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## The Principal–Pastor Relationship: The Experiences of Principals Working With Pastors in Lutheran Schools

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Concordia University–Portland  
College of Education  
Doctorate of Education Program

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The Principal–Pastor Relationship: The Experiences of Principals Working With Pastors in  
Lutheran Schools

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College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in  
Administrative Leadership

Julie McCann, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Concordia University–Portland

2020

## **Abstract**

Principals of Lutheran Schools work in an environment that includes the leadership of a pastor or pastors. Principals and pastors often serve in Lutheran churches with schools as servant leaders. Within the framework of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1997), this study focused on the experiences of five Lutheran school principals working with the pastors of their congregations. A case study approach was utilized to gather data through interviews of principals selected from Lutheran schools. Five principals were given the opportunity to reflect upon the preparation and training they received to lead Lutheran schools, with a focus on collaboration with their pastors. Building upon the limited previous research, the researcher sought to better understand the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they collaborated with pastors where they served as leaders. Data collection was conducted via interview. The principals interviewed indicated strong principal–pastor relationships were critical to successful Lutheran school leadership. Implications for future practice and development of Lutheran school principal preparation programs such as those provided by the Lutheran Universities and principal development initiatives of a national Lutheran Church body were discussed.

*Keywords:* principal–pastor collaboration, servant leadership, Lutheran school

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to principals and administrators who work tirelessly to improve the lives of students, teachers, and their families. Your work is vital. Thank you for making a difference.

## **Acknowledgments**

When thinking about the many individuals to whom I owe gratitude for their support during this study, I am overwhelmed by how many important people blessed my life and my work. First and foremost, I'd like to thank my family. To my wife Melissa, thank you for your continued faith in my ability to complete the project; for reminding me I was an intelligent human being who was up to the task. To my children, Abigail, Ryan, and Madeleine. Your patience with me all those nights when I needed quiet or couldn't give you my attention did not go unnoticed. I love you, and I'm so proud of the amazing people you are.

I would also like to thank all of my colleagues, the school board, and all of my students and families at my church and school for your patience and support as I divided my attention between school life and research. I am proud to be your principal and look forward to working with you each day.

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Thank you also to my committee members, Dr. Catherine Beck and Dr. Corey McKenna. Your thoroughness, patience, and encouragement were valuable assets to me throughout the entire process. I hope in the future I will be able to help others as you have helped me.

Finally, I give thanks to God for the opportunity to serve as a Lutheran school principal. Thank You, Lord, for your continued guidance, forgiveness, and the promise of eternal life. May the work of my hands bring joy to your heart. Soli Deo Gloria!



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem**

Lutheran church bodies have incorporated the use of Lutheran schools to help accomplish their mission (Beck, 1939). Lutheran schools were an important part of the work of Lutheran churches because they served to educate member children as well as children outside the Lutheran community. Originally, Lutheran schools were designed to ensure children would grow up with a proper understanding of the Word of God and Lutheran doctrine (Beck, 1939). Today this is still a primary function of Lutheran schools (as noted on the national Lutheran church body's website). As Lutheran schools carry out a part of the work of national Lutheran church bodies, they do so under the leadership of principals and pastors.

As a Lutheran school educator, the researcher has had the opportunity to work in a variety of Lutheran schools from a large Lutheran school in an urban setting that served 465 students to a small Lutheran school in a rural setting that served 50 students and several in between. Within each of his Lutheran school experiences, the researcher noted how principals and pastors worked together, or, in some cases, struggled to work together. In some of these schools, the researcher was a teacher watching from the outside of the administrative leadership circle. However, in the last three Lutheran schools in which the researcher served, he was the principal. In these schools, the researcher was aware of how the relationship of the pastor and the principal played an integral role in the life of the Lutheran School.

Principals and pastors across the nation serve together in a variety of ways. The uniqueness of each human being means that working together has the potential to be different for everyone. A principal and a pastor that collaborate extremely well may not collaborate as well with others given a different combination. On the other hand, a principal and pastor that struggle to work well together may find working with a different combination of people is just what each of them needs to serve at the highest capacity. As workers who are placed in positions of



leadership and service through a Divine Call, a formal process to place an ordained minister (pastor) or a commissioned minister (principal, teacher, etc.) in a Lutheran ministry, principals and pastors are expected to recognize the purpose of the church on earth—to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Struggling to get along, a principal and pastor leadership team may not be as successful as they need to be in order to achieve the purpose to which the Lord has called them. When principal or pastor are not equipped to understand the importance of collaborating with one another, they are bound to struggle to accomplish ministry to the full. As leaders of Lutheran schools, principals most often serve as the leader of one area of ministry prescribed by the congregation. When a principal struggles to collaborate effectively with a pastor, it does not only make the job more difficult, but it can lead to a sense perhaps the principal is not willing to support and uphold the ministry the pastor has been called to do.

In his role as a principal, the researcher had the opportunity to experience working with pastors of Lutheran schools firsthand. Because of these experiences, the researcher wondered if the Lutheran Church addressed this collaboration at the university and seminary levels where principals and pastors are prepared to serve in congregations and schools of the Lutheran Church body. Although the researcher found his teacher preparation within the Lutheran University System to be a useful learning experience that well-prepared him for leading a Lutheran school classroom, he did not recall experiencing courses designed to prepare him to handle the potential challenges of leading a Lutheran school with a pastor. With 880 schools operated by Lutheran Church congregations (as reported in the church body's annual statistics report), there are many opportunities for pastors and principals to work together as they lead where they are called. In the process of leading where called, principals and pastors will undoubtedly find they must collaborate, especially where school and church policies or issues overlap.

This research was important, not only for Lutheran churches and schools but for the development of leaders in a variety of settings that find themselves sharing leadership roles that may, by nature, have areas of ambiguity. In addition, it provided a needed entrance to the conversation about how to approach, understand, and, if necessary, improve relationships between principals and pastors leading Lutheran schools. Further, it also provided an opportunity to frame the possibility of opening a dialogue within Lutheran Universities about how principals and pastors may be better prepared to live out the calling of servant leadership within their schools and congregations.

Historically, Lutheran Churches have been careful to prepare leaders for service in the church (Rueter, 2019). As a church body, the Lutheran Church has opted to develop systems for preparing workers for positions such as pastor, teacher, director of Christian education, director of Christian outreach, director of parish music, director of family life ministry, and lay minister (Rueter, 2019). Principals are generally considered teachers from the perspective of Lutheran church calling bodies. Within Lutheran Church bodies, it has been historically understood that those aspiring to the principalship could do so through teacher preparation programs and subsequent administrative degree programs once in the field.

It should be noted the researcher recognizes the importance of principal and pastor preparation programs and the scope of such endeavors. This study was not a critique of the preparation programs of the Lutheran universities. As a learner, the researcher has benefited from both undergraduate and graduate programs offered by Lutheran universities. The researcher found the programs prepared him well to serve in Lutheran schools and in other endeavors as well. To that end, the researcher recognizes it would be unfair to suggest that principal–pastor collaboration is dependent upon instruction at the university or seminary level. To be sure, Christians have been encouraged to work together as the Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the

Church in Ephesus, “walk in a manner worthy to the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:1–3 English Standard Version). Principals and pastors working together in Lutheran schools and seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace will undoubtedly find themselves collaborating. Where the ministry obligations of principal and pastor intersect or overlap, there is an inevitable requirement for them to work together. Walking worthily in the manner to which principal and pastor were called is not a passive endeavor. There is no question that a principal and a pastor will have to work together in the operation of a Lutheran school. There is some ambiguity, however, as to how they will work together and whether they have been supplied the tools with which to navigate the important work of collaboration.

### **Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

A review of the literature found that several studies were conducted with regard to principal–pastor collaboration or operationalization of roles of principal and pastor in parochial schools (Eakins, 2015; Sieger 1999; Schaefer, 2004; & Wojcicki. 1982). These studies demonstrated that principal and pastor roles were important to the operation of parochial schools. The studies found similarity in purpose as church schools. Leaders of schools operated by congregations in the studies noted were tasked to some degree with carrying out the mission of the church body. Since the studies were qualitative in nature, they did not provide opportunities for principals or pastors to describe the experiences they had while leading their respective schools. The studies described how principals and pastors may be expected to work together or how they viewed their work together quantitatively. However, none of the studies allowed principals the freedom to express their own experiences as they worked with the pastors of the congregations that operated their Lutheran schools.

In the 2016 opening lecture of Australian Lutheran College, Nelson described research that included an open interview process that allowed principals and pastors to describe contributions of pastors and principals to the mission of Lutheran elementary schools. Nelson's work allowed for a deeper conversation about the roles pastors and principals played and included recommendations that principals and pastors should be provided appropriate preparation for working together to effectively carry out the mission of Lutheran schools. Additional research also pointed to the need for further training for pastors and principals of parochial schools (Durow & Brock, 2004; Wallace, Ridenour, & Biddle, 1999) as well as describing the challenges faced by principals and pastors in parochial school settings (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016). The literature suggested gaps both in preparation programs and in understanding the unique relationships of principals and pastors as faith leaders in parochial school communities.

In addition to studies aimed specifically at the principal–pastor relationship, literature describing the importance of supporting principals was reviewed. Principals play an important role in effective schools (Drago-Severson, 2012). As principals lead schools, they will be better equipped as leaders if they can avoid experiences of isolation (Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Sarpkaya, 2014; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010; & Thomas, Grigsby, Miller, & Scully, 2003). The literature suggested that there is a gap in understanding of how principals might experience leadership with pastors in Lutheran schools. An opportunity for principals to describe their own personal experiences was not found in the literature.

Historically, the Lutheran Church has a strong connection to Lutheran school ministry (Rueter, 2019). Reuter indicated as long as the Lutheran Church has been in existence, Lutheran schools have been a part of the offerings of Lutheran congregations. So, from the early days of the Lutheran Church, pastors have served as leaders along with other Lutheran school workers.

As two leaders within a Lutheran school ministry, principal and pastor have long history of working together within the Lutheran Church. How these relationships are experienced and how they are supported are both missing from the literature relevant to the study of Lutheran school principals and pastors.

Within the literature describing principals and pastors, the topic of service or servant leadership was present. As a framework for how to view principal roles in Lutheran schools as well as principal–pastor relationships within the context of Lutheran schools, the concept of servant leadership as first described by Greenleaf (1972) was emphasized. Literature describing servant leaders helped focus the understanding of how principals and pastors may interact within the concept of a servant leadership framework. Servant leadership concepts in the literature were further explored in preparation for conversations with five Lutheran school principals as they discussed their experiences with the pastors of the congregations operating the Lutheran schools in which the principals served. The literature suggested that leaders such as principals and pastors served in institutions that may also be identified servant leaders (Fryar, 2001; Greenleaf, 1972; Blanchard & Hodges, 2003; Keith, 2012; Sipe & Frick, 2015; & Wilkes, 1998).

By understanding how servant leadership looks within the context of the Lutheran school, the data collected from the principals themselves can be compared using similar descriptive measures. As servant leaders, the experiences of the principals of Lutheran schools can be viewed through the lens of service to the church. This service is reflected in the work the principals do as well as how they perceive their roles in service to the church, specifically to through the congregations in which the principals serve. Although the roles of principals and pastors have been described by the literature, it was of note that after a review of major Lutheran church body websites including Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), LCMS,

ELCA, and Australian Lutheran Church (LCA), only one, LCA, had documents developed that spoke directly to principal–pastor roles and relationships.

While time and effort has been expended by past researchers to better understand principal–pastor relationships, there is ample opportunity for others to further explore how those relationships are experienced within the context of Lutheran schools. The literature described the importance of preparation for ministry (Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Laabs, 2016; Nelson, 2016; Wallace, Ridenour, & Biddle, 1999). The literature also described the importance of role expectations and operationalization of roles within the principal–pastor relationship (Eakins, 2015; McLean, 2018; Sieger, 1999; Wojcicki, 1982). Further, the literature described the role of servant leadership within the principalship (Bartsch, 2006; Fryar, 2001; Hammond, 2018; Kleinschmidt, 2002). Principal isolation and retention were also topics of note in the literature (Bottiani, Bradshaw, & Mendelson, 2014; Cemaloğlu, 2011; Drago–Severson, 2012; Izgar, 2009; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Sarpkaya, 2014; Stephenson & Bauer, 2010). Although research has been dedicated to understanding principal–pastor relationships, there exists a large gap in the literature specifically targeted at better understanding the principal–pastor relationships of Lutheran school principals and pastors.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Principal and pastor roles in Lutheran schools were documented by various national Lutheran church bodies (LCA, 2002; LCMS, 2015; ELCA, 2020, WELS, 2013). However, these documents did not provide descriptions of how principals and pastors should work together within the context of a Lutheran school. Additional documentation of other denominations operating parochial schools also indicated that the way principals and pastors worked together was critical to retention of principals (Durow & Brock, 2004; Dosen & Reickhoff, 2016). The Wojcicki (1983) and Sieger (1999) studies sought quantitative measures of role

operationalization for principals and pastors of Catholic and Lutheran schools, respectively. These studies helped lay groundwork for scholars seeking to better understand the roles of principals and pastors within parochial schools but did not allow the principals or pastors opportunity to elaborate on how or why they scored particular survey items. Eakins (2015) also studied principal–pastor collaborations of parochial schools, namely, Seventh-day Adventist to describe the impact of collaborations between principals and pastors. While all of these studies shed light on principal–pastor relationships in parochial schools, none of them focused on qualitative data collected within the context of Lutheran schools.

Noting a particularly large gap in the literature speaking to Lutheran school principal–pastor relationships, this study examined the experiences of several Lutheran school principals and how they collaborated with the pastors of the congregations operating the schools in which the principals served. The nature of principal and pastor roles potentially overlap concerning the operation of Lutheran schools. As leaders, principals and pastors of Lutheran schools have opportunities to work together to ensure the prescribed ministry of a Lutheran school gets done. The congregation, led by the pastor, may have specific goals for a Lutheran school ministry. The principal, called to lead a Lutheran school by the congregation, may have specific goals as well. As principal and pastor go about the work of the congregation with a Lutheran school, they will most likely experience a requirement to collaborate to some degree. How well they feel prepared and supported to exercise collaborative skills within the context of their servant leadership roles may help or hinder their responses to the collaborative nature of their roles. This study sought to extend previous research by employing qualitative measures rather than quantitative measures to understand how principals and pastors view their roles. The study was interested in developing a better understanding of how five principals experienced collaboration with the pastors of the

congregations they serve. The words of the principals themselves would be used to determine underlying themes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study of several Lutheran school principals sought to understand how they perceived their relationships with the pastors of the schools in which they served. The focus of the study was on the collaboration that took place between principal and pastor as they led the churches and schools to which they were called. The study was designed to give principals an opportunity to reflect upon the preparation and training they received to lead Lutheran schools, with an emphasis on how preparation and training impacted their ability to navigate the relationship of principal–pastor.

As servant leaders, principals of Lutheran schools most often serve in Lutheran school environments including working with pastors and other leadership team members. Operating under the framework of servant leadership, the principal is positioned to offer guidance, support, and leadership skill as it pertains to the operation of a school ministry. Principals provide pastors of Lutheran congregations operating schools additional help in the rigors of the day-to-day management of a school program. In the early years of the Lutheran Church in the United States, pastors often were expected to lead a parish as well as administer the day school program (Beck, 1939). Today, and for the foreseeable future, the role of the pastor is not generally expected to also operate in the role of principal. Principals are important partners in ministry for Lutheran pastors as they work together to accomplish the goals of the congregations and communities into which they have been called to serve.

### **Research Question**

This research sought to build on limited previous research that looked at the relationship between the principals and pastors of parochial schools. This case study research asked: what are



the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they collaborate with pastors where they serve as leaders? Principals being interviewed were questioned utilizing a set of open-ended questions to guide the discussion (see Appendix D).

### **Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

The reach of Lutheran schools in the United States is not insignificant. In fact, Lutheran schools make up the largest non-Catholic parochial school systems and serve over 200,000 students from infancy through 12th grade (Laabs, 2016). Most Lutheran congregations operating schools employ a principal to lead the school and a pastor to lead the congregation. As Christian leaders, principals and pastors often ascribe to the servant leadership model in addition to other leadership models (Nelson, 2015). The notion of leading as servants is a complex model that includes an understanding of the persuasive power held by a leader. When a congregation employs two leaders, a principal and a pastor, there may be some overlap in the spheres of influence. By understanding how principals and pastors work together to lead in service to their congregations and their Lord, those called to similar leadership positions may better use the lessons learned in their own collaborative efforts. Additionally, programs designed to prepare principals and pastors for service in the Lutheran Church may use the results of the study as an encouragement to evaluate how preparation programs address the needs of principals and pastors as they collaborate to serve people in their schools and congregations.

The work of the Church on earth is carried out through ministries such as Lutheran churches and schools. Congregations with schools have an opportunity to share the Gospel in the community in a unique way that may not otherwise be available to them. Families from a variety of backgrounds may choose to send their children to a Lutheran school. In so doing, congregations are afforded the opportunity to share with students and families the Good News of Jesus. Principals and pastors not only focused on the task of sharing the Good News but able to

collaborate well together will be better equipped to carry out the mission of Christ. Because the leadership roles of principal and pastor are important in the life and work of a congregation operating a Lutheran school, it stands to reason the programs developing and supporting principals and pastors in the Lutheran Church should include systems that enable effective collaboration.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study of the experiences of Lutheran school principals and how they collaborate with pastors called to serve with them followed a case study protocol. Yin (2014) indicated case study as an appropriate qualitative method for studying a current phenomenon. A small sample of five principals was selected from those on the roster of the Lutheran Church. Principals contributed data via a single interview using Skype, WebEx, or via phone. Additional data were collected for triangulation purposes, including church and school handbooks and other written material provided by participants.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Ministry.** The definition of ministry for this study included ministry as it is understood in one of the wider senses by the Lutheran Church. Ministry referred to all forms of preaching the Gospel by those commissioned to apply them or by chosen public servants in the name of a group of Christians (as indicated in the organization's online nomenclature documents).

