are

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limited in the areas where they might serve. Our current leaders face new ministry challenges in changing social contexts.

- We affirm the report's call for leadership development and its emphasis on this requiring efforts across the church (2A). We strongly agree that the challenge goes far beyond the seminaries doing more extensive recruitment on their own. Indeed, leadership development is not mainly a matter of seminary admissions staff members spending more time recruiting. Identifying and preparing leaders involves broader networks of engagement. Thus, we welcome greater collaboration with synods and congregations in identifying those with the leadership potential needed by the church. In addition, given the breadth of leadership needs, we encourage the ELCA to consider innovative approaches to meeting ministry needs in areas that are currently underserved. Current examples include the TEEM program and training for Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMS), but these alone are not adequate. Along these lines, we welcome opportunities to work collaboratively in the development of ethnic-specific programs, such as those involving Spanish language education and ministries (2B). No one seminary can do this alone, and we look forward to working with others in these areas.
- We affirm the report's call for renewed efforts in educating lay leaders (2C). We urge that consideration be given to the entire process from recruitment to education to placement. We recognize that lay education takes many forms and that seminaries have distinctive strengths. We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with other schools in developing the range of offerings that best meets the missional needs of the church.
- We affirm the report's call for greater collaboration among the seminaries, other educational organizations, and the Conference of Bishops around continuing education (2D). The changing character of ministry warrants greater attention to continuing education for leaders, and shared commitments among seminaries and church leaders would be a major contribution. We recognize that no one seminary can provide all the learning opportunities needed, and we welcome the opportunity for creative thinking and collaboration in this area.
- Finally, in addition to a renewal of efforts within the ELCA on calling forth leaders in the church, we will, as a seminary, need to expand the scope of our partnerships beyond the ELCA to other contexts and locales where Christian public leaders are being called and nurtured. This task of broadening the scope of the kinds of leaders and communities we serve—to include, for example, ecumenical partnerships, among others—is important not only for our survival as a seminary, but also for fulfilling our public vocation as part of the “Lutheran movement” serving the larger church and society at this time.

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Response to TEAC Recommendation 3:

- We share the report's commitment to developing more vibrant and sustainable modes of theological education that keep the needs and assets of the whole church in view. We too take seriously the findings of the Baker Tilly Report. We agree that major changes are needed. The focus of our comments is on specific proposals for doing that. In particular, the TEAC report discusses a "common theological education enterprise." We do not fully understand what this would entail. We also do not fully understand what the report means by calling for an enterprise that has the necessary "planning structures" and "decision-making authority" to carry out the tasks listed. Is this a move toward greater consolidation or a move toward a more focused arrangement that is limited to carrying out certain tasks? Is what is being suggested here a move toward a more centralized system? The Baker Tilly Report, for example, notes various options, including a highly centralized system. Overall, we would like to make clear that we, as a faculty, see centralization as a problem. The following four points address this concern.
- First, it is clear that innovation is needed. However, we think that centralization and the addition of layers of institutional structure are not the best ways to foster the kind of innovation necessary for discerning and responding to God's call on us in our current context. Indeed, we think that moving toward a centralized system will limit innovation rather than enhance it. Creative changes generally come from various parts of the system rather than from the center.
- Second, it is clear that ELCA seminaries need to attend to efficiency and sustainability (see 3A4). But what is not clear is that these efficiencies will come by developing a common enterprise among the seminaries. Care must be taken so that inter-institutional arrangements do not become more cumbersome or costly than those currently in place.
- Third, with regard to recruitment and admissions, merely making some administrative shifts in this direction may not be enough to address the challenges before us. Instead, collaboration needs to focus on widening the range of applicants—as discussed under Recommendation 2—rather than simply competing for a few more students in a shrinking pool. Our central challenge is that of widening the range of potential candidates for theological education, which as discussed above entails working closely with the specific locales within which those leaders are being called and nurtured, both within existing and to-be-developed channels within the ELCA and beyond. The proposal for "common recruitment and a common application process" does not seem to address the primary issue before the church, which is leadership. The more important kinds of efforts were identified under Recommendation 2, which aims at expanding the pool of candidates for theological education.
- Fourth, and perhaps most importantly for us as faculty, we have concerns about the proposal for a common online learning platform. We recognize that individual seminaries have different faculty resources in different areas and that more intentional collaboration among the ELCA schools can help us provide the breadth of learning opportunities that our students need. But what would this entail and how would it be implemented? The report seems to assume that the primary form