**Call.** A Call is the process by which the Lutheran Church places candidates in various positions such as ordained minister (pastor) and commissioned ministers (principals, teachers, directors of Christian education, etc.). Throughout this study, when the term is referring to the process or the formal Divine Call extended to a church worker, it will be capitalized. When referring to the calling to serve in general, the term will not be capitalized.

**Pastor.** For this study, the term pastor referred to ordained clergy within the Lutheran Church. Generally, the vocation of pastor is not conferred until a candidate has completed the course of study at a Lutheran seminary.

**Servant leader.** A servant leader is one who espouses the seven leadership pillars described by Sipe and Frick (2015) building upon Greenleaf (1997). The pillars included: (a) person of character; (b) puts people first; (c) skilled communicator; (d) compassionate collaborator; (e) has foresight; (f) systems thinker; and (g) leads with moral authority (Sipe & Frick, 2015).

## **Delimitations and Limitations**

### **Delimitations**

This study included five principals serving in the Lutheran Church as commissioned ministers. The principals were selected from the 35 districts of the Lutheran Church. The study was delimited to Lutheran school principals currently serving in congregation-operated schools of the Lutheran Church at the time of the interviews. The study was further delimited to those principals serving at least three years in their current Lutheran school and currently serving in a school that was part of a congregation that also had a full-time pastor in its employ. Delimiting to only principals having served 3 or more years ensured principals opting into the study would have had time to experience the role of principal and be able to fully consider how collaboration with the pastor may have taken place. The study was also delimited to principals that had self-selected to share their experiences as interested or very interested in participating in the study. Only principals who indicated they were very interested or interested in the study as determined by a survey the principals completed were included in the study. Data gathered was voluntary in nature and was only provided by principals willing to share. It is possible that principals were reluctant to share negative or otherwise unflattering information. Had a principal desired to exit

the study, he or she may have done so at any time. Although the study had measures in place to protect the identities of the principals sharing experiences, the principals may have hesitated to give a complete picture if they perceived their careers might have suffered from complete candor.

### **Limitations**

As a Lutheran school principal, the researcher took care to ensure bias was not a hindrance to the collection and interpretation of data. By asking open-ended questions and recording responses of live interviews, the researcher worked to hear the voices of the participants rather than trying to determine intent from written responses or surveys. Although measures were taken to select participants with no specific region or Lutheran school in mind, those who were selected rated their interest levels in the study higher than those who were not selected. It is possible that the data shared by the principals who were not selected may have experiences that do not align with those that were selected. Additional limitations include the questions asked of the interview participants. Measures were taken to ensure the development of questions that would provide focus for the study without leading participants to predetermined results. However, participant interpretation of the questions was a limitation that required the researcher to allow for responses that were determined by the participants and not suggested by the researcher.

### **Chapter 1 Summary**

Lutheran School operate within the context of the mission assigned to them by the church bodies that govern Lutheran school system. National Lutheran church bodies not only include congregations that operate Lutheran churches and schools, but universities and seminaries that play a role in providing the principals, teachers, pastors, and other called staff who work in the ministry of Lutheran schools and the churches that sponsor such schools. This study sought to

understand how principals and pastors of a national Lutheran church body were working together. A study of principal–pastor relationships allowed the researcher to extend research that demonstrated the importance of understanding and supporting principal–pastor collaboration (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016; Durow & Brock, 2004; Eakins, 2015; Nelson, 2016; Schafer, 2005). Within Lutheran schools, there are servant leaders striving to engage in collaboration as they work to fulfill the purpose of Lutheran schools. This study may also serve to identify additional areas for study and development within Lutheran Churches with regards to how leaders such as principals and pastors are prepared to work together.

As leaders espousing a variety of leadership models, Lutheran school principals and pastors often approach their vocation from a perspective of servant leadership (Kleinschmidt, 2002). Servant leaders seek to lead persuasively rather than coercively (Greenleaf, 2008). A principal and a pastor working together may struggle to determine how best to persuade followers within their organization to follow their lead, especially if disagreements arise. This study was one way to begin the conversation that must take place within the Lutheran Church to ensure principals and pastors are well-prepared to lead in ways benefitting those being served as well as their leaders. The experiences of principals of Lutheran schools as they collaborate with the pastors of the congregations in which they serve was designed to criticize or condemn any programs or processes currently used to develop pastors and principals for leadership in the congregations of the Lutheran Church. Rather, it was an opportunity to take a closer look at what principals serving in the field alongside pastors had experienced both in preparation programs and the supports in place in their current ministries. Principals and pastors work together in Lutheran school ministries. The principals interviewed for this study understood the nature of the career of a Lutheran school principal. The principals recognized part of their work would entail working with the pastors of their congregations.

As a case study, this research offered a look at the real-world experiences of five men and women leading Lutheran schools as principals. These principals offered insight into how they experience collaboration, their expectations for collaboration, and offered suggestions for ways to improve collaboration between principals and pastors from a variety of viewpoints. By sharing experiences in their own words, principals of Lutheran schools were given an opportunity to shape an understanding of how principals and pastors collaborate, how well they feel prepared to collaborate, and how well-supported they feel to lead Lutheran schools alongside the pastors of the congregations that operate those Lutheran schools.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction to the Literature Review**

There are several large national Lutheran church bodies in the United States. Among them are the ELCA, the LCMS, and the WELS. Laabs (2016) indicated there were 4,310 Lutheran elementary schools, high schools, and early childhood centers in the United States represented by the ELCA, the LCMS, and the WELS in 2016. As a church body that operates a large number of schools, the Lutheran Church supports and encourages spiritual development in students attending Lutheran congregational schools (Ave, 2013). Ave (2013) cited William Cochran, former director of the School Ministry department of the Lutheran Church, as indicating that the central purpose of Lutheran schools is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As ministry arms of Lutheran congregations, Lutheran schools are carrying out this purpose under the authority of individual congregation mandates.

Lutheran schools have a long history in the United States (Beck, 1939). As Lutheran church bodies such as the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) took different stances doctrinally, they also had a different approach to education (Sieger, 1999). The LCMS adopted a program of school ministry that was, at its core, designed to ensure doctrinal purity while the congregations that would later become the ELCA took a more pro-public school approach in the sense that rather than develop their own schools, members of the ELCA opted to utilize the strong public schools in their communities (Beck, 1939). As a result of this, ELCA congregations needed to find a different method to attend to theological education, and this was accomplished through midweek and Sunday school programs (Beck, 1939).

Teacher colleges and seminaries were developed by Lutheran church bodies to train and prepare teachers and pastors to carry out the work of the synods. The LCMS (2020) operates

eight universities and two seminaries. The ELCA (2020) operates 26 colleges and universities including 7 seminaries. The WELS (2020) operates a college and a seminary. Although the universities of each Lutheran church body offer a variety of degree programs, they continue to offer Lutheran teaching certification as one path to staffing the many Lutheran schools within the LCMS, the ELCA, and the WELS. Regardless of the church body, Lutheran schools and Catholic schools operate within the contexts of church bodies that do have an interest in what is taught within their respective schools. As church bodies that have invested in university level programs to help staff Lutheran schools, the ELCA, LCMS, and WELS whose member congregations employ principals and pastors in the work of Lutheran schools. Yet, research to understand the relationships of principals working with pastors of Lutheran schools is limited.

Several database searches revealed limited data with regard to the roles of pastors, principals, and congregations within Lutheran schools. Search terms included: *Lutheran schools*; *Lutheran school pastors, principals, congregations*; and *Lutheran school roles*. A lack of evidence-based research relating to Lutheran school principals demonstrated the need for further study of the topic. Sieger (1999) built on the quantitative Catholic principal–pastor study of Wojcicki (1982) to add to the understanding of Lutheran school principal–pastor roles. Eakins (2015) addressed principal–pastor relationships from a qualitative approach but was focused on the work of Seventh-day Adventist schools. Additional work by Bartel (2004) and McClean (2018) focused on perceptions of principals and pastors within the Catholic and Lutheran school communities, respectively. Parallel work in the field of Catholic education also demonstrated gaps in Lutheran administrator preparation programs, seminaries, future and current Lutheran school principals, and the congregations in which Lutheran school principals may be called to serve can benefit from a study that examines how pastor-principal relationships were experienced in the process of leading Lutheran schools. In convention, the LCMS adopted a



resolution to acknowledge reports that within the next five years, 40% of the administrators in LCMS school will retire (LCMS, 2016). Similarly, WELS (2018) described a common experience for Lutheran churches and schools was the continuous need to fill open positions throughout the synod. While Lutheran churches recognize the need for leadership, it is important for those calling principals, those training principals, and the principals themselves to be well-prepared for the leadership roles they assume in the course of administrating a Lutheran school. By listening to how Lutheran school principals perceive principal–pastor relationships affect their leadership, congregations, administrator preparation programs, and those pursuing leadership roles within Lutheran schools may be more aware and better equipped to meet the demands of the modern Lutheran school ministry.

According to and Rueter (2019) and even earlier, Beck (1939), Lutheran schools were founded upon the principle of carrying out the work of educating young people with attention to ensuring doctrinal soundness and stability. As demographics of Lutheran schools shifted from once being entirely attended by Lutheran students to schools attended by a diversity of religious backgrounds and beliefs, there was the opportunity for greater tension between pastors, principals, teachers, and the congregations in which they all serve. The focus of this study was to better understand how principals of Lutheran schools perceived the challenges of pastor-principal relationships, and more specifically, how those challenges impacted the effectiveness of the leadership of principals leading Lutheran schools.

A review of the current literature suggested that very little research has been conducted with principals of Lutheran schools with regards to how they collaborate with their pastors. As leaders of Lutheran churches with schools, pastors and principals undoubtedly will find themselves working together. Several studies seeking to operationalize roles of principals and pastors have been conducted but have yet to speak directly to the experiences of individual

principals in Lutheran schools (Eakins, 2015; McLean, 2018; Sieger, 1999; Wojcicki, 1992). Some studies, such as those conducted by Bartel (2004) and Nelson (2016) sought to understand Lutheran school principal perspectives however, these studies were focused on principals and pastors in Australia. The work of Boyle and Dosen (2017) and Wallace, Ridenour, and Biddle (1999) addressed preparation programs for Catholic priests working in Catholic schools and principals working in Catholic schools, respectively. However, a review of preparation programs for pastors or principals working in Lutheran schools was not available. The principals interviewed for the study provided an opportunity to share firsthand experience of collaboration with their pastors. In this way, these principals contributed to the important research of understanding how principals and pastors in Lutheran schools work together.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Servant Leadership**

Hickman (2010) suggested the leadership philosophy of an organization is more than a description of the style of leadership occurring within an organization. He indicated the leadership philosophy of an organization is inseparable from the organization's integrity and the leadership philosophy is how the organization puts values and beliefs into action (Hickman, 2010). Nelson (2015) suggested Lutheran school principals utilize a variety of leadership styles in the practice of leading a modern Lutheran school, including transactional leadership, distributed leadership, and servant leadership. Hammond (2018) supported the notion that principals that approached school leadership as servant leaders experienced greater empowerment of the teachers in their schools.

A study to examine the effects of Lutheran school principals and the perceived effects of their relationships with their pastors and their congregations aligns with a servant leadership model suggested by Greenleaf (2010). Greenleaf understood the servant leader as one who

sought to serve first rather than lead first with high priority being placed upon the needs of those being served. The LCMS (2010) included this focus in describing the objectives of the corporate church body:

The Synod under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall-- . . . 2. Strengthen congregations and their members in giving bold witness by word and deed to the love and work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and extend that Gospel witness into all the world . . . 4. Provide opportunities through which its members may express their Christian concern, love, and compassion in meeting human needs. (p. 13)

The members of the Lutheran Church have set an objective to meet human needs, thus espousing the purpose of the servant leader described by Greenleaf (2010). Greenleaf (1991) described charitable institutions such as churches as organizations or institutions in which servant leadership may be effectively practiced.

Greenleaf (2010) suggested servant leadership is effective because servant leaders use their power of persuasion and example to create opportunities for people to grow stronger and healthier in their autonomy. Blanchard and Hodges (2005) suggested leadership is a process defined by the act of affecting or influencing others. Wilkes (1999) recognized servant leadership as affecting others because servant leaders focus on “serving the mission” (p. 18). For the Christian, this may be best described by Christ’s own summary of the law, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37–39 ESV). Because the idea of servant leadership is to serve the follower, a servant leader is focused on serving those around him or her as they work to convey the mission as well. Hammond (2018) recognized that perception of the principal as servant leader had an impact on the empowerment of teachers in Lutheran schools. Among the recommendations from

the Hammond research, principal preparation programs including servant leadership theory was suggested.

In church work, including work by Lutheran school principals and Lutheran pastors, the prime example of serving others and the mission is Jesus Christ. Lutheran churches and schools work to develop disciples for Jesus Christ as a major focus of their ministry. They look to Jesus as the prime example of servant leadership. Servant leaders seek to promote healing and develop growth in those they lead and in themselves as well (Fryar, 2001). As leaders in churches with Lutheran schools, pastors and principals work with congregations to put servant leadership into action. To successfully develop an organization within the context of servant leadership, principal, pastor, and congregation need to work together. Blanchard and Hodges (2005) recognized servant leadership is not best begun from outside the leader, but rather from within. The process of developing and improving leadership from a servant leadership perspective takes place when four leadership domains, including heart, head, hands, and habits, are aligned (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005).

It makes sense that a discussion of how Lutheran school principals and pastors interact would include a discussion of what Blanchard (2003) referred to as the heart component of servant leadership. Blanchard distinguished between serving leaders and self-serving leaders. In part, servant leaders can be identified by their motivation. The active expression of servant leadership demonstrates a motivation to keep the needs of followers first because, as organizational colleagues grow, organizational capacity grows (Keith, 2012). In this regard, serving others is a critical component of the servant leader. It is important to note whether principals of the Lutheran Church are experiencing this kind of leadership from the pastors with whom they serve. According to Greenleaf (1997), leaders that have a clear understanding of the heart of servant leadership are motivated to serve in leadership. As leaders, principals and pastors

are subject to the framework of servant leadership when professional relationships between principal and pastor are considered. Relationships in which either the pastor or the principal struggle to understand and carry out their roles as leaders from a servant perspective may experience tension that discourages followers, especially in the context of an organization that naturally lends itself to a servant leadership model. For evaluative purposes, this study was not focused on determining whether or not a principal or pastor fits the profile of a servant leader. Rather, the research was conducted recognizing that whether intentional or not, servant leadership was most likely a value of the Lutheran congregations and the principals and pastors serving in them.

The heart of servant leadership is the motivation of the serving leader, and this heart for the follower naturally flows into the domain of the head (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005). Blanchard and Hodges (2005) noted that a servant leader clearly operates within a particular belief system and perspective. Leadership assumptions and methods fall under the servant leadership domain referred to by Blanchard and Hodges as the head. Within the domain of the head, servant leaders espouse a vision that enables followers to understand what and why they follow a particular leader in support of his or her desired outcomes. In their study of servant leadership, Sendjaya, Sarros, and Santora (2008) considered vision a part of the transforming influence of a leader. Greenleaf (1997) included vision as one of the attributes of servant leadership. Effective principals are expected to develop and promote vision as part of their leadership. In some settings, the principal would be free to develop a vision and use his or her influence to promote the vision within the school he or she leads. When a pastor is also involved at the head of Lutheran church and school, both principal and pastor as leaders may need to work together, not only with one another but with those they lead, to develop a vision that guides their leadership

and their organization. Conversations with principals and pastors are important to better understand how they work together to accomplish the goals of their leadership.

Sipe and Frick (2015) described servant leadership from a perspective of seven pillars and referred visionary thinking under the concept of the pillar of foresight. Sipe and Frick recognized a servant leader was one who “imagines possibilities, anticipates the future, and proceeds with clarity of purpose” (p. 6). Under the pillar of foresight, the servant leader supports the organization by serving as a visionary leader that not only does so creatively but also demonstrates the ability to take “courageous and decisive action” (p. 6). Accordingly, principals leading from a servant leadership perspective will need to have experience developing, sharing, and supporting vision with the pastors of the congregations in which they serve. As principals lead in this manner, they must adequately apply the concepts of servant leadership even if they find themselves in a position that does not give them final authority over the development of the organizational vision. Of course, the ability for a principal to take decisive action is dependent upon the amount of latitude the principal may or may not be given to exercise such authority. One of the obvious challenges to developing, sharing, and supporting vision for a principal of a Lutheran school would be the potential overlap of responsibility shared by the pastor of the congregation that operates the school. Bonem and Patterson (2005) recognized the pastor serving from the first chair position in an organization, that is, the senior position, serves as the primary vision-maker for a congregation. In this position, the pastor holds a spot that allows for some latitude in decision-making and administration that the principal, leading from what Bonem and Patterson would refer to as the “second chair,” would not have.

As a functional leader, the principal must have a big-picture perspective that also involves attention to the details of the day-to-day operation of the ministry. Often, this includes more than just those areas in which the school is involved. A principal, as the second chair

leader, may move from a budget meeting to an issue with student discipline to comforting a teacher that has experienced some kind of loss to a classroom observation to standing in for a teacher that needs to leave suddenly and a variety of other activities, meetings, and interactions throughout the day. If a principal misses on any of these points, he or she may be questioned or have to give account for his or her perceived inability to uphold the principles of the job of school ministry leader. If the pastor is not able to participate in one of these many activities, he may be given a pass simply because, as Bonem and Patterson (2005) note; he is “the ‘visionary leader,’ a big-picture person” (p. 67).

In servant leadership, the concept of the hands is understood by Blanchard and Hodges (2005) as the way a servant leader applies the motivation and the vision of servant leadership and carries it out in their “decision-by-decision behaviors” (p. 61). The actions of servant leaders have a significant impact on the organizations in which they serve. In the study of principals and pastors collaborating together to lead in the Lutheran school setting, there is a necessity for the right hand to know what, in fact, the left hand is doing. If the principal and pastor are not both applying servant leadership principles to their day-to-day and long-term decision-making, the need for greater clarification of motivation and vision may need to be explored. Of course, the principal may choose to uphold a servant leader ethic, regardless of the approach to leadership taken by the pastor of the ministry in which they work together. However, as the principal continues to hone his or her servant leadership skills through the habits of daily practice, it makes sense that working with a pastor that is more interested in sharing the role of leadership by empowering others in the organization would create an environment more susceptible to adopting the habits of a servant leadership model.

The practices of servant leaders include self-awareness, listening, changing the pyramid, developing your colleagues, coaching not controlling, unleashing the energy and intelligence of

others, and foresight (Keith, 2012). These habits of effective servant leaders allow leaders to effectively lead those entrusted to their leadership. As principals and pastors work together, if they are servant leaders, they will participate in the key practices of servant leadership in order to move forward personally, professionally, and organizationally. Workers in Lutheran schools are expected to demonstrate the love of Christ as they serve those around them (WELS, 2015). Pastors are expected to provide servant leadership that serves as an example of Christian conduct (LCA, 2016). Self-aware servant leaders must be able to recognize how their role affects the roles of those around them. Within the context of servant leadership, a principal and pastor working together must be able to recognize how they are working together and how they, as leaders, may develop one another as colleagues. As leaders of a Lutheran church operating a school, a Lutheran pastor and Lutheran school principal work together to support the organization as servants of Christ and the organization. Principal and pastor work to deepen the faith of the community by adopting and practicing a mindset of servant leadership (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016).

In their discussion of servant leadership, Sipe and Frick (2015) suggested the inverted pyramid of leadership suggested by Greenleaf (1997) was further explained and understood utilizing a seven pillar image representing the servant leader. The servant leader was represented by seven pillars, including (a) person of character; (b) puts people first; (c) skilled communicator; (d) compassionate collaborator; (e) has foresight; (f) systems thinker; and (g) leaders with moral authority (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Within the framework of servant leadership, principals and pastors of Lutheran schools could both be viewed as servant leaders seeking to lead in their respective positions from the fundamentals represented in the pillars.

As leaders, principal and pastor are expected to be people of character. Sipe and Frick (2015) suggested character was evident through maintenance of integrity, humility, and a clear



focus on serving a higher purpose. By putting people first, principal and pastor demonstrate the second pillar when they work to mentor the leaders around them (2015). As skilled communicators, servant leaders serving as principals or pastors demonstrate an ability to use communication tools to persuade others. Sipe and Frick (2015) described compassionate collaboration as a pillar that “strengthens relationships, supports diversity, and creates a sense of belonging” (p. 6). By leading with moral authority, principals or pastors behaving as servant leaders are willing to share power and control as they work to shape and create culture within an organization such as a Lutheran church and school (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Such leadership expectations not only rest in the individual of principal or pastor but are also recognized by scholars of servant leadership as organizational attributes as well.

Greenleaf (2008) described the role organizations or institutions play in developing servant leadership when they “build a group of people who, under the influence of the institution, grow taller and become healthier, stronger, more autonomous (p. 41). As individual institutions and as members of a larger institution, congregations of the Lutheran Church have ample opportunity to develop people, including the pastors and principals that serve as leaders. According to Greenleaf, when an organization is focused on developing the people within it, it is on the path of institutional servant leader. When describing the institution as servant leader, Greenleaf noted that formal and informal structures are indicated.

According to Greenleaf (1972), the formal structure of a servant leader institution is comprised of those elements that give structure or rules to guide the practice of the leaders within the organization. In the context of this study, formal structures of Lutheran congregations operating schools include church constitutions, personnel handbooks, and any other operational manual that gives guidance to those employed by a congregation with a Lutheran school.

According to Greenleaf (1972), such formal structures are those rules that “specify lines of reporting and authority for certain actions and expenditures” (p. 20).

Formal structures provide guidance for servant leaders, but informal structures are those that provide what Greenleaf (1972) described as the response to leadership. If the formal structures are developed appropriately, creativity and effective response to leadership are not “master-minded” (p. 20) by the formal structure. The informal structures are those structures that allow for innovation and creativity to develop within an organization (Greenleaf, 1972). These informal structures are in play when principals are able to lead alongside pastors of Lutheran schools and utilize creativity and take decisive action without being bound by the formality of bureaucracy that may be present when principal and pastor have not yet understood how to apply servant leadership principles to the work principal and pastor do together when leading a Lutheran church and school.

As institutions that may be considered servant leaders, Lutheran congregations also extend the work of service through the leaders they call to lead in their midst. As a part of their vocation, principals are called to lead school communities in the capacity of spiritual leaders (Bartsch, 2006). Pastors also serve as spiritual leaders. Even though the pastor may view his primary role as that of spiritual leader, often, the principal may be the first contact point a family has with the structure of the church (Kleinschmidt, 2002). Although Bartsch (2006) and Kleinschmidt (2002) speak from the perspective of principals in the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), the discussion of principal and pastor roles translates well to Lutheran schools in the United States.

While the principal defers to the spiritual leadership of the pastor, the challenge of servant leadership in a Lutheran school is that the school leader (principal) and the church leader (pastor) both exercise a leadership role and may find that their leadership overlaps. It may be

difficult for a principal or pastor to live out the Greenleaf (2008) principle of servant-first when they may sense a challenge to the authority vested in the office of principal or pastor. Durow and Brock (2004) as well as Dosen and Reickhoff (2016) cited conflict with pastors as significant hindrances to principal retention in Catholic schools. Nelson (2015) identified one of the challenges to the servant leadership of a pastor moving into a school ministry setting is the change in structure.

Pastors of congregations without schools often experience a more self-directed flexible schedule (Nelson, 2015). A Lutheran school ministry may be more time-sensitive and structured and may require pastors to relinquish some authority regarding how school-necessitated schedules and ministry demands affect their time and scheduling. Principals may struggle to make decisions knowing that they may have to explain their decision-making process to a pastor that may not fully understand school ministry needs.

Although Lutheran school principals may aspire to operate as servant leaders, the authority, responsibilities, and nature of the job of principal present challenges to principals (Kleinschmidt, 2002). Principals may find themselves struggling to help pastors understand decisions that are made in the day-to-day operations of the school, especially when they seem to conflict with what the pastor may have chosen in a similar situation. Alternatively, principals may find they are supported by their pastors in the decision-making process but misunderstood by parents, students, or teachers within the school community. As the spiritual leader of a Lutheran school ministry, the principals must make decisions in keeping with the doctrine and position of their Lutheran church body and the congregation. Those in the Lutheran school community that are not members of the Lutheran Church or the congregation sponsoring the school may not understand the doctrinal position or reasons behind a particular decision the principal has made. Additionally, a principal may seem to make a decision that does not express

the doctrinal position or intent of the congregation clearly enough to the pastor or others within the congregation.

### **Organizational Development**

Organizational development (OD) theory has a place in the discussion of principal–pastor and principal-congregation relationships relative to the impact these relationships have on a principal’s ability to effectively lead a Lutheran school through the process of OD. Schmuck, Bell, and Bell (2012) indicated the importance of consensual decision-making in organizations that are engaged in tasks that require a coordinated effort among all participants within an organization. Although this study is not an evaluation of OD within Lutheran schools, the terminology used in OD Theory may provide an effective means of framing the discussion as principals of Lutheran schools share their perceptions of the principal–pastor relationship and how it affects their leadership effectiveness.

Schmuck, Bell, and Bell (2012) acknowledged organizations such as schools are made up of individuals. As leaders of congregations operating Lutheran schools, principals and the pastors are the most recognizable individuals contributing to the development of the organization from a leadership perspective. Principals and pastors may or may not work together toward the same objectives. However, as a leadership team, the principal and pastor may recognize interdependence within the leadership team. Within OD theory, this interdependent team of individuals is referred to as a subsystem (Schmuck, Bell, & Bell, 2012). The congregation may also be viewed as a subsystem within a Lutheran church with a school. Members of an organization may be a part of more than one subsystem (Schmuck, Bell, & Bell, 2012). Principals of Lutheran schools may be included in the leadership team subsystem, the faculty subsystem, and the congregation subsystem, among others. By understanding how principals manage their roles within various subsystems and how those subsystems support or detract from

effective leadership is an important start to helping principals, pastors, and congregations recognize how their interactions affect principal leadership.

As individuals, the principal and pastor contribute to the ministry even at an organizational level. While principal or pastor may perform the duties of the principalship or the pastorate from a servant leadership position, they may also play a role in how the overall organization carries out the function of servant leadership. Institutions such as churches with schools may be viewed as servant leaders in and of themselves (Greenleaf, 1972). As an institution, the church with a school has what Greenleaf referred to as its two main parts, “formal and informal (p. 20). There are formal structures at work in a congregation with a school as well as informal. The formal structures in place are developed and carried out in policies, rules, or practices that have been established over time (Greenleaf, 1972). The informal structures are more concerned with how leadership plays out within the organization (Greenleaf, 1972). These informal structures may be recognized by how the leader, in this case, the principal and/or pastor builds purpose in the organization, challenges fellow workers with opportunity for growth, how they allocate and advocate for judicious use of resources, encouraging creativity and risk-taking, and empowering team members to build a strong network of interpersonal relationships that benefit those in them as well as the entire organization (Greenleaf, 1972). Paradoxically, these formal and informal structures may work against one another as the formal structures interfere with the development of a more robust informal structure (Greenleaf, 1972). Without adequate consideration by those in leadership roles, the tension between the two structures may not be maintained to a healthy degree, and principal or pastor may find themselves struggling to lead an institution that views servant leadership as an important manifestation of the institution but lacks the necessary structures to enable servant leadership to take place. While formal structures may be available via a variety of means such as written policies and procedures, the most qualified

individuals to provide insight into the informal structures guiding principal–pastor collaboration would be principals and pastors themselves. A frank discussion with principals and pastors of Lutheran schools would be a good first step in determining how well the Lutheran Church is carrying out and supporting a servant leadership approach in Lutheran schools.

This study did not seek to extend the study of the servant leadership or OD frameworks, but rather, to identify how the literature regarding both might help focus the discussion of principals working in Lutheran school. Several studies of principals and pastors described leaders of parochial schools in terms of service (Eakins, 2015; McLean, 2018; Sieger, 1999; Wojcikici, 1982). A firm understanding of the point of view a principal of a Lutheran school may have is well-described by those that have described leadership in this context from a servant leader framework. If principals are servant leaders, their experiences should align with the principles suggested by a servant leadership framework. Specifically, they should experience some degree of collaboration with pastors that also lead within the congregations operating Lutheran schools. This case study allowed principals as subsystems of Lutheran churches with schools to describe their experiences with the pastors serving in ministry with them.

### **Review of Research and Methodological Literature**

A review of the literature began with potential studies that spoke to principal–pastor relationships. While studies that specifically speak to Lutheran school principals were rare or focused on principals of Lutheran schools outside the United States (Bartel, 2004; Nelson, 2016; Sieger, 1999), other studies were included that represented similar situations in that they looked at principals and pastors of schools that were operated by religious organizations including Catholic and Seventh-day Adventist schools (Eakins, 2015; Durow & Brock, 2004; McClean, 2018; Patterson, 2007; Schafer, 2004; Wojcicki, 1982). A review of relevant literature describing studies of principal–pastor relationships was followed up with material that supported the servant

leadership framework guiding the understanding of how principals and pastors may be expected to collaborate. Additional literature was reviewed that identified possible causes for isolation in the principalship and spoke to the necessity for collaborative relationships to be formed.

### **Lutheran Schools and the Principal–Pastor Relationship**

A review of the literature found that studies focused on principal–pastor relations were very limited. Studies that included an in-depth look at roles of pastors and principals are included here. Although two studies included in the literature review were not conducted within the last twenty years, the Wojicki (1982) and Sieger (1999) studies provided valuable insights to parochial systems that are still relevant today. These studies opened the door for further study of how principals and pastors work together in schools operated by churches. Discussions by Schafer (2004), suggested the need for shared vision amongst principal, pastor, and others for effective school governance. Schafer (2004) also described the challenge that may arise as principal and pastor both serve from positions of leadership with pastor of the Catholic parish holding authority over all ministries of a parish including the school. One study included a look at the perceived and expected roles of pastors of congregations with Lutheran schools (Sieger, 1999). The research conducted by Sieger was relevant to this study because it shed light on the history and development of Lutheran schools in the United States as well as presented an opportunity to see perceptions and expectations of several stakeholders in a Lutheran school ministry program. Although the study was focused on schools specifically in the ELCA, the study provided useful background information and a framework, including role and organizational theories (Sieger, 1999). The Sieger study represented a step forward in filling the gap of understanding with regard to the roles of pastors within Lutheran schools.

Sieger (1999) utilized a Likert-type survey method to collect responses from pastors, principals, and teachers in ELCA schools. The questionnaires for the principals and teachers

were designed to determine principal and teacher expectations for pastors with regards to pastoral responsibilities in the surveyed schools (Sieger, 1999). Sieger also polled pastors with similar questionnaires to determine how pastors perceived their roles with regards to pastoral responsibilities in the surveyed schools. The findings reported by Sieger indicated that in most ELCA Lutheran schools, the pastor was not the chief school administrator of the school, but rather the pastor was part of a team responsible for ensuring that all subsystems of a congregation were provided appropriate ministry opportunities. The Sieger study included senior pastors, principals, and teachers from 112 elementary schools of the ELCA.

Sieger (1999) found a discrepancy between what pastors viewed as their role and how teachers and principals viewed the pastoral role in a Lutheran school. A recommendation of the Sieger study was to work toward strengthening the relationship between congregation and school through specific role training. Based upon an earlier study conducted by Wojcicki (1982) and also included in a review of the literature for this study, Sieger incorporated role theory into the study seeking to operationalize roles of the pastor within schools operated by congregations.

More contemporary studies included a study conducted by Eakins (2015) that sought to describe the impacts of collaborations between Seventh-day Adventist principals and pastors in the United States. While not generalizable to Lutheran schools, the Eakins study approached the subject of principal–pastor relationships from a qualitative approach as a multiple case study. Eakins included four sites in the study for data collection. Findings of the Eakins study included recommendations that principals and pastors find ways to build relationships beyond the professional setting. The cases in the study also led Eakins to conclude that principals and pastors need to be supportive of the entities, namely school and church, led by their colleagues. Finally, Eakins described the data as pointing to the need for strong collaboration between principal and pastor for development of school vision.



In a study more closely aligned with Lutheran schools, Nelson (2016) addressed collaboration between principals and pastors. Although Nelson (2016) was describing principal and pastor perceptions within Australian Lutheran schools, the lessons learned in that research may help increase understanding of how principals and pastors in Lutheran schools in the United States collaborate. Nelson found that personal and professional relationships between principal and pastor are highly valued. Nelson also noted that when principals and pastors experience conflict, it may be detrimental to school growth or lack of connection between congregation and school.

The Wojcicki (1982) study included Catholic schools, and although they were applied to schools of different denominations whose structure and governance are significantly different, the Likert-style surveys used in both studies were similar thus justifying the research of the Catholic schools being applied to Lutheran schools by Sieger (1999). As a precursor to the Sieger study, the Wojcicki (1982) study delivered questions that sought to understand how respondents rated the importance and authority level a pastor may have with regards to operationalizing his role within the context of a Catholic elementary school. While there may have been many groups that may have had insight regarding the specific diocesan schools within the study, Wojcicki limited respondents to principals, pastors, and teachers. In contrast to the wider net cast by the later Sieger (1999) study, Wojcicki limited respondents to pastors, principals, and teachers within the dioceses of Sacramento, San Diego, and Santa Rosa, California.

Schafer (2004) reviewed principal–pastor leadership role expectations and found that the principal is recognized as the primary leader of a parochial school. Schafer also noted that pastors serve as primary leaders in parochial schools as well, often in a position to hire principals that will lead schools operated by congregations. A more contemporary study of perceptions of

Catholic schools conducted by McLean (2018) recognized that the notion that schools are schools regardless of their type, Lutheran, Catholic, public, private, or other, was not a principle espoused by the Catholic church. According to McLean, Catholic schools are perceived by the operating church body to be set apart for a particular purpose that cannot be recognized as a universal reason for being. At the center of Catholic schooling, school leaders invite students into community through the agency of leaders and other stakeholders by fostering the development of interpersonal relationships. Such notions are true for Lutheran schools as well.