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of resource sharing will be online. Our Distributed Learning Program has been one of our most successful programs in the last decade. We are proud of its value, recognizing that it too can be continually improved and its reach expanded. Much of the DL program's success is due to the deep relationships established among students within their DL cohorts and with their professors. In other words, it is in part due to the face-to-face interaction that our online program is successful! We cannot lose that strength. The move to a shared platform will only prove effective if it enhances this important strength. Related to this point, formation is central to our curriculum at LS. We are still learning how best to do that—through portfolios, the Learning Leader courses, our various courses, and other offerings on campus. It is unclear how a shared learning platform would better enable us to address this important theme, which is so central to our curriculum.

In short, the faculty of Luther Seminary knows that there is room for institutional collaboration across the system of theological education. We welcome that conversation for the aim of such collaboration would be living into God's call for the future of the church. We bring to this conversation a number of pedagogical and theological convictions that we believe God is calling us to foreground in our common work.

TEAC Notes from Covenant Cluster Meeting

What shall we say to the Church Council regarding the TEAC recommendations?

- Seminaries
 - Get people of similar functions from seminaries around the table to talk about the best way forward for their function
 - Get the seminaries to buy in to similar software products to allow students to more easily take classes at other Lutheran seminaries
 - Asset-based model: How can seminaries (faculty qualifications, etc.) be an asset to the whole network of theological education rather than believing that theological education needs to be reduced to seminaries?
- Theological education
 - There is a need to ask what “theological education” actually means.
 - Theological education needs to be theological; it cannot simply focus on the “how to”
 - How can theological education be marketed to a broader audience?
 - Speak specifically to how theological education among all the baptized is realized
 - There is a need to think about outcomes beyond education and that more people are receiving it
- Culture of theological education
 - The current culture is for seminary professors to share the information because they have a degree.
 - It would need to be a culture shift to listen to other people
 - These other people are not currently being invited in or encouraged to attend seminary
 - This leads to lower numbers of leaders
 - Is it essential that the people we learn from have advanced degrees?
 - Some would say yes because they have struggled with the material and are experts
 - Others would say no because experience can be just as valuable as a degree
 - Where do we learn from the voices able to teach (campus ministry, outdoor ministry) in their areas of expertise?
- Continuing education
 - Clergy who have been in calls for a long time are not expected to do continuing education
 - Clergy will push back on that recommendation
 - In general, the group supported the continuing education proposal, but there is a need for continuing education budgets
- Enhance programs to service pathways for future leaders
 - We should celebrate new social workers, new teachers, etc., not only new pastors
 - Someone’s spiritual life is coming alive; this does not necessarily mean they are called to be a pastor

- Discernment programs for young adults are vital, but need to be expanded to include not just leaders in the church, but leaders anywhere for the scattered church
- The church needs leaders and people need to be invited into the possibility of this type of work
- Seminary is an expensive discernment process
- Developing different kinds of leaders
 - For spaces that can no longer afford a full-time pastoral leader, how do we develop leaders for these spaces?
 - In these kinds of places, how is there still oversight and management of these sorts of folks?
 - Is certification enough? Some congregational members and ordained leaders fear that people who have been trained in this way have not received enough training, and cannot effectively lead.
 - What is the role of continuing education for those who have not taken a traditional track to seminary?
 - Look again at the policy about SAMs
- Financial matters
 - Efficiency should not be a factor in talking about the where and how many of seminaries
 - Contradiction between financial efficiency and the call for more theological education
 - There will need to be a significant amount of money put into the IT of this new system
 - Money must be spent to support different pedagogies (in different ways, from different communities) rather than reinventing pedagogies and platforms that already exist.
- Other comments
 - Broaden voices included in this research, including lay people
 - Introduce a Director of Theological Education position in synods; incentive to synods to staff and resource; similar to DEM position

What shall we do in light of TEAC's recommendations?