Wojcicki (1982) determined the study supported the literature suggesting the importance of the role of the principal in defining the pastoral role in a Catholic school. The results of the Wojcicki study indicated pastor and principal relationships might be a source for future study because the analysis of variance between principal and pastor responses accounted for the greatest statistical difference. The Eakins (2015), McLean (2018), Sieger (1999), and Wojcicki (1982) studies indicated that the pastor and principal play an important role in a congregation endeavoring to operate a school program. McClean (2018) identified the need to appropriately train pastors to be future school leaders. Boyle and Dosen (2017) also advocated for appropriate seminary preparation of pastors who may lead Catholic schools. The quantitative studies of McLean (2018), Sieger (1999), and Wojcicki (1982) also suggested that some role ambiguity existed within schools operated by congregations. The history of ambiguity regarding pastoral roles in parochial schools from the 1980s through 2018, suggested the importance of hearing from principals with regards to their relationships with pastors in the school setting. Even with formal and informal structures in place, servant leaders such as principals and pastors may struggle to recognize clear roles for interaction and collaboration. In addition, principals and pastors may struggle to best understand how to lead with moral authority within the context of their individual offices, particularly when role ambiguity exists.

In Lutheran and Catholic schools, principals are tasked with leading their schools. However, they may also be tasked with leading their schools with pastors that are also designated as primary decision-makers (Schafer, 2004). It is not always clear to leaders of parochial schools how the role of a pastor should be understood (Eakins, 2015; Sieger, 1999; & Wojcicki, 1982). Schafer (2004) noted in his discussion of the principals and pastors working in a parochial school the principals and pastors should work together to derive a functional job description for the pastor in relation to school ministry.

In both Lutheran and Catholic congregations, a conflict between pastor and principal may have serious consequences, particularly for the principal who may not directly have the ear of the congregation in which he or she serves. In one case, a Catholic pastor cited philosophical differences for unilaterally dismissing a long-time principal in his parish (Coday, 2003). In the Coday case, the principal was later reinstated after parents of the school pushed for reconsideration of the termination. Although the Coday case served as an extreme example, it demonstrated the need for principals and pastors in shared ministry situations to have a strong understanding of how the roles of principal and pastor were operationalized. Further, the principal and pastor do not operate in a vacuum. As the Coday case demonstrated, other stakeholders came into play when the operation of a school ministry was in question. As Sieger (1999) observed, the number of church member children attending Lutheran schools has significantly decreased. With a lower representation of school families also serving as members of sponsoring congregations, non-Lutheran parents may have a difficult time understanding how or why a principal or any other staff member may be asked to leave or have policy decisions removed from his or her jurisdiction. Patterson (2007) also noted that principals, pastors, and other leaders must work together in order to ensure that church needs and school needs are adequately met. Patterson further indicated the importance of understanding organizational

expectations and clarifying roles for leaders in schools operated by churches. Dosen and Rieckhoff (2016) identified conflict with pastors as a major challenge in principal retention. Principals that experienced positive principal–pastor relationships had higher job satisfaction (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016).

Pastors in Lutheran congregations generally do not retain the authority to hire and fire Called workers. Ammerman (1997) indicated that pastors had the perceived role in a congregation as the leader and decision-maker. In addition, even in an organization such as a Lutheran congregation that practices a congregational polity that resembles a representative democracy, the pastor or others may have been found to exercise informal superiority because of position or seniority (Deifenbach & Sillince, 2011). Although an informal, unspoken power may accompany the office of pastor, this did necessarily mean that a pastor would exercise his authority for the purpose of controlling the principal. It was, however, a potential risk that may be present in Lutheran congregations also operating schools.

Role descriptions for principals and pastors were available for review on the websites of national Lutheran church bodies (ELCA, 2020; LCMS, 2020; WELS, 2020). It is of note that none of the materials within the ELCA, LCMS, and WELS role descriptions included specifics on the roles of pastors in Lutheran schools. A search of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA, 2016) produced a document specifically directed at the role of pastors in Lutheran schools. In the LCA document, the role of pastor in a Lutheran school is described as different the role of the pastor in a congregation. In congregations where a pastor and principal both occupy leadership roles, there may be times when the scope of the leadership of pastor or principal overlaps that of the other. One of the facets of this study is to better understand how principals in Lutheran schools recognize, experience, and navigate principal–pastor relationships.

Lencioni (2012) suggested any organization that wanted to maximize its success must be smart and healthy. He described smart practices as those including effective strategy, attention to marketing, sound financial principles, and technological awareness (Lencioni, 2012). He described healthy practices as those with (a) minimal politics, (b) minimal confusion, (c) high morale, (d) high productivity, and (e) low turnover (Lencioni, 2012). Under the umbrella of servant leadership, the subsystem of principal and pastor as a leadership team seeking to maximize success would seek to espouse the principles of healthy practices.

Xenidis and Theocharous (2014) defined organizational health as “the state of complete and unimpeded operation of all formal, informal, main and auxiliary processes” (p. 564). School organizational health may also include staff perceptions of collegial leadership relationships between coworkers that are based upon trust, encouragement, and support (Bottiani, Bradshaw, & Mendelson, 2014). Lencioni (2012) described cohesion in the leadership team as a fundamental discipline in organizational health. For the purposes of this study, the leadership team included pastor and principal but may have been expanded as study participants described and defined their own leadership teams.

Lencioni (2012) suggested that a dysfunctional leadership team would lead to a dysfunctional organization. Cemaloğlu (2011) also found the principal plays a role in securing organizational health. If principal and pastor experience some crossover in leadership, then they both play a role in the organizational health of the congregation with a school. As a leadership team, the pastor and principal ought to work together to achieve a common objective (Lencioni, 2012). Lencioni described the importance of building trust within the leadership team. Effective leaders recognized building trust across the school community provided opportunities for continued success (Anrig, 2015). Sipe and Frick (2015) also noted servant leaders developed the

organization by presenting themselves through word and action as leaders that demonstrate worthiness of respect, inspire trust, and build confidence in those being served.

In general, Lutheran school principals serve Lutheran schools within the context of a congregational role. That is, a congregation extends a divine call to a rostered worker to serve in the position of school principal. In addition to leading the school, the principal is often expected to be an actively involved member of the congregation as well. Congregational polity may include a school board that oversees the work of the principal as well as a council that oversees the work of various boards, including the school board. Polity varies from congregation to congregation and from synod to synod, so in one Call, a principal may find he or she answers to a school board and a council, and in another congregation, the principal may be supervised by a board of directors or an administrative pastor. In any case, the principal is part of the subsystem of the congregation and must lead from the position within that context. In Lencioni's (2012) work with organizations, he observed healthy practices of an organization as having limited politics. In congregations with elected boards, positions, and other democratically chosen policies and procedures, there exists the potential for politics whether limited or not.

### **Challenges to Effective School Leadership**

Drago-Severson (2012) summarized the literature describing the principal's role in supporting teacher learning, acknowledging the importance of the principal as a key to school development. Principals play an important role in school organizations. In addition, preparation for effective teaching and leadership was important (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Throughout the years, the principalship has seen a variety of roles and challenges. In the early days of the Lutheran schools, administration of the school was often a function of the elders (Beck, 1939). If teachers were unavailable, the pastor may have been called to cover the role of school teacher or headmaster (Beck, 1939). The challenges facing a Lutheran school educator in the early 1900s

were not the same as those facing Lutheran school administrators today. As times have changed, so, too, may have the needs of various subsystems represented in a Lutheran school.

Beck (1939) identified the purpose of Lutheran schools as being significantly tied to the theological development of the congregation. As legislatures throughout the United States began to impose standards and requirements for public schools, Lutheran schools were strongly encouraged to uphold similar standards in addition to the theological emphasis being placed upon the school by the congregation as the school carried out the unique calling of a Lutheran school (Beck, 1939). Beck indicated the attitude prevailed that congregation members should not be given any reason to send congregation children to a public school when a Lutheran school was available. In order to create an atmosphere that was not only uniquely Lutheran but also academically excellent was and continues to be a characteristic of a Lutheran school (Bartsch, 2006). Lutheran distinctives are and should be lived out through Lutheran schools because the “Gospel is at the heart of the school” (Jaensch, 2006, p. 43).

Lutheran school or not, several studies indicated the principalship, especially for new principals, may have created a sense of isolation for a school leader (Izgar, 2009; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Thomas, Grigsby, Miller, & Scully, 2003). As a leader, a principal may feel isolated in his or her role. Wright et al. (2006) studied loneliness of managers and nonmanagers in organizations. The Wright et al. study found that managers and nonmanagers alike may have experienced loneliness as a result of substantive interpersonal relationships. Subsystems of organizations may be interdependent, but that is no guarantee of interpersonal relationship development.

The Wojcicki (1982) study indicated teachers surveyed scored principal–pastor relationships lower than the principals and pastors themselves. Wojcicki posited that such a measure indicated principals and pastors were not completely aware of possible shortcomings

with their collaborative relationships. Principals and pastors may unknowingly overlook the interdependence they share as leaders of Lutheran schools and congregations. As principals and pastors struggled to recognize their interdependence in the Wojcicki study, other members of the organization were aware of possible difficulties within principal–pastor relationships. Eakins (2015) also found that leaders of Seventh–day Adventist schools did not agree with one another when it came to describing interdependence and relationships within a school leadership team that included principals and pastors. Regardless of how principals and pastors perceived their respective roles with parochial school systems, principals valued strong connections with the pastors along with whom they serve (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016; Durow & Brock, 2004; Nelson, 2016).

Sarpkaya (2014) suggested an environment of isolation may lead to loneliness based upon individual perception. A study of principals in Turkey found that if principals experienced rising levels of loneliness, they also experienced a rise in depression (Izgar, 2009). In order to sustain effective principals, loneliness and isolation must be addressed as principals work to lead within the scope of their leadership roles. If Lutheran school principals and pastors operate as leaders of other organizations, the quality of the relationship between pastor and principal may play a significant role in the overall health of the principal and perhaps the pastor as well. By accessing the experiences of Lutheran school principals, this study may also be able to determine whether or not isolation played a role in the principal–pastor relationships discussed.

Numerous studies focused on principals and how they collaborate with the pastors of the schools in which they serve were not readily available for review. In fact, there are no such studies readily available with regards to the ELCA, the LCMS, or the WELS outside of the Sieger (1999) study of principals and pastors collaborating. However, the literature that does exist consistently demonstrated the importance of principal–pastor relationships (Eakins, 2015;



Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016; McClean, 2015, Sieger, 1999, & Wojcicki, 1982). Servant leadership models described by Greenleaf (1972) and others also suggested the importance of collaborative efforts amongst leadership staff (Blanchard, 2003; Blanchard & Hodges, 2005, Fryar, 2001; Greenleaf, 2010; Keith, 2012; Sipe & Frick, 2015, & Wilkes, 1998). Servant leadership theory as a theory is still limited by the potential ambiguity of its definition (Parris & Peachey, 2013), but the terminology used within discussions of servant leadership include many of the same terms such as collaboration and service included in studies of principal–pastor collaboration in a variety of parochial settings including Catholic, Lutheran, and Seventh-day Adventist.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

When trying to determine how Lutheran school principals experience collaboration with the pastors of the congregations in which they serve, many research methods were available. One possibility for this study could have utilized the survey research method chosen by Wojcicki (1982) in his study of pastor roles within Catholic schools. Yin (2014) noted survey research was appropriate for studies that included questions such as who, what, where, how many, or how much. For Wojcicki (1982), the approach of survey research allowed his study to identify various roles within Catholic schools, who carried out those roles, and how much agreement between roles there was with regards to how principals and pastors worked together.

Sieger (1999) also used survey research to quantify how teachers, principals, and pastors viewed the roles of pastors within Lutheran schools. By using survey research with Likert-type survey questions, Sieger was able to analyze the responses of each of the participants and compare how each viewed roles of pastors in Lutheran schools. Sieger described a benefit of the study as contributing to the body of knowledge as it operationalized the roles of pastors in Lutheran schools. According to Sieger, congregations considering opening a Lutheran school

may have also benefited from an approach that quantified data in a way that allowed them to see that the pastor was going to be an important part of a Lutheran school.

Yin (2014) noted when choosing among five methods of research, the particular methodology used to conduct research could be based upon three conditions. The conditions described by Yin included (a) forms of research questions, (b) requirement of control for behavioral events, and (c) contemporary versus historical focus. For Wojcicki (1982) and Sieger (1999) forms of the questions being asked did not require an in depth understanding of how or why pastors and principals viewed their roles, and therefore worked well within a survey research approach. Because this study problem was focused on how principals experience working together with pastors of their congregations, survey research was not an effective approach. Yin (2014) suggested in order to determine whether a case study approach was most effective was to ask whether the question being studied could be answered with a history, a survey, or an experiment. Any of those approaches may have added to the body of research contributing to the understanding of principal–pastor relationships. The most logical methodology to use in this study was a case study approach since it focused on contemporary experiences and sought to answer how principals worked with pastors of the congregations they serve.

The Wojcicki (1982) study focused on understanding the pastor’s role within Catholic schools. As noted earlier, Wojcicki used a Likert-style survey and conducted statistical analysis to determine if significant variance occurred with regards to operationalization of pastor roles in Catholic schools. The qualitative approach allowed Wojcicki to compare responses to various questions from principals, pastors, and teachers. Wojcicki noted the study was spread between schools that were distributed at a distance that made the research possibly generalizable to other Catholic schools. What the Wojcicki study was not able to do was to determine why principals,

pastors, or teachers felt the way they did about the roles of pastors in Catholic schools. Further, since the Wojcicki study focused on Catholic schools, the results did not easily translate to a study of Lutheran schools.

Sieger (1999) recognized the study Wojcicki conducted could be conducted similarly with pastors, teachers, and principals of Lutheran schools. Sieger also opted to use survey research. The data collected was analyzed to better understand how the roles of pastors are operationalized in Lutheran schools of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or the ELCA. Sieger also included expectations of pastors by teachers in the study. The Likert style questionnaire used by Sieger was modeled after the Wojcicki questionnaire and adjusted for differences between the Catholic school system and the ELCA school system (Sieger, 1999).

Both Wojcicki (1982) and Sieger (1999) used a quantitative approach that allowed them to conduct surveys they used to identify the correlation between perceptions of principals, pastors, and teachers. The studies were focused on a specific data set determined by the researcher. The research done by the Wojcicki (1982) and Sieger (1999) contributed to understanding perceptions of roles of pastors in Lutheran schools. Eakins (2015) utilized a different approach that included a multiple case study approach to determine the impact of collaboration between principals and pastors in Seventh-day Adventist schools in the United States. Although limited in its scope, the Eakins study noted that principals and pastors had more positive experiences when they used effective communication and collaboration techniques.

Nelson (2016) approached understanding of Lutheran school principal and pastor roles from both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Nelson included survey-type research as well as open-ended interviews to better understand how principals and pastors perceived their contributions to the mission of Lutheran schools. Other studies of parochial principals indicated not only role perceptions of principals as leaders of Christian organizations, but also spoke to

how they were prepared for those roles (Bartsch, 2006; Boyle & Dosen, 2017; Wallace, Ridenour, & Biddle, 1999). Patterson (2007) noted that role confusion was possible in principal–pastor relationships. Patterson noted that roles were operationalized by principals and pastors in four leadership dimensions including faith leader, instructional leader, communicator, and administrator.

By using additional methods of research, such as case study, the results of empirical research can be complemented (Yin, 2014). Principal–pastor relationships are complex social situations. Yin (2014) noted the study of such complex social situations lend themselves well to a case study approach. This study sought to look more closely at how five principals experienced collaboration with the pastors of the congregations they serve. While other methods of research could be used, case study research was chosen as the best method for exploring the views of the principals in their own words.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

The field of research encompassing principal–pastor relationships in Lutheran schools in the United States was limited. The researcher expanded the search to other schools with similar demographics including Lutheran schools of Australia, Seventh-day Adventist schools in the United States, and Catholic schools in the United States. Studies included quantitative studies that sought to understand the perceptions of principal–pastor roles (McLean, 2018; Seiger, 1999; Wojcicki, 1982). Studies reviewed also included qualitative or mixed-methods aimed at understanding principal–pastor relationships (Eakins, 2015; Nelson, 2016). A review conducted by Schafer (2004) also highlighted leadership role expectations and relationships of principals and pastors in parochial settings.

A study of Catholic schools and the perceptions of the roles of pastors within Catholic schools was conducted by Ted Wojcicki (1982). The Wojcicki study suggested agreement

between principals, pastors, and teachers with regards to the of role operationalization for pastors. In analyzing the data, Wojcicki recommended pastors of Catholic schools carry out roles of administration with care. The study also noted principals may need to educate personnel, particularly younger teachers or newly hired with regards to the role of the pastor in the operation of the school (Wojcicki, 1982). The study highlighted the importance of relationship between pastor and principal that is harmonious (Wojcicki, 1982).

In her study, Sieger (1999) also concluded pastors, principals, and teachers shared similar viewpoints with regards to the operationalization of pastor roles. Sieger noted principals and teachers readily recognized the role of pastors as shepherds but were less likely than pastors to identify the pastors as administrators or policy-makers. The Sieger (1999) research study supported the findings of the Wojcicki (1982) study, which found the relationship between principal and pastor to be a factor in the health of the school. Patterson (2007) demonstrated similar results and found that there exists in principals and pastors of parochial schools a mutual understanding that principal and pastor roles are important in the health of those schools. The studies approached the problem of pastor roles and how pastors, teachers, and principals viewed these roles within the organizations. Wojcicki (1982), Sieger (1999), Patterson (2007), Eakins (2015), and McClean (2018) all acknowledged schools operated by churches did so with a purpose that went beyond academics and included spiritual development as well. In the studies, the pastor was recognized as playing an important role as shepherd within the school or congregation. The opportunity for further research was recommended by each of the studies reviewed. Wojcicki (1982) and Sieger (1999), as well as Bosen and Doyle (2017) noted their respective church bodies should address issues of pastor-principal relationships at some level including principal preparation as well as the hiring process. Boyle and Dosen (2017) went as far as to suggest pastors would benefit from the inclusion of curriculum at the seminary level that

included instruction in leading within the context of a school ministry. McClean (2018) found that principals and pastors were likely to agree when question about guiding principles of parochial education. The McClean study was not focused per se on how principals and pastors work together, but the inclusion of both as leaders within the study was a demonstration of the expectation that a conversation about parochial education whether it be Catholic or Lutheran will most likely include the pastor as servant leader in addition to the principal.

The literature reviewed suggested several themes that would later be used in the coding process. These themes included challenges to leadership, collaboration, conflict, expectations, support, second-chair leadership, and servant leadership. Challenges to leadership were more widely discussed by Drago-Severson (2012), Izgar (2009), Piggot-Irvine (2004), Sarpkaya (2014) and Stephenson and Bauer (2010). These studies did not focus on principal–pastor relationships but did point to the challenges any principal may face, including those serving Lutheran schools. Collaboration was a theme that was broadcast throughout the servant leadership literature as well as the studies specifically designed to measure collaboration within the leadership of schools operated by churches. Wojcicki (1982), Sieger (1999), Patterson (2007), Eakins (2015), and McClean (2018) all addressed the concept of collaboration within their studies. Themes that recurred in the literature made sense as tools to begin the process of organizing data as it was collected.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

The studies conducted by McClean (2018), Eakins (2015), Patterson (2007), Sieger (1999), and Wojcicki (1982) targeted the principal–pastor relationship. As literature supporting this case-study research, the studies by Sieger and Wojcicki provided valuable insight concerning perceptions of pastors, principals, and teachers of Catholic and Lutheran schools. Eakins (2015) and Patterson (2007) provided opportunities to view the experiences and

perceptions of principals and pastors in Seventh-day Adventist schools. In all of these studies, the schools were similar but not entirely analogous to all Lutheran schools. Like Lutheran schools, Catholic schools, and Seventh-day Adventist schools operate as religious institutions within the realm of both civil law and ecclesiastical law. In the Catholic system, schools titled “Catholic” must operate under the authority of the diocesan bishop (Schafer, 2004). Principals of Catholic schools are tasked with leading their schools but most often with a pastor who is also designated as a primary decision-maker (Schafer, 2004). This hierarchy differs from the Lutheran systems of congregational polity, and that differentiation may prevent generalizations from the Catholic study to a Lutheran study. In fact, Sieger (1999) acknowledged the differences between Catholic and Lutheran schools as justification for reproducing the qualitative study conducted by Wojcicki (1982) in Lutheran schools operated by the ELCA. By reproducing the work accomplished in the Catholic system, Sieger (1999) was looking to see if similar data was supported in Lutheran schools as well. While it might be tempting to transfer the results of a study of ELCA Lutheran schools to all Lutheran schools, it is critical to note there are some significant differences among the various Lutheran school systems in the United States and the church bodies that operate them.

Although ELCA, LCMS, and WELS schools identify as Lutheran, they come from different historical backgrounds with different purposes (Sieger, 1999). Krause (1963) identified the purpose of Lutheran schools as supporting the preparation of children in doctrinally sound ways. The LCMS made it a priority at its inception to include schools in congregational development to protect the doctrine of the LCMS and thus expended resources to develop colleges, universities, and seminaries tasked with developing candidates to supply teachers and principals for the LCMS elementary schools. The ELCA approached education from a different perspective, focusing more on midweek and Sunday school as faith-building tools (Sieger,

1999), although, nationally, the ELCA operates a large number of schools and early childhood centers (Laabs, 2016). The schools of the WELS congregations are also focused on providing doctrinal education, and as such are focused on providing teachers for WELS schools from WELS universities (Laabs, 2016). Differences in philosophy and purpose among schools systems of the ELCA, LCMS, and WELS prevented generalizing from the ELCA schools studied by Sieger (1999) to all Lutheran schools.

Wojcicki (1982) acknowledged his study of Catholic school principals, pastors, and teachers was not necessarily generalizable to Catholic schools outside the three dioceses from which the participant sample was drawn. The Wojcicki study did take into account the importance of sample selection and used a randomized process which allowed for greater generalizability within the population from which the sample was taken. Wojcicki noted the results of the data analysis suggested the sample was adequate for generalizability. In the study on pastor role perception, Wojcicki noted there had been no prior major studies of the phenomenon seeking to better understand how the role of pastor was perceived within a parochial system. While limited to the participant population, the results demonstrated an affirmation of what Wojcicki understood to be true: the pastor plays an important role in the life of a school (1982). Since the results were not generalizable to other populations, further study of other populations was a possibility. Additionally, the Wojcicki study took place well before the follow-up studies, and care must be taken to recognize how schools may have changed since that research was conducted.

Sieger (1999) recognized the opportunity to utilize the Wojcicki (1982) study as a way to understand a similar yet different system of Lutheran schools. With Wojcicki's permission, Sieger (1999) adapted the 1982 study and used it to survey Lutheran school pastors, principals, and teachers. The purpose of the Sieger (1999) study was to identify tasks which operationalized



the role of pastors in Lutheran schools. An analysis of the data suggested principals and teachers recognized the role of shepherd for the pastor as being more expected than administrator or policy-maker. Pastors viewed the pastor role as all three, shepherd, administrator, and policy-maker. Patterson (2007) also noted how principals and pastors viewed their respective roles and indicated that those involved in church school ministries demonstrated general agreement when describing and operating within the various roles of pastor and principal.

While the Wojcicki (1982), Sieger (1999), Patterson (2007), and, more recently McClean (2018) studies provided valuable insight to principal–pastor relationships in three types of Christian schools, the studies were not focused on getting a more in-depth picture from the stakeholders in the study. Principals, pastors, and teachers were surveyed, and the results were analyzed using appropriate quantitative measures. Perceptions of the roles of pastors were discussed in both studies, however stakeholders were not asked to give further commentary on why they chose to score a particular question on the Likert type survey. Eakins (2015) approached the concept from a multiple case study approach that included principal interviews at several sites. Principals in the Eakins study were asked open-ended questions that guided the process of data collection. A case study approach to understanding how pastoral roles are experienced by principals offered a closer look at the personal experiences of the stakeholder groups. In other words, the survey research of the Wojcicki (1982) and Sieger (1999) studies built a firm foundation that recognized pastor-principal relationships as playing statistically significant roles in the operation of Christian schools such as Catholic schools or Lutheran schools. The Eakins (2015) study then demonstrated how case study research can lead to a deeper understanding of how principals or pastors experience those roles and relationships.

The Eakins (2015) study of principals and pastors of Seventh–day Adventist schools differed from the McClean (2018), Sieger (1999), and Wojcicki (1982) studies in its multiple

case study approach. The Eakins (2015) study also sought to better understand relationships within parochial school settings, but from a qualitative approach. The Eakins study also found principal–pastor relationships to be important factors in parochial education and suggested that opportunities for developing greater collaboration between principal and pastor should be explored.

Nelson (2016) contributed to the body of work associated with pastor–principal relationships by using mixed-methods to understand the perceptions of principals and pastors of how the leaders contributed to the mission of Lutheran schools. Nelson recommended further preparation and support for the roles of principals and pastors in order to better equip principals and pastors for working together in the unique ministry represented by a Lutheran school. Nelson noted that perceptions of principals and pastors had shifted to a more positive perspective since the work of Bartel (2004). Even with a shift in perceptions, the research demonstrated that more discussion around principal–pastor relationships is needed and necessary.

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

Lutheran schools are led by principals that nearly always serve with pastors of the congregations operating the schools. As church-operated institutions, it is appropriate to look at the work of Lutheran school principals through the framework of servant leadership. As a subsystem of a Lutheran church and school, the principals serve on an administrative team that may include one or more pastors. As servant leaders together, principals and pastors must work together to lead churches and schools.

Historically, Lutheran Church has recognized the importance of Lutheran schools. Beck (1939) noted Lutheran schools were established to provide a vehicle for maintaining and supporting the dissemination of the Word of God in a doctrinally sound way. Principals and pastors experienced similar preparation programs operated by the synod as they studied to

prepare for vocation of principal or pastor. In the early days of one Lutheran synod, it was not uncommon for a pastor to also be called to accomplish the duties of leading the Lutheran school operated by a congregation (Beck, 1939). The Lutheran church bodies of the United States all operate colleges, universities, and seminaries to prepare pastors and teachers for work in the schools of those synods (ELCA, 2020; LCMS, 2020; WELS, 2020).

As servant leaders, principals and pastors embrace the principles espoused by the work of Robert Greenleaf and those who have followed his seminal thesis on servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2009). Scholars describing and applying servant leadership theory such as Sipe and Frick (2015), Blanchard and Hodges (2008), Keith (2012), Fryar (2001), and others helped to create a framework by which the work of principals and pastors of Lutheran schools can be viewed. Servant leaders are tasked with the responsibility of building up the colleagues serving around them. Hammond (2018) went as far as to link teacher empowerment to the servant leadership of a Lutheran school principal. As servant leaders, principals and pastors exercise foresight in the work they do. Developing vision as leaders can create situations in which roles of principal and pastor overlap. Where overlap occurs, the potential for conflict is present. Formal and informal structures should be considered in an effort to create balance in an organization such as a church-operated school.

Conflict between principal and pastor is detrimental to the function of the parochial school (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016; Durow & Brock, 2004). Preparation for pastors working in parochial schools is one way to combat the potential for conflict (Boyle & Dosen, 2017). Pastor roles for Lutheran schools can be defined and applied. In the case of the LCA, specific documents exist to direct pastors regarding their roles as leaders in Lutheran schools (2016). While major conflict is not inevitable, facing the challenges of potential teacher and principal

shortages means ensuring that candidates for principal and pastor share values that align with the Lutheran school in which they serve (Laabs, 2016).

Previous studies focused on principal–pastor relationships recognized the various roles principals and pastors play in the leadership of church-operated schools. Sieger (1999) indicated principals and teachers recognized the roles of pastors in schools differently than the pastors did. Wojcicki (1982) conducted a study which suggested the role of the principal is important in defining the pastoral role in a parochial school. Both studies acknowledged role ambiguity experienced by principal and pastor in church-operated schools. It was noted in the Wojcicki study the principals and pastors had a tendency to view their relationships as better realized than others in the organization viewed principal and pastor relationships. Studies by McClean (2018) and Eakins (2015) were also reviewed. The qualitative study by McClean (2018) found that principals and pastors shared similar views regarding defining characteristics of Catholic schools. Eakins (2015) recognized the crucial nature of strong principal–pastor relationships within the context of Seventh–Adventist schools.

Like their public school counterparts, Lutheran school principals experience challenges in the modern principalship. The challenges Lutheran school principals experience also come with the addition of potential congregation-related burdens. Challenges such as poor relationships may lead to isolation (Izgar, 2009). Lutheran school principals may struggle to meet the demands of the principal job and maintain healthy relationships with pastors who may or may not also serve as administrators. In either case by nature of his vocation and in the role of a servant leader, the pastor of a Lutheran school has a responsibility to ensure the school associated with his congregation is meeting the needs of the people in the congregation and community from a spiritual perspective. As revealed by Wojcicki (1982), Sieger (1999), and Boyle and Dosen (2017), pastors of may not fully recognize the role they play in a school community. They may

also not be entirely prepared for it (Boyle & Dosen, 2017). They may struggle to provide appropriate feedback for principals serving in their congregations. Principals and pastors both may struggle to determine how best to carry out the moral authority entrusted to them as servant leaders. At the extreme, principals who experience negative principal–pastor relationships cited these negative experiences as preventing them from continuing as principals in a parochial setting (Durow & Brock, 2004).

A review of the literature suggested servant leaders operate under a specific set of principles or pillars including, but not limited to influencing others (Greenleaf, 2010), promoting healing and developing growth in those they lead (Fryar, 2001), and leading with foresight (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Servant leadership of principals is an important factor in teacher empowerment in Lutheran schools (Hammond, 2018) In addition, the roles of principals and pastors can be identified as subsystems of an organization as described in organizational development (OD) theory by Schmuck, Bell, and Bell (2012). The research conducted by Wojcicki (1982), Sieger (1999), Patterson (2007), and Nelson (2016) suggested the perceived importance of pastors in schools operated by congregations was supported by an analysis of the data conducted in survey research. A review of the literature helped develop an understanding of the expected behaviors of leaders operating as servant leaders as well as data-supported research indicating the importance of principal–pastor roles demonstrated strong support for further study of principal–pastor roles. While there is limited research on principal-pastor relationships, even when expanded outside the Lutheran school context, the gap in the literature suggests ample opportunity to further explore and describe principal–pastor relationships in Lutheran schools. Case study research as a research method was also supported as method for developing what Yin (2014) described as thick, rich, descriptions of the data collected. A case study of principals serving as leaders of

Lutheran schools was positioned to contribute to the literature previously published describing the roles principals and pastors play in leading schools together.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Purpose of the Study**

Three major national Lutheran church bodies within the United States, the ELCA, the LCMS, and the WELS operated 4,310 schools that served 432,478 students in 2016 (Laabs, 2016). According to the LCMS during the 2014–2015 school year, 2,812 children were baptized (LCMS, 2015). Outreach statistics for WELS schools indicated outreach as a percentage of non-WELS-affiliated students compared to total enrollment (WELS, 2020a). The ELCA also indicated that schools affiliated with the ELCA were focused on providing excellent education with the inclusion of character and faith development (ELCA, 2020). References to baptism, outreach, and faith development spoke to one of the reasons Lutheran schools exist: to raise disciples. It makes sense Lutheran schools are most often operated as ministries of Lutheran churches. As school ministries, Lutheran schools utilize the leadership of principals for school operation. As church ministries, their congregations utilize the leadership of pastors to carry out Word and sacrament ministry.

As leaders of Lutheran churches and schools, principals and pastors most certainly will find themselves working together. The purpose of this study was an investigation of the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they worked with pastors and congregations and how they viewed the preparation programs and supports in place to help facilitate collaboration between principals and pastors of Lutheran schools. The study sought to build on the previous research of principal–pastor relationships that included Catholic schools (Schafer, 2004; Wojcicki, 1982), Lutheran schools (McLean, 2018; Sieger, 1999), and Seventh-day Adventist schools (Eakins, 2015).

## **Research Question**

The following question guided this study: What are the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they collaborate with pastors where they serve as leaders? The study sought to understand how principals perceived their relationships with pastors in the schools in which they served. Further, the study included an opportunity for Lutheran school principals to describe how their principal preparation programs prepared them for the work of collaborating with pastors in the congregations in which they served as well as describing any other issues the principals interviewed found relevant to the study.

## **Research Design**

An effective method for determining the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they worked with the pastors of the congregations operating their schools was to get a firsthand account of those experiences from the principals themselves. Case study research begins with the process of identifying specific cases to study (Creswell, 2013). Case studies are an appropriate form of research to help explain some present circumstance (Yin, 2014). In this case, a small group of principals was selected in order to further investigate their experiences collaborating with the pastors of the Lutheran school in which both principal and pastor served together. Creswell (2013) indicated the case study approach most often includes “current, real-life cases” for the purpose of gathering accurate information that is not degraded or lost as a result of the passage of time (p. 98). In this study, principal experiences gathered via interviews, print resources, including handbooks and church constitutions, as well as digital discovery of public sources such as websites and social media posts demonstrated the study took place in a real-time environment. Yin (2014) suggested high-quality research is possible using the Internet or telephone, depending upon the research. Since this study relied upon interviews of Lutheran principals from various regions of the United States, the bulk of data collected was electronic in



nature. That is, interviews took place through Internet access and triangulating documents such as handbooks, policy manuals, and constitutions were collected via email.

Yin (2014) identified two steps for meeting the test of construct validity in a case study research design. These steps included defining pastor and principal collaboration in terms of specific concepts and the identification of operational measures reflecting the concepts (Yin, 2014). In this case, the researcher identified the experiences of a group of principals in several districts of the Lutheran Church and whether their relationship with the pastors of the churches in which they administered Lutheran schools had an effect on how the principals performed as principals. While this study sought to identify experiences, it did not necessarily provide a proposition at the outset, but rather served as a descriptive case study to determine what experiences, if any, were common to a group of Lutheran school principals collaborating with the pastors at their individual congregations.

Baxter and Jack (2008) used the term descriptive case study to represent a case in which an intervention or phenomenon is described as it occurs in real life. The principals interviewed described their real-life experiences in working with pastors of Lutheran schools. As a descriptive case study, it would be nearly impossible to gather data describing every aspect of the lives of the principals participating in the study (Yin, 2014). The data gathered in this case, then, was delimited to the principal responses to questions developed for the interviews. The case study was bounded by the experiences of the five principals interviewed and did not seek to describe the experiences of others outside the interview circle. Interview questions may be found in Appendix D.

As individuals, respondents provided data answering the questions in a unique and personal way. By collecting data from and attributing data to specific individuals, this case study focused more on the concrete illustrative cases of the individuals rather than the relationships

they shared with the pastors of the schools in which they served. The relational component was an important part of the study, however, limiting the study to only principals and not gathering data from the pastors with whom the principals collaborated meant the expression of the principal–pastor relationship was to be limited to the perceptions of the principals sharing their experiences.

## **Context of the Study**

### **Demographics**

The demographics of this study included Lutheran school principals in several districts of a national Lutheran church body. Principals in the study had served as principals for a minimum of three years and had not been in their current location for more than 10 years. Congregations included in this study operated a Lutheran school as well as employed an ordained pastor. Principals in the study were chosen from a variety of Lutheran school types, including urban, rural, those with student populations greater than 300 and those with populations less than 300 students.