- Consider the theological gift we bring
 - Resourcing around uniqueness of Lutheran theology (e.g., Gospel, Abundance, etc.)
 - Equip people who are committed, hungry and intelligent theologically adequate resources to enable them to talk about these theological gifts
- Expand the Covenant Cluster Network
 - Be intentional about inviting ethnic-specific ministry leaders to the Covenant Cluster Network. Invite them to share their experiences and learnings.
 - Provide resources to people who are interested in coming, but who don't have the necessary funding
- Actively work on asset-mapping
 - What assets do we have along these lines?
 - Streamlining and reducing redundancies
 - Identifying synergies and holes
- Covenant Cluster website as a place for the theological education website
 - Inform people about the different networks that are already available
 - Website could be a way to gather the point-people
- Connection between faith and life
 - Synods should encourage congregations to connect faith and daily life through a committee around these issues (e.g., SE Iowa commission)
 - Encourage campus (outdoor) ministries to deepen connection between faith and life and share those stories from campus (outdoor) ministries
 - The people in this network have the influence to convene groups to broaden conversations around issues of life and faith
 - Take initiative to gather conferences within synods. Don't wait for instruction from the CWO staff to gather people.
 - MDL Conference from the Covenant Cluster Network
 - Discipleship practices (around the 5 promises made in baptism) as a possible evaluation tool (similar to Wartburg's pastoral competencies)
- Other comments:
 - Start with administrators at the seminaries to get on the same page about unifying processes; get enough IT support to use a robust data system
 - Share TEAC's report and recommendations with non-Lutherans in the theological network
 - Share and promote good practices toward a culture of teaching and learning

Western Mission Network Consultation
Spirit in the Desert
January 22-24, 2016

Conversations on Recommendation #2A of the TEAC Report

Participants: Per Anderson, Rachel Berry, Jack Fortin, Desta Goehner, John Hulden, Greg Kaufman, Tom Morgan, Ron Rude, Brenda Tibbetts, Alicia Vargas, Christina Von Bank, Howie Wennes, Nancy Winder

The conversations centered on vocational discernment and the education of all the baptized. Our recommended actions to the Advisory Committee are:

That the ELCA work to do these things to assist its people and congregations to discern their vocation in church and world:

Develop a network that makes available theological and practical resources throughout the church. To do this the ELCA needs to make its digital presence more nimble, flexible, and accessible. Learn from existing platforms at our church colleges. (Faith and Wisdom database is an existing model that could work.)

In this reformation anniversary, lift up and celebrate our core Lutheran theology of call to church and world. To do this we need ways to engage rostered and congregational leaders in identifying the gifts and vocation of the baptized in all congregations. The ELCA should encourage synods, in 2017, to make the ministry of the baptized and our theology of vocation the themes for bishops' convocations and synod assemblies.

Encourage extra-church networks (such as current youth ministry network) To do this: support existing efforts, in appropriate ways, by camps and campus ministries. Synod assemblies are good places to lift up these networks locally.

Following are the other comments and questions that came in our conversations over two days.

Affirmations: our theology, baptismal and otherwise.

Transformational ministries

What kind of continuing ed do we prefer? What does it look like?

What requirements do we need for our rostered leaders?

Something more in our synods to connect with our congregations; how to share the faith.

How do we learn together about our faith?

How do we develop pedagogy for pastors

If we do lay schools, how are they paid for?

There is a chain of teaching; the chain breaks when the pastor cannot - or will not -
teach.

We need a vehicle of connection through the church for this to happen; do a real network.

How does this get connected to the asset mapping and to the online learning platform?

How do we take the steps to be different?