### **Target Population**

This study was limited to educators actively serving as principals in Lutheran schools within the United States. During the 2015–2016 school year, the LCMS, the ELCA, and the WELS reported 4,310 Lutheran schools operating. The number of full-time principals serving in Lutheran schools may not be equal to the number of schools since some principals were part-time, some may have served in more than one school, the pastor may have served as principal, or the principal’s office may have been vacant. By limiting the study to Lutheran school principals, several cases were able to be included in a single case study bounded by their involvement in Lutheran schools. At a meeting of Lutheran school principals in a large suburban area, the principals identified principal and pastor relationships as one of the critical challenges facing

Lutheran school principals today (2016, October 25). This study was an important step in the process of helping Lutheran school principals better understand the relationships between principals and pastors. Although it was specifically focused upon Lutheran principals, in the future, it may be helpful for other school leaders that may work in schools operated or influenced by congregations.

### **Sampling**

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is used (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling means a researcher chooses participants for a study according to the needs of the study (Coyne, 1997). This study included five Lutheran school principals voluntarily sharing the experiences they had with the pastors in their respective Lutheran school ministries. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), sample sizes must be large enough to provide data saturation but not too small so the researcher is not hindered in his or her ability “to extract thick, rich data (p. 242). By limiting the study population to five participants, data collected was enough to provide diversity while keeping data to a reasonable and manageable amount.

In order to choose the five candidates for participation in the study, an email was sent to a minimum of 100 principals of Lutheran schools in the United States. At the time of the study, the Lutheran Church body in the study was divided into 35 districts, so these 100 recruitment emails were sent to 3 or 4 principals in each of the 35 districts of the Lutheran Church (see Appendix A) in order to collect a large enough sample to provide data saturation but small enough to be manageable. Lutheran school principals received an invitation to give statistical information via a web-based link using Qualtrics. A simplified consent to participate was included with the survey with a written form for those chosen to participate in the full study (see Appendix B). The survey contained information to purposefully select respondents (see Appendix C). Survey items included: (a) Name; (b) Current position in a Lutheran school; (c) the number of years serving as

principal in a Lutheran school; (d) indication that the principal responding currently works in a school operated by a congregation that employs a full-time pastor; (e) gender; (f) ethnicity; (g) name of school; (h) address and Lutheran district of school; (i) number of years served in current school; (j) willingness to participate in a study of principal–pastor collaboration; (k) pathway to administration of current school; (l) degree(s) held (13 Lutheran institutions of higher education represented), and (m) best means of contact for the study. The respondents were prioritized to represent gender, ethnic, and geographical diversity. Coyne (1997) suggested that while all sampling in qualitative research may be purposeful, the type of sampling must fit the purpose for data collection. In this case, the type of sampling was criterion. That is, all the cases must have met the criterion of serving as principals in Lutheran schools for greater than three years with a full-time pastor. Respondents not currently working with a pastor or having served as principals for less than three years were not asked to participate in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

Data collection was conducted through the use of a set list of open-ended interview questions. Commercially-developed instruments were not used. Questions for possible data collection were distributed to committee members, four Lutheran school principals currently serving in the field, and two faculty members of a university in the Concordia University system. Reviewers were asked to vet the questions that would be asked of principal participants. The final list of questions was developed with feedback implemented. Yin (2014) suggested that questions for interviews in case study research may serve as prompts in a case study interview. These prompts were used to guide the discussion with principal participants to ensure that the topics of collaboration with pastors and preparation for working with pastors were addressed.

## **Data Collection**

Yin (2014) suggested there are six major evidentiary sources to consider when conducting case study research. These sources include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2014, p. 106). This case study used a combination of these sources especially interviews and physical artifacts such as church/school handbooks, policy manuals, and formal planning reports. Participant observation was not used in this study due to proximity. The primary source for experiences of Lutheran school principals was the Lutheran school principals' personal responses to the questions provided in the study in an open-ended interview. Participants were asked to contribute additional materials for the study including congregation constitutions, personnel handbooks, and other materials or handbooks that may have increased insight into the working relationship of principals and pastors in the location of the principal participating in the interview process.

Participants in this study responded to an interview with open-ended questions. Participants were notified that interviews would be approximately 1–2 hours with the possibility of follow-up discussions. In the five cases, the interviews all took more than one hour but less than two hours each. The questions were designed to help the researcher better understand the various experiences each of the principals had in their interactions with pastors with whom they served. To facilitate the challenges created by geographic proximity, all participants were interviewed via telephone or online interface such as Skype or FaceTime.

Participant responses were recorded and transcribed so they could be coded. Participants were provided a copy of the transcript via email in order to triangulate data collection. Following transcription, the recorded interviews were saved on a firewall-protected server. Copies of the recordings were destroyed 90 days after acceptance of this study for publication

by Concordia University. Participants were asked to provide copies of personnel manuals, handbooks, and congregational constitutions as evidence to triangulate potential collaboration processes within their congregations. Identifying information was redacted from principal-provided materials, and they were copied with redactions. Originals were destroyed after copies with redactions were made. These copies were not included in this study to prevent the release of potentially identifying information.

Coding qualitative data can take a variety of forms (Creswell, 2013). A priori codes for this study included: servant leader(ship), collaboration, conflict, second-chair leadership, challenges, Lutheran Church support, and expectations. These codes were developed as themes that emerged multiple times from texts included in a review of the literature. Creswell (2013) suggested the prefigured codes could be used but care should be taken to be open to additional codes opening up as data is analyzed. Emergent codes included in vivo codes, those that were words used by participants, or others describing emerging, perhaps unexpected, themes (Creswell, 2013).

The data collected in this study was useful for developing what Creswell (2014) called thick, rich description. The data gathered helped create a picture of how a group of Lutheran school principals viewed their interactions with the pastors of the schools in which they served. Principals were encouraged to answer open-ended questions with no limit to what was described or how it was described. Allowing interview participants to share as much or as little as they desired gave the researcher an opportunity to hear about the participants' experiences in the participants' own words.

### **Identification of Attributes**

Attributes defining the study of principal–pastor collaboration include principles of servant leadership such as communication, collaboration, foresight, and leadership. Principal

preparation was also an attribute reviewed in the study. Principals themselves indicated their own level of preparedness, so the measure of the attribute of preparation was self-determined by the participants. These attributes were measured by their presence within the interview answers provided by participants. Coding procedures allowed the researcher to determine whether attributes were present within the dialogue provided by the participant as well as follow-up documents provided by participants including congregational constitutions and personnel manuals or handbooks. Creswell (2013) noted that frequency of codes does not necessarily demonstrate a valid measure of the importance of those topics, however, it was useful to note if particular attributes such as communication, collaboration, participation, or servant leadership seemed to be expressed more often as a way to recognize a principal considered it to be of value to share.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data collected via interviews was recorded and carefully transcribed to ensure that the exact words of the participants were noted. Notes were recorded via paper and pen during interviews to clarify points or to make note of the researcher's impression of tone. Following interviews, recordings were listened to a minimum of three times to allow the researcher the opportunity to listen for tone and inflection throughout the interview process. Recorded interviews were typed word for word using a word processing program as the recorded interviews were played back. Prior to beginning the process of organizing data into a database and determining which themes arose, transcripts were read a minimum of three times each.

The coding process described by Creswell (2013) includes a careful organization of data collected. As transcripts and supporting documents were analyzed for potential codes, the a priori codes were used as initial codes for the purpose of determining potential themes throughout the data. Sentences or fragments of sentences were coded as supportive details for a

priori codes. As part of the process of coding, codes that were not pre-determined also were used. Each time a transcript and supporting documents were analyzed, the sentences, phrases, or words that were attached to a particular code were included in the database. As themes developed, the coding process would allow groups of codes to be organized or classified (Creswell, 2013) around more general themes as noted in the data. These themes would later be used to organize the report of the findings.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

#### **External Validity**

External validity refers to the generalizability of research beyond the immediate study (Yin, 2014). This generalizability may be a statistical generalization or analytic generalization. Yin (2014) suggested case study does not lend itself well to a statistical generalization focused on transferability to populations, but rather an analytical generalization that speaks more to the collaborative efforts between principal and pastor and how principals in similar situations can be better prepared to serve more effectively.

#### **Transferability**

Since this study involved a small sampling of Lutheran school principals selected by willingness, the results may not be transferable to other populations. However, given the number of Lutheran elementary and/or high schools in operation, there were conceptual similarities that transfer nationally. Creswell (2013) suggested one way to assist in transferability is to use thick, rich description as part of the research process. While it was understood the interviews could allow for thick, rich descriptive language, they only represented five principals and the individual experiences of those principals. Care should be taken to limit the results to this group while extending the possibility it may also speak to larger populations.



## **Validation**

### **Credibility**

Researchers use triangulation to corroborate evidence that improves credibility within the study (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation is the process of using multiple sources to demonstrate corroboration. In this case, triangulation included the use of multiple sources. More than one principal was included in the study. Interviews were used as primary data sources. Supporting documents were also collected from participants to corroborate the experiences they described in the interview process. These documents included church constitutions as well as personnel manuals. Documents that indicated how principal and pastor may be expected to work together were requested and reviewed in the context of the interviews. As interview transcripts were coded, the handbooks, manuals, and constitutions provided were also included in the coding process. Codes were applied to corroborating materials only in sections that spoke directly to how principals and pastors were expected to collaborate, roles of principals and pastors, and descriptions of Lutheran schools within the written materials. In addition, participants reviewed transcripts and conclusions for accuracy, context, and intent. Participant review of interviews allowed participants to eliminate potential bias of the researcher. By including the observations of several respondents, the data collected showed similarities supporting the credibility of the study. Marshall (1996) indicated a purposeful sample may lend more credibility to a study than a sample of convenience. In this study, an initial survey was used to select candidates who were most likely to provide responses leading to greater insight (Marshall, 1996).

One threat to credibility described by Yin (2014) was reflexivity. Yin indicated that in the interview process, the conversational nature of the interview has the potential to lead interviewer and interviewee to experience mutual and subtle influence. While it may be impossible to eliminate this threat to credibility completely, Yin suggested that awareness of the potential for

reflexivity could lead to better case study interviews. Throughout the process of interviewing the principals in this study, the researcher took care to utilize the same questions for each participant and to avoid commenting in ways that indicated affirmation or negation of comments by participants.

### **Dependability**

Dependability of the results was strengthened through several procedures. Participants were asked to review transcripts of interviews to verify accuracy of their statements. Data analysis began only after listening to interviews at least three times and reading transcripts at least three times. Additional dependability measures included reviewing supporting documents provided by the principals. These documents included congregation constitutions and personnel manuals that may have spoken to the relationship of principals and pastors.

### **Expected Findings**

Since there is ample literature expressing the value of collaborative leadership, the researcher expected principals and pastors who found ways to collaborate effectively would experience greater job satisfaction and longevity within schools and congregations. The principal respondents with positive collaborative experiences with the pastors of their congregations would most likely express positive feelings about the ministries in which they served. In the context of servant leadership, it was expected principals and pastors that approached their vocations as servant leaders experienced healthy collaborative environments which sought to build their leadership skills as well as the skills of those around them. Those principals with negative collaborative experiences would have most likely expressed a desire for greater collaboration and training for their positions. Particularly, if principals or pastors did not actively engage or seek to engage in servant leadership principles and attitudes, they may have found collaborative efforts were strained.

Since this study gave the five principals an opportunity to share their experiences, the researcher expected to find the principals had not experienced coursework to prepare them for the task of working with pastors in the school setting. In addition, it was expected the “compassionate collaboration” described by Sipe & Frick (2015) as they expounded upon Greenleaf’s ideas of servant leadership would be experienced more fully by principals who had either instigated the process of collaboration or had pastors who did so.

### **Ethical Issues**

Since the study of principals entailed the use of human participants, it was important to ensure that the safety and security of the participants was respected throughout the process. The methodology plan developed for this study was submitted to the Concordia University Institutional Review Board (CU IRB). The CU IRB process included the submission of potential questions for participants, an explanation of how participant identification would remain confidential, and protocol for voluntary exclusion from the study at any time. The CU IRB recommended a click to consent format that allowed participants to consent to participation via electronic means. The handling of data and data collection instruments post-study was included in the CU IRB required documentation as well. The researcher did not begin the process of interviewing participants until authorized by the CU IRB.

### **Conflict of Interest Assessment**

As a Lutheran principal who enjoyed working collaboratively, the researcher needed to take care to accommodate bias in his observations and interpretation of interview data. Additionally, the possibility existed the researcher may have prior knowledge of a pastor or principal who was involved in the study. Because principals were providing their experiences in their own words, prior knowledge was determined to not be a concern.

Participants were not compensated for their participation in the study. The researcher held no authority, perceived or actual, over any of the participants. The pastors the researcher served within his own tenure as a Lutheran school principal were no longer serving in congregations with schools, had retired, or were no longer on the roster of the Lutheran Church thereby removing the potential issue of interviewing principals currently working with pastors with whom the researcher had also worked.

### **Researcher's Position**

As a Lutheran school principal, the researcher was interested in the outcome of the study. The researcher served as a Lutheran school principal. As a practicing Lutheran school principal, the researcher had an interest in examining how principals and pastors in Lutheran schools worked together. Further, it may have been demonstrated to prove beneficial to determine how principals may be better supported by principal preparation programs and the Lutheran Church in general. As a principal who had experienced both highly collaborative principal–pastor relationship environments and non-collaborative principal–pastor environments, it was important for the researcher to acknowledge bias may have existed as a result of positive and/or negative experiences.

### **Ethical Issues in the Study**

The participants in the study were consenting adults who voluntarily shared their information with the understanding that every effort was made to maintain confidentiality. Because principals were discussing their working relationships with the pastors of their congregations, it was possible they may have been describing relationships with a pastor who was their superior within their workplace hierarchy. The possibility existed, then, if unflattering or negative information was shared by a principal and was revealed to the pastor supervising the principal sharing the information, a situation in which the principal's job security came into

question may have developed. Although the possibility was low, and principals and pastors worked within the construct of a system of processes that included congregational calling bodies, the potential for harm did exist. As such, it was important to protect participants and the information they shared in a way allowing for the greatest opportunity for confidentiality to prevail.

Because the information collected had the potential to create potential challenges to employment, the information gathered from each participant was considered Type 4 Personally-Identifying Information (PII). Thus, a specific set of data protection practices was implemented. Potential participants were assigned codes to replace PII. For example, a participant was referred to as Principal A, serving with Pastor A at City Lutheran Church in City A. Another was referred to as Principal B, serving with Pastor B at Town Lutheran Church and School in City B. During the initial phase of interviews, it would be impossible to not know who or where a participant was. This information was known only by the participant and by the researcher. Each interview had a cover page including PII to help keep information organized during the interview. However, as a separate cover page, the PII was not stored with field notes collected in the process of the interview. Field notes to this effect were kept in a file and locked in a file cabinet in the office of the researcher to which only the researcher had keys. Cover pages were stored in another file, also locked, and kept separately. Interviews were recorded and stored on a hard drive that was password-protected, data encrypted, and locked away from other study materials. As part of interview transcription, PII was eliminated. Upon transcription of the interviews and acceptance of the research study by Concordia University, recordings were deleted in order to prevent accidental exposure of participants. The key to connect PII with participants was known only by the researcher and kept in a secure, locked location in a locked file at his home apart from the materials kept on file in the office of the researcher. Once information had been

gathered via interview, it was transcribed with codes and stored electronically on the researcher's password-protected computer. Ninety days after the acceptance of the study report for publication by Concordia University, all documents containing PII, except for signed consent forms, were shredded using a document shredder. Any electronic means of storage of such information was also erased. Additional materials gathered had PII redacted from them before being given a code according to the key held only by the principal researcher. The materials were copied and then originals destroyed so PII was not available in any manner. Materials required by the CU IRB to be kept for 3 years were filed in an appropriately locked cabinet to which the researcher has the only key.

Even with precautions to protect participant identity, and even if confidentiality could be maintained with 100% effectiveness, participants still may have found the study raised in them emotional or other responses that make it impossible to continue in the study. If such a case had arisen and because participation in the study was completely voluntary, participants were permitted to remove themselves from the study at any time and for any reason without repercussion of any sort.

This study required principals to answer interviews which described their experiences working with pastors of congregations operating the Lutheran schools in which the study participants worked. By sharing experiences, the participants may have experienced the risk of the development of conflict within their work environment should their information have been inadvertently linked to them as a participant. Since lists of Lutheran school principals were not difficult to obtain, it was and will continue to be possible some readers may draw conclusions about the identity of one or more of the participants. Also, while the study was not designed to cause discomfort, some principals opting to participate in the study may have found that answering interview questions caused them to develop feelings of emotional distress. The

consent portion completed by the participant prior to the interview process indicated participants were free to stop their participation at any time without consequence.

Since the research study involved interviewing five principals for analysis, if a participant opted out of the study, it was possible to replace a participant with another from the pool of potential participants. This, in fact, was the case when a participant who had completed the survey did not respond to further emails requesting an interview. The non-responsive participant, deemed by the researcher to have self-selected out of the study, was replaced with another principal from the participant pool. Since the study did not necessarily require follow-up interviews, it was feasible to simply replace the participant opting out with a new participant. Additionally, if other participants had dropped out even if the research portion of the study was concluded and the analysis and reporting of data had begun, it would have been possible to obtain other principal participants from the list.

### **Benefits of the Study**

In the researcher's experience as a Lutheran school principal, his colleagues were often willing to share their experiences from the field to assist one another in the process of leading Lutheran schools. The benefit of sharing information about principal–pastor collaboration allowed a greater understanding of how principals may more effectively collaborate within their roles as leaders of Lutheran schools. It also provided evidence for the need to include further training in Synodical leadership preparation programs in the colleges and seminaries of the Lutheran Church.

While participants in the study may not have benefited directly from the results, they may have experienced the benefit of sharing their experience in a manner that allowed them complete freedom to express themselves without censoring their feelings or attitudes. Further, Lutheran school principals, as part of a group of leaders within the Lutheran Church, may have benefited

collectively from a better understanding of the collaboration of principals and pastors. It may also have served to assist in the creation of a support system to support and encourage greater principal and pastor collaboration. It may also have benefited principals by strengthening resolve to actively seek more collaborative relationships with the pastors in the schools in which the principals served.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

Chapter 3 described the process by which the study to determine the experiences of Lutheran school principals working with the pastors of their congregations was organized. A descriptive case study approach as described by Baxter and Jack (2008) was used because it was designed to allow participants to describe and corroborate their experiences in real-life situations. Principals were chosen from a group of Lutheran school leaders that had served for more than three years at their current site and were currently working with a pastor within the context of Lutheran school ministry. Principals were interviewed using a set list of questions to guide the discussion and keep it focused on principal-pastor collaboration and preparation of principals to work with pastors. Additional materials including congregation constitutions and personnel manuals were provided by participants to support data given in interview form. A priori codes were chosen from the literature supporting the study of principal-pastor collaboration within the context of servant leadership. Emergent codes were expected and used throughout the coding process as data was collected and organized into larger themes. The study was developed to fill in a gap in the current literature regarding principal-pastor collaboration in Lutheran schools that builds upon the works of other researchers studying collaboration in non-Lutheran, but related schools operated by churches such as the Catholic church or Seventh-day Adventists.



## Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Within Lutheran school systems, there are a variety of ways principals and the pastors may interact. This study was designed to answer the question, “what are the experiences of principals as they collaborate with pastors where they serve as leaders?” The study included a sample of Lutheran school principals that indicated an interest in providing information about the experience of working alongside Lutheran pastors.

Five principals from Lutheran schools were asked to provide answers to open-ended interview questions (see Appendix D). Questions were designed to allow principals in Lutheran schools to share their experiences of working alongside pastors with whom they serve in Lutheran church and school ministries. Principals responded to interview questions via video chat or telephone. Principals answered with as much or as little detail as they felt comfortable and were reminded they could opt out of the study at any time. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed principals to expand on topics or information they found important for sharing.

Analysis of the data provided by the interviews was accomplished through a variety of means. Initially, interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. During the interviews, notes were recorded using pen and paper. Notes included interviewer impressions of tone as well as an opportunity to include additional questions for follow up. For example, a probative question which arose during the interview gave participants the option of sharing their description of an ideal principal–pastor relationship. Responses to the question of the ideal principal–pastor relationship were included in this chapter. Following the recorded interview, interview recordings were typed into word processor documents with pseudonyms and reviewed with the recordings to ensure accurate transcription had taken place. Subsequent to the transcription, the analysis of data included the reading and rereading of each of the transcripts

several times before beginning the coding process. Participants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts via email to verify accuracy. The next phase of the sample analysis included reading the interview transcripts of the five principals and noting where a priori coding values stood out. A priori codes included: servant leaders(ship), collaboration, conflict, second-chair leadership, challenges, Lutheran Church support, and expectations. In subsequent readings of the interview transcripts and with handwritten notes created during interviews, the researcher highlighted other ideas that began to stand out and noted additional codes were necessary. Participants were invited to share additional material such as congregation constitutions and personnel manuals for the purpose of triangulation. Each participant provided a personnel manual. Two participants provided congregation constitutions in addition to a personnel manual. Participants submitted manuals and constitutions via email. Sections of the participant-provided materials speaking directly to principal–pastor collaboration were included in the coding process.

As the data began to emerge in certain categories, there were opportunities to see the similarities in what the principals shared as well as places where individual ideas or thoughts stood out from others in the participant group. Some of the data from the principals aligned well, while other data may have only been limited to the interview of one principal. In order to organize the information from the interviews in a meaningful way, responses of the participants were organized by interview question.

### **Description of the Sample**

The sample population for the study was selected from principals serving in Lutheran schools operated by congregations of the Lutheran Church. Participant contact information was collected from the roster publication of the national church body. From the more than 30 districts, 128 individuals listed as principals of Lutheran schools in the Lutheran Annual were selected to be invited via email to answer a brief online survey. These 128 were chosen by

selecting 2 or 3 principals from each geographical region. Eighteen individuals completed the online survey, which included a click to consent form (see Appendix B). Survey participants were asked to share demographic information in addition to answering the question, “How willing are you to participate in an interview that explores principal–pastor collaboration?” Responses were provided in a Likert type survey which included extremely interested, very interested, moderately interested, slightly interested, and not interested. As shown in Table 1, the responses of the 17 respondents who completed the survey were collected and used to determine potential interview candidates. This study excluded candidates that indicated moderately interested, slightly interested, or not interested at all.

Table 1

*Willingness to Participate in Principal–Pastor Study*

<b>Extremely Interested</b>	<b>Very Interested</b>	<b>Moderately Interested</b>	<b>Slightly Interested</b>	<b>Not Interested At All</b>
<b>7</b>	4	5	0	1

In order to provide for the extraction of thick, rich data, the participant field was narrowed further to five participants. Limiting the participant field to five participants made data collection and analysis more manageable while still allowing diversity (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). One of the initial five participants who had completed the survey did not respond to follow-up emails and was replaced by another principal who had also indicated an interest in participating in the study. The final five participants were contacted via email to establish times and dates to conduct interviews. To encourage frank and open dialogue within the case study interviews, participants were assured their identities would remain confidential. For the sake of this study, participants interviewed will be referred to as Principal A, Principal B, Principal C, Principal D, and Principal E. Cities and schools in which the principals served will also be

labeled with the corresponding letter to the principal indicated. For example, Principal A served at School A operated by Congregation A in City A.

Each of the five principals selected to participate in the study was a Lutheran school principal at the time of the interview. Participants were serving alongside full-time pastors. Participants represented a variety of years of service in their current schools from 3 years to 11 years at their current school at the time of the interview. Three of the principals studied at a Lutheran university. Three of the principals graduated from a school leadership development program provided by the Lutheran Church.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

According to Yin (2014), a case study approach calls for evidentiary resources that may include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participation, and physical artifacts. In this case study grounded in a servant leadership framework, it made sense to utilize interviews of the principals as the primary source of evidence. In order to triangulate the data, the participants were asked to provide additional evidence such as congregation personnel manuals, handbooks, and/or congregation constitutions. These additional sources were used to help identify the expectations and the structures of how principals and pastors work together in their various congregations. The data collected from interviews was recorded to better understand how principals understood their relationships with the pastors of their congregations. Triangulation data such as personnel manuals and congregational constitutions were submitted by participants via email or regular post.

### **Servant Leadership Framework**

The collection of data through interviews, as well as a review of additional documents, was completed using the framework of servant leadership. The development of an understanding of how principals and pastors work together goes hand-in-hand with servant leadership

framework defined by Greenleaf (1972) and others. As leaders in church-sponsored schools of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the principals interviewed considered themselves to be servants alongside the pastors of their congregations. These principals may have exhibited the qualities of servant leadership as originally described by Greenleaf as well as Sipe and Frick (2015) and further discussed in a church-specific way by Blanchard and Hodges (2005). Servant leadership qualities include a strong sense that servant leaders strive to empower and grow the leaders around them rather than simply serving as managers. As leaders of Lutheran churches and schools, both principals and pastors serving together may have developed strong relationships. However, it may also be possible principals experienced challenges in working with the pastors of their congregation schools. Methodologically speaking, the simplest and most direct method for gathering information in this case study was the use of personal interviews.

### **Case Study Approach**

The goal of this research was to understand the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they collaborated with pastors, where they served as leaders. In addition, the study gave principals an opportunity to describe their own experiences with special attention to how principal preparation programs prepared them for their roles as leaders of Lutheran schools. Finally, principals were given the opportunity to describe any additional thoughts or issues they felt relevant to the study. The purpose of the study was to better understand the experiences of Lutheran school principals working with pastors. The case study approach was effective for gathering data to more fully understand the relationship between Lutheran school principals and pastors in the words of the principals themselves. This approach worked well since it was not possible to physically visit and observe each of the principals during the study.

Because collaboration between Lutheran school principals and pastors included what Creswell (2013) would characterize as current, real-life cases, the case study approach utilizing

personal interviews was a logical fit for the kind of data being collected. Each of the principals interviewed gave real-life, current experiences. Because they led alongside the pastors of their Lutheran schools, they were able to share firsthand experiences. In some cases, the principals were able to share how their predecessors had given them a reason to consider the principal–pastor relationship. As a case study approach, personal interviews served as a way for principals to give thick, rich descriptions of their personal experiences working with pastors.

The interviews each principal gave were recorded so their own words, inflection, and other nonverbal cues would be available throughout the process of data analysis. Each interview was recorded with the permission of the participant. The transcription process began after the interview was complete. Davidson (2009) identified transcription of recorded interviews as selective. He further described the impossibility of translating all features of talk and interaction (2009). However, transcription allowed for the opportunity to review the information shared by each candidate several times prior to the coding process.

After completing the interview, the researcher listened to the interview immediately and added to any notes he may have taken during the interview. In order to get a strong feel for the attitudes and emotions the participants may have been trying to convey, the researcher listened to each interview a minimum of three times before transcribing them into word-processed documents that would later be used in the coding process. During the transcription, the researcher opted to use naturalized transcription including nonverbal cues such as umm and like. Although Bucholtz (2000) suggested denaturalized transcripts may be confusing to a reader, the researcher found transcribing the interviews exactly as they had been spoken allowed him to both recall the interview better and to gain insight where participants may have shown hesitation or confusion about a particular question. In order to avoid confusion for the reader, however, some portions of interviews, such as “umm” and “uh,” were left out of direct quotations.

The experiences shared by the principals through the open-ended interview questions provided data best analyzed using coding that took two forms, a priori and emergent coding. A priori codes for this study included: servant leaders(ship), collaboration, conflict, second-chair leadership, challenges, Lutheran Church support, and expectations. The a priori codes were developed as a set of codes expected to appear and be utilized in organizing data as it was collected. During the interviews, the list of a priori codes was available. The researcher included the codes in the note-taking process as he conducted the interviews. For example, when a participant mentioned collaboration or conflict, he noted on the interview note sheet for that particular participant. Once the interviews were transcribed, numerous readings of each interview allowed a priori codes to be connected to the data within the interview and manually collected into a spreadsheet for further evaluation.

It became evident the a priori codes were not sufficient to give detailed descriptions of the information shared by the participants. Six of the seven a priori codes, including servant leadership, collaboration, conflict, challenges, Lutheran Church support, and expectations. Second-chair leadership as an a priori code did not get used in the initial data analysis process. Creswell (2013) suggested researchers be open to additional codes during data analysis. In vivo codes, words used by participants (Creswell, 2013), were used to further identify themes and ideas presented in the interviews. Additional codes appropriate to the data collected included: pastor support of school, preparation, school-church relationship, principal–pastor partnership, Concordia University System, mission, team ministry, governance, school leadership development program, Communication, administrative degree programs, leadership, support, time to develop collaboration, a professional principal fellowship program, and professional development.

A priori codes were used as codes because they were consistent throughout the literature reviewed. As guiding codes, they were not intended to be the sole codes utilized. Emergent codes were developed as words and phrases were added to the database that did not have a priori codes available to represent them effectively. As codes, both a priori and emergent, were collected, the frequency of codes was noted. Although the frequency of codes may have demonstrated a stronger theme emerging, Creswell (2013) cautioned against the use of code counting since it may lead to the conveyance of a “quantitative orientation of magnitude and frequency” (p. 185). A code that seemed to be repeated over and over did lead to the conclusion this was a theme emerging in the data. Through the coding process, the researcher was able to narrow the codes into four broader ideas, or what Creswell referred to as themes. The themes suggested by the data coding process included: collaboration, preparation, expectations, and support. Within the broader use of these codes repurposed as themes, the remaining codes could be classified as supporting data.

### **Summary of the Findings**

As principals described their experiences in working with the pastors of their Lutheran schools, data emerged that was used to identify potential codes. A priori codes were found to be present in transcript interviews, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

#### *A Priori Codes Recognized in Analysis of Principal Interviews*

A Priori Code	Principal A	Principal B	Principal C	Principal D	Principal E
Challenge	X		X	X	X
Collaboration	X	X	X	X	
Conflict		X			X
Expectations	X		X	X	X
Church Support	X		X	X	X
Second-Chair Leadership					
Servant Leadership	X	X			X



One of the a priori codes, second-chair leadership, did not emerge in the coding process. Codes are listed in alphabetical order in Table 2 and not necessarily in order of importance or frequency.

Emergent codes were also developed through the iterative process of analyzing the interviews. These codes were not prepared before the process but were developed throughout the process of reading and re-reading the text of the transcribed interviews as well as listening to the recordings of the interviews a minimum of three times. Emergent codes collected from the interviews of the participants are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

*Emergent Codes Developed in Analysis of Principal Interviews*

Emergent Code	Principal A	Principal B	Principal C	Principal D	Principal E
Administration Degree Program			X	X	X
Communication Lutheran University System			X	X	
Governance Leadership Mission	X		X	X	X
Pastor Support of School Preparation	X		X	X	X
Principal–Pastor Relationship		X	X	X	X
School–Church Relationship	X	X	X	X	X
School Leadership Development Program	X		X	X	X
Support Team Ministry	X	X	X	X	X
Time to Develop Collaboration			X		
Professional Principal Fellowship Program			X		X

*Note.* Codes in Table 3 are ordered alphabetically.

Although not reported, the frequency of the codes was used in the analysis process to determine which codes led to broader themes. Four themes emerged from repeated reviews of the data. The themes suggested by the coding process were collaboration, preparation, expectations, and support. The remaining codes could be included as supporting data for the broader themes, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Emergent Themes With Supporting Codes From Principal Interviews*

Collaboration	Preparation	Expectations	Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team ministry</li> <li>• Principal–Pastor Partnership</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Challenges</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• School–Church Relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Leadership Development Programs</li> <li>• Professional Principal Fellowship Program</li> <li>• Lutheran Universities</li> <li>• Administration Degree Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastoral Support of School Lutheran Church Body Support</li> <li>• Time to Develop Collaboration</li> </ul>

**Presentation of Data and Results: Principal Narratives**

The five principals engaged in this study were given the same set of interview questions to guide each of their personal narratives. As each principal shared his or her story, the opportunity to share how they perceive principal–pastor relationships within the context of their leadership of Lutheran schools was presented. The principals spoke of the local situations in which they served and gave descriptions of the district of the Lutheran church in which they serve. For some, the influence of the national church body of their Lutheran church was discussed. Special care and attention to potential bias were given as analysis of data took place. Translation of discussions with each principal represented in the study into a narrative organized by the questions found in Appendix D. Gender pronouns for principals are not necessarily

accurate in order to further protect the identity of the principals involved in the study but are used facilitate ease of understanding for the reader.

**Question One: Describe Your Current Ministry.**

**Principal A.** Principal A began his description of ministry by framing it in the context of servant leadership since he understood the study to be coming from the framework of servant leadership. His school had what he considered a unique beginning as the result of a demographic study completed by the congregation several years before his arrival. The demographic study suggested a school be built in a different part of town where growth would most likely take place. According to principal A, the congregation's mortgage company, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, required a congregation also be established on the grounds of the new school construction.

And so, they planted a second worship site where the school went, and over the course of 10 to 15 years, the people that kind of called that worship site home identified less and less with the Mother Church, if you will, and they decided to rebrand themselves as Church A. It's kind of like an accidental church plant, actually. So, right from the beginning, the relationship between church and school has been very synergistic. As the population of the church grew, so did the school. As the population of the church kind of steadied out and stayed the same, so did the school.

Along with the congregation growth came new members including teachers from the City A public school system. Principal A suggested the pastoral support during this time was existent, but not as evident publicly for "fear of offending those who didn't choose it." Principal A indicated there was never a lack of support, but the support was almost "apologetic."

So, that became our norm, our cultural norm, through a very strong pastor who grew us from a church plant to worshipping 1200 on weekends, 3000-member-type place. And he

took a call two years before I got there, which has been 11 years now for me, so 13 years ago, he took a call to another state to X congregation, which is a pretty powerful place, and has since left from there. We kind of drifted for six, seven, eight years because the super, super strong pastoral leader that had gotten us to where we were was no longer there, and the church was kind of looking for the next “him” to come in, and you and I both know that that’s almost impossible to do.

There was a 4–year vacancy in the pastoral office at Church and School A. Another pastor was called before the congregation called the pastor currently serving with Principal A.

During the time Principal A served at Church and School A, the congregation went through a shift in governance that allowed Principal A to lead from a policy-based governance style. Principal A noted this style allowed him “a lot more free way of leading.” He described this freer way of leading as helpful for working with the pastor of Congregation A because each could focus on the strengths they brought to the leadership team.

**Principal B.** The ministry situation Principal B described was similar to that of Principal A in that the congregation grew out of the school ministry. Principal B described her ministry as a mission school and church. She served at what she noted is the youngest of the Lutheran churches and schools in the area. Principal B described the school population as about one-third Lutheran, one-third from other churches, predominantly nondenominational, and the final third non-churched. Principal B considered the school ministry to be the church’s largest mission field.

Principal B described the reason she had come to serve at Church and School B. Her coming to Church and School B was a response to major conflict between the principal and pastor who had served prior to her employment there.