Communication

Digital platforms that work

The TEAC document is exciting. How can we share the TEAC report?

Are the ways we learn theology dated?

How do we articulate the necessity of continuing education that really means something
in our culture?

Where the economics have gone - old Continuing Ed models?

What about learning from the Youth Ministry Network?

Can we get money to do this?

What forms of education do we need?

How to connect people of interest?

What should a pastor know?

Open Space: Charge to the Advisory Committee on TE to the Church Council

Convenor: Marty Stortz

Members: Brad Abbott, Andrew Berry, Shauna Hannan, Holly Johnson, Melissa Maxwell-Doherty, Moses Penumaka, Rachel Puttbreese, Robin Steinke, Brian Stein-Webber, Jonathan Strandjord

Recommendation #1: Charge to the Advisory Committee

1. Identify all of the multiple providers that play a crucial role in theological education in the network, exploring relationships among them that already exist, the audiences they serve, the faculty they use, the pedagogical strategies they employ;
2. Clarify precisely the power, the authority, the fiscal resources, the responsibilities, and the accountability the Advisory Council has to the Church Council, to the Conference of Bishops, to the Churchwide Assembly, et al.;
3. Bring to the Church Council possible models for creation and sustenance of a robust network for Lutheran theological education that includes existing and potential players;
4. Provide the technical expertise that would curate a website that would display and catalogue assets as opportunities;
5. Take the temperature of the church, i.e., what we already know about the needs and resources for theological education in the church;
6. Revisit the Reformation commitments to education the laity, as it did in the Saxon visitations in 1527-1528;
7. Imagine a single faculty model for TE in the ELCA, identifying teaching faculty from ELCA and non-ELCA institutions.

Recommendation concerning TEAC Rec. 2C:
A Vehicle for Recognition of Non-rostered Lay Ministry
Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

This suggestion comes as a result of an Open Space discussion that took place on January 23, 2016 at the Western Mission Cluster Network Event at Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center, Carefree, AZ. The topic of the Open Space discussion was, “Accreditation of Lay Ministry.”

Those present for the discussion were: Gordon Straw, convener; Paul Baglyos, Region 3 Coordinator; Andy Berry, Littlefork, MN; Brenda Tibbets, NE MN Synod; Mark Nelson, Region 1 Coordinator; Andrea Arey, Portico Benefits; Christina Von Bank, Portico Benefits; Rachel Berry, Littlefork, MN; Jodi Hanson, Fisher’s Net/Select.

Notes of the discussion:

- Much of the early part of the discussion revolved around two points, or parameters, of the notion of accrediting or somehow recognizing the achievements of non-rostered lay members of the ELCA in the areas of theological education and ministry training. The two parameters are:
 - Many members of the ELCA participate in well-grounded, high-quality programs of theological education or ministry training. Oftentimes, these members participate in numerous such opportunities. As an example: someone makes the commitment to attend a synod lay academy program, which commonly is a two-year commitment to a structured curriculum that resembles much of the curriculum of ELCA M.Div. curricula and they expend significant funds and effort to do so. At the end of their program, most often, they receive a simple “certificate of participation,” a “yeah, rah, rah” from synod leaders, or are asked to go back to their parish pastor to inquire what they might be able to volunteer for in the congregation. There is no wide recognition of the training, expertise, or learning goals that were accomplished, which could serve congregations, synods and the larger ELCA in significant ways.
 - By nature of what seems to be the most popular view of ministry, i.e., ministry is best done by professionals (ordained or lay) and that the primary arena of ministry is within the four walls of the congregation, many participants in such lay programs build an expectation that they will receive something upon completion—something more than a “certificate of participation.” Some expect that they will have a paying position in the congregation to which they belong, or at least the possibility for one. Some expect to be engaged as “experts” in a certain area of ministry for the synod or a grouping of congregations around them. Some have even behaved badly and have taken their congregations out of the ELCA, promising the congregation that they can be their pastor, because they went through such a program. Now, these are anecdotal and mostly extreme cases. But, they point to the other parameter, i.e., how can the ELCA construct a “system” of recognition of the educational accomplishments of these lay members in the areas of theological education, ministry training, and their own expertise

and experience of doing ministry in their congregation, without creating a quasi-roster within the ELCA.

- Ultimately, the discussion tried to deal with this question: What can the ELCA do to “affirm the universal priesthood of all its baptized members” (ELCA CBCR, Chapter 7) in ways that are realistic to the ordering of ministry in the ELCA and to the doctrinal commitment to universal priesthood as an important witness in the world today.
- Another excellent point that was made in the discussion was the fact that people who participate in these opportunities know each other, particularly within the individual synods. They see each other, not only in the programs themselves, but on congregational councils, synod council and/or committees, in the community. An organic network of these leaders already exists. How does the ELCA build on this organic network to bring recognition of the vast resources of these dedicated and faithful leaders?
- The discussion moved, then, to a more pragmatic consideration: How does the ELCA, in its various expressions, account for what these participants are actually doing with the knowledge, experience and expertise they have acquired through all of the opportunities with which they have availed themselves? What roles in the ELCA do they take? Is it possible to track any of this in a way that is reliable and sustainable?

Thus, a recommendation to TEAC from this Open Space discussion group:

- A social media vehicle be created, conceptually based upon and similar in scope and function to LinkedIn, the Web 2.0-based virtual community of business professionals and those seeking connection with others who are in similar work environments.
- This recommendation was inspired by the use of the Rostered Leader Profile already used in the ELCA to identify the assets of the rostered leaders of the ELCA. However, this vehicle will be open to the millions of non-rostered members of the ELCA in an open, volunteer environment. A way for individual members to identify their learning experience, practical ministry experience, form affinity groups to encourage each other in ministry, make connection with others in the ELCA who have similar situations or interests. It also can be a vehicle for nominating committees of synods or the churchwide organization to identify qualified candidates for openings on committees and councils in the ELCA. In a sense, it is a public “curriculum vitae” that each individual who joins the vehicle to voluntarily offer their gifts and assets to the larger church, as a way of being recognized as a leader of the ELCA and, perhaps, identified by others for specific engagement in new opportunities.
- We chose to base this proposed vehicle on LinkedIn, because of the advantages that members of LinkedIn experience and the similarity to what we hope for in such a vehicle for non-rostered ministry in the ELCA. At its basic level, it is an opportunity for individuals to sign on and volunteer whatever information they choose about their leadership experiences in the ELCA. This would give other people who have joined the community to connect with them in a variety of ways. As I mentioned, nominating committees could see this as a source of candidates, affinity groups could form which come from the connections made by individuals,

live chat rooms would be a wonderful opportunity for people to support one another and ask questions, new connections can be made when an individual moves to a different synod, and the possibilities go on.

- Inspired by the function of Ministry Site Profiles in the ELCA call process, if this original conception takes off, various institutions and entities that provide education, training, and/or support of lay members could be added as a vehicle for connecting individuals with organizations in the church. As an example, synods could become an interest group for those who are members of the community can join as an affinity group of synod members. The group thought this would be best as a second stage of development in this conception.
- Another suggestion, inspired by the *Tripadvisor* tool, “Trip Collective,” is to create a collection of virtual badges that individual members of the community could use as a way of visually identifying their accomplishments. The more a person learns on a particular subject or area of ministry, the “higher” level they advance in their recognition as a resource person in that area.
- A name (brand) was even offered for this new vehicle, “Charismata.”

This was as far as the group got in its strategizing and deliberation. There are a lot more questions to answer and even more possibilities to explore. The Open Space discussion group on “accreditation of non-rostered lay ministry” humbly offers this recommendation to the TEAC committee for serious consideration. This group also is planning to reconvene to further explore this idea, with the support of the Lay Schools for Ministry program of the ELCA. We hope that you look favorably upon our efforts and are caught up in the same excitement that we generated in this discussion.

On behalf of the group,
Gordon Straw
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