The church and school back in 2010–2011 dropped down to about 40 kids. It had been around 2, almost 200. The pastor and principal did not like each other, did not see eye to eye, and tore the place apart. They both left to calls elsewhere, umm, and the whole place fell apart. So, so the school enrollment tanked, and umm, they had no pastor and no principal. And so, they brought in an interim, umm, principal, and they had a rotating, just a different weekly pastor coming in. So, I was not trained as a principal. I was dean of students at a university.

Principal B earned a doctorate in higher education and had written an article on student recruitment and retention that someone from the school had read. The person who had read the article asked Principal B to come and consult with the stakeholders at Church and School B to determine whether the school should remain open.

After spending about a week at the school, Principal B determined that the school could be salvaged, “but they had some pretty serious issues.” The interim principal did not agree with what Principal B had to say about salvaging school operations and resigned. Principal B was asked to step in temporarily until the congregation could facilitate a call for a principal. In the meantime, Principal B was able to recruit about 50 students. As a result of the difficulties being experienced by church and school, a candidate willing to accept a call was not found, so Principal B stayed on through the remainder of the year. Under her leadership, the school was able to grow from the original 40 when she had stepped into about 125 the next fall, with 200 enrolled the following fall. At that point, a pastor was called and accepted, and the two began a strong partnership.

**Principal C.** Principal C described his ministry as a preschool through Grade 8 school with about 180 students for the upcoming school year. Principal C labeled Church and School C as a very traditional church-school model utilizing what he called the captain governance model.

The church and school are governed by a church council and many boards, including a board of Christian education made up of elected lay people that make decisions for the school ministry.

Our main goal on the board is vision and creating policy, and of course, making sure that we have the finances to move forward and a good plan so that we bless the congregation and the school. We have two pastors, a senior pastor and an associate pastor. We also have a DCE that was just called. We also just called a Director of Worship and Music.

Principal C also indicated that the church and school have a variety of personnel such as secretarial staff, administrative assistants, teachers, and aides that are all essential to the operation of the school ministry at Church and School C.

**Principals D and E.** For this question, Principals D and E gave brief answers. Principal D described her ministry as being the principal of a large Lutheran school in kindergarten through eighth grade with more than 40 employees, including teachers and other support staff. Principal E indicated that she had been in Christian education at Lutheran schools for 18 years. Six of those years were spent as an assistant principal prior to moving to City E, where she had served as principal for 4 years.

**Questions Two and Three: Please Share How You Work With the Pastor(s) of Your Congregation and Help Me Understand How You Work With the Congregation That Operates Your School.**

**Principal A.** Principal A indicated that Congregation A experienced a 4-year vacancy when the pastor took a call to another congregation. According to Principal A, the next pastor to accept a Call to serve at Church A knew right away that he was not the long-term solution to the need for a senior pastor. Principal A referred to this pastor as the “guy before the guy.” He was not able to move the congregation out of the pattern of “drifting” that they seemed to experience after the strong pastoral leader left.

While the congregation had a pastor, they may have been unaware of the status of the “guy before the guy,” however, Principal A indicated that the pastor recognized that he was not going to be the leader that could help the congregation avoid the drifting pattern described by Principal A.

Along the way, God was developing who our current senior pastor, who had been on our staff for quite a while as an associate and had a lot of relationship chips in a lot of pockets but wasn't quite ready to be senior pastor when some thought he was, and then, 2 years ago, he became our senior pastor. And, he and I are better together than any pastor combination I've worked with. So, it's been interesting to kind of watch that happen and to kind of work with him as he grew into that senior role. I think what that's done for our relationship has allowed him to see me as more of a partner than some pastors do their principals and even more an expert at some things that he's not. And so, he'll come to me for feedback or advice or co-leadership things that he has seen in me over time that he doesn't personally have. And, vice versa, I'll bring him in when I need somebody that brings his skill set. So, after working together for 11 years, we have a pretty good idea of who is better at what than the other, and it makes us a pretty good team.

Principal A described this part of the narrative as the beginning of the relationship phase at Church and School A.

**Principal B.** Principal B described the congregation as unable to afford a pastor, but in the interim, she was able to lead the school in the direction of growth so that they ended with about 125 students, and the following year they “were up to about 200.” When they finally called a pastor, Pastor B, the two,

Formed an amazing wonderful partnership where we came together and decided we were going to run this as a one-mission ministry. Everything we were going to do was with one

mission in mind. There was going to be no separation between the school and the church. Everything was going to be done together. Umm, so all of our important decisions would be made in conjunction.

Even the physical plant enabled the decision to operate with a one-mission focus.

Principal B described the office area at Lutheran Church and School B as having principal and pastor offices side by side with secretarial staff sharing an open office in front. There was no separation of church and school offices; ministry happened together in the office space. Principal B noted that occasionally, she would joke with him through the door when she could hear him practicing his sermons and other times as well. She also spoke of how working closely with the pastor brought about the conversion of an entire family of eight. The family sought baptism as a result of the church and school ministry. Principal B noted that she liked to “tease that he’s my assistant principal” when referring to Pastor B.

Principal B also noted that the collaborative nature she experienced with Pastor B was intentional. For example, the way the ministry is structured at Lutheran Church and School B, both principal and pastor sit on the mission board, and this structure led them to a decision early in their collaboration.

We decided very early on that we would . . . always have each other’s backs, so-to-speak. So, we meet before every board meeting so that we don’t go in their contrary. Because that’s what tore the last pastor and principal apart. So, we meet. We look at the agenda ahead of time, and we go in there and say, “okay, what do we need to go in before and make sure we have the same voice.” So, if there’s something I need to push through, I talk to him about it beforehand.

This practical use of collaboration from day one in their ministry together helped Principal B develop trust in her pastor and their working relationship.



I trust him with absolutely everything. And that is just amazing. Because, you know, the boards, they are here once a month. They see the school side of things, the school is the largest ministry here, umm, you know, once a week, whatever. We're here, you know, five days a week together, and so I have to trust him with everything and vice versa.

This trust relationship allowed Principal B and Pastor B to work together to lead the various groups in ministry that they were expected to lead. This trust relationship was challenged when Pastor B accepted a call to serve another congregation. It reminded Principal B of the importance of having the principal of a Lutheran school be involved in the process of calling a new pastor.

I think that it is imperative that the principal be part of the call process, first and foremost. That's just got to be a big part of it because that's the person I'm working with five days a week. You know, I would joke that I see Pastor B more than I see my family. And, so that's key. Anything that you could do to build that trust to, you know, help those two people realize that church and school are not in competition. That one does not take away from the other. That, you know, building the one only benefits the other and enhances the other.

Principal B noted that taking time during the pastor Call process to spend a day during the process to allow for a one-on-one discussion between principal and pastor should be taken into consideration.

**Principal C.** Principal C described the most important thing to him as an administrator in a Lutheran school was the principal–pastor relationship.

What I've learned is that it is not necessarily taught either in our seminaries or our universities, but it is the integral part of how you connect a church and a school so that the mission is fulfilled. So here at Church and School C, my first request was to meet regularly with the pastors and just to be able to talk about how we can support one

another, not just professionally, but also personally, and then to the support staff around us, and then, further the mission. To me, what works best is two meetings a month no longer than an hour apiece which includes time in prayer and wrestling through challenges also, but also looking ahead to the future.

Principal C acknowledged that although principal–pastor collaboration was important to him and that he had expressed it clearly to the pastors in his ministry team, it took three years to see the request come to fruition.

Like I said, the first thing I asked for was to have formal meeting, umm, that did not happen until May of this year. I came here in July of 2014, and it took until May of ‘17 to have a plan in place. Intentions were good, but from past experience, that’s not what the pastors were used to here.

It wasn’t until Principal C led a conference presentation on principal–pastor relationships and invited one of his pastors to attend with him that Principal C felt like the importance of principal–pastor collaboration started to make sense to his pastoral team.

That’s when it hit home to them that it was important to me, and we did truly have a strong support system here, but that was a missing piece. So, probably daily, the pastors now poke their heads into my office, or we meet each other in the hallway, or when I walk into the church office area, it’s just a quick touch-base, and that has segued into a formal meeting time. No agenda, but just a time of sharing, support, and prayer. So, I’m really hopeful for the future, and somehow we got that to click and hope that it will continue.

Principal C admitted that even though his current experience had an outcome over time that met his need for principal–pastor collaboration, it had not been common to any work in Lutheran schools that he had experienced. Principal C recognized principal–pastor collaboration

was a “great need” of his, and he indicated he could not do his job without it. Principal C acknowledged the importance of intentionally sharing his needs and expectations for how the principal and pastors should work together, and he further indicated in every single instance in which he had experienced a strong principal–pastor collaboration, “it took months to years to make it happen.” According to Principal C, without a strong communication model, “things will fall apart.”

To ensure that Principal C’s principal–pastor communication expectations were met, he utilized what he called “process pages.”

These process pages are plans. They are plans; I try to keep them to one page. So the communication process page shares the most important parts of how we can be successful with a good communication plan. I think we can say it, but unless sometimes it’s actually part of a manual or a form we look at often, as simple human beings, we have the tendency to forget, and so that makes it a continual reminder of having process pages. This is who we are. This is what we do. This will help us to be successful as a faith-filled community here.

Principal C indicated effective communication such as that found in communication process pages allowed the principal and pastor to “be on the same page.”

**Principal D.** Principal D described her working relationship with the pastors of Congregation D in the context of their meeting schedules. She indicated “the entire church ministerial staff which includes pastors and all the DCEs and music ministers and all that” meets one morning each week to coordinate plans for the near future. Principal D also indicated she meets with the administrative team of congregation D on another day each week. The administrative team of congregation D includes three pastors, Principal D, the early childhood director, and the business manager. The meeting of the administrative team is

a little more specific into ministry questions. Different, you know, vision for the direction of our church, budget issues, and then, we, I have an open-door policy between me and the pastors, so, especially the two associates, I see them almost daily. They are either in my office, or I am in theirs talking about something.

Principal D described her career as being marked with “really good relationships” with her pastors, including the ones with whom she currently works in ministry at Church and School D.

**Principal E.** Principal E described work with the two pastors at Church and School E in terms of the involvement of the pastors in activities that were school-related. The two pastors of Church and School E meet once a week with Principal E “to just go over general schedule items and how we can help each other in our ministries.” Principal E indicated the pastors’ involvement includes participation in faculty devotions, leading school chapel once per month for each pastor, a pastor teaching confirmation classes at the school, assisting teachers with religious instruction questions, teaching a required ten-week course for new teachers that are not Lutheran to help them understand what the church and school requires to be taught in religion classes at the school. Pastors are also “involved in school fundraisers and stuff, too.”

**Question Four: What Did Your Administration Preparation Program Contribute to Preparing You to Work With the Pastor(s) of Your Congregation?**

**Principal A.** Principal A was quick to answer “nothing” with a laugh. Principal A followed up by indicating he had participated in a Lutheran school leadership development program.

I did [school leadership development program]. You know honestly, I couldn’t tell you if even the leadership program gave me any. If it did, I don’t remember it. It was, how do you deal with the craziness of the school day from a building level as opposed to the

craziness of the classroom from a classroom level, and we didn't really dig into how to work together with your pastoral team.

Principal A did not have anything further to say regarding preparation for working with the pastor(s) of the congregation.

**Principal B.** Principal B entered the Lutheran school principal position at Lutheran Church and School B from a position in higher education. She did not have a preparation experience, such as a school leadership development program to speak of when asked about her preparation for leading a Lutheran school. Principal B answered this question by describing her relationship with other Lutheran principals in nearby schools. Principal B suggested the Lutheran principals in her area had a network strengthened by their attendance at a Lutheran college or university.

**Principal C.** As part of his principal preparation, Principal C attended a Masters' program in leadership and instructional technology at a public university. Because it was a public institution that was not necessarily focused on developing leaders for Lutheran schools, Principal C did not indicate University C as preparing him to work with a pastor specifically. Although, he did indicate leadership principles were "very intensely taught, but not in a faith-filled way because it was a secular university."

Principal C described his leadership preparation as including participation in two major programs in addition to his undergraduate work at a Lutheran university and Masters' program in leadership and instructional technology. The first program was a school leadership development program to which Principal C was nominated by a colleague. Principal C did not describe his leadership development program experience as providing preparation for working with the pastors of a congregation that operates a Lutheran school. While collaborative leadership was

intensely taught from a secular perspective in his graduate program at a private secular university, “it was not in a faith-filled way.”

Principal C indicated that he needed to transition “some really strong professional leadership philosophies that were very public” to a Lutheran school situation, and he found that opportunity in a professional fellowship for principals:

So, their philosophy there is “big tent.” So, what that means is you don’t just grab Lutheran administrators. You don’t just grab Baptist or nondenominational. You find people from all different roots and denominations, and we pull together, and we talk about the best practices from all these different realms. They also lined us up with professional coaches, and so they were available to us for an entire year, and so, whatever issues we ran into, we just called our coach, and the coach would walk us through, “this is probably what you need to do and probably how you need to do it.” They would provide for us amazing written resources and human resources so that we could understand how we could be-best-prepared-for-leadership model—either in a situation where the church operates the school or in a separate situation where there is a board of directors.

While the fellowship experience has helped further support Principal C in working with the pastors of Church and School C, Principal C also pointed to on-the-job experience as the most important part of understanding the whole system. Principal C also indicated regular meetings with administrators of other Lutheran schools in the area were important “because that’s where we share support for one another. We can talk through real issues, and we can make real progress as well.”

**Principal D.** When asked about being prepared to work with pastors, Principal D responded her master’s degree work at a Lutheran university did “zero prep. for working with

pastors.” She indicated she felt her administration preparation program did not address working with pastors. She indicated she believed it was geared more toward public school principals than Lutheran school principals. While she did not see the topic of principal–pastor relationships addressed in her graduate programs, she noted in her work with the school leadership development program, the topic was being addressed.

**Principal E.** Principal E responded to the question of how her administration preparation program had prepared her to serve alongside the pastor of her congregation:

It didn’t. It didn’t. You know, teachers are trained. There’s no degree program at the undergraduate level to become a principal. So, the only training you have is a Master’s program and real-life experience, and so, um, I got my Master’s degree at [redacted] which is an online program, so that did not train me at all to work with a pastor and a congregation. Umm, the school that I was at in [a former city], I was assistant principal for six years, and the last four years, we had a principal who loved me, was very hands-on at the school. The school in [a former city] was an association school, four different churches, and the pastors weren’t really involved, and so, as far as, how was I trained or set up to work with pastors? I wasn’t. I really wasn’t. So, trial and error.

While trial and error may have seemed the approach to Principal E experienced as a preparation method, Principal E as well as the other principals had suggestions for how to improve program developed for the purpose of preparing principals for leading Lutheran schools.

**Question Five: What, if Anything, Might You Change About the Program(s) You Took Part in as Preparation for Leading a Lutheran School?**

As principals, the participants were no strangers to providing suggestions for improvement. The follow-up question to describing preparation programs for principals was focused on how the Lutheran school principals interviewed might change leadership programs

for developing principals of Lutheran schools. The principals each had input to offer regarding the kinds of changes each would like to see to better prepare principals for leading Lutheran schools.

**Principal A.** Principal A hesitated to answer but described his hope that someday there would be “joint development efforts offered for principals and pastors to benefit together,” but tempered his optimistic response with the opinion “this is not going to happen in our synod.” However, if it were to happen, Principal A recognized including principal–pastor collaboration training a “two-sided coin.”

One, there’s some kind of learning that they both need to gain together, as far as how to effectively work together, but the other is that it forces them to spend the time together that neither has the time to give. So, if you think about the experience you have with your staff when you go to conference together that’s out of town, to be able to have that experience with your church leadership staff is unheard of, which is too bad.

Principal A suggested the time spent together would be invaluable to school ministry leaders.

**Principal B.** Because Principal B came to a Lutheran school leadership position from a different track than a Lutheran University. She pointed out the Lutheran Church does not currently seem to have a system for developing leadership from outside of the Lutheran University systems. Principal B pointed out teachers in Lutheran schools that did not graduate from a Lutheran university with a Lutheran teaching certificate could participate in a colloquy program that enabled them to gain a position on the roster of the Lutheran Church as a commissioned minister eligible for a call to serve in a Lutheran school. Principal B suggested it may be beneficial for the synod to develop a colloquy program for principals.

I mean, I don’t have a colloquy. I’m not called, umm, and the colloquy doesn’t necessarily apply because the colloquy is all about for teachers, so it would be nice if



they had one for administrators. Umm, they have a school leadership development program, umm, and frankly, there are less principals now, and there's going to be a big push for retirement, umm, so it'd be nice if they had something because they are going to have to draw people from outside the [Lutheran universities]. So, it'd be nice if they had something for that.

**Principal C.** Principal C also had some ideas for how to change programs for preparation for leading a Lutheran school. Principal C suggested current efforts may need to be “refreshed.” He indicated he was aware that the school leadership development program had recently undergone some adjustments but seemed very similar to the school leadership development program of 1999.

I think we need to always be willing to refresh and revisit sort of like in our jobs today. Nothing surprises us anymore with things that come up, and I think we need to be open and willing to well, this has always worked, but it's not working now, so we need to be willing to switch gears, and so for me, a lot of it is professional development.

Principal C also suggested communication was an important part of the “refresh” he was suggesting. He applied the idea of communication to the Lutheran university system.

You know, if you look at our Lutheran university system, I guess my biggest thing there is, I'm not convinced that even though it's called a system that they talk to each other. I think there's a lot of silos out there, and I think they're all trying to do a great job, but as you and I know, when you pool resources together, amazing things can happen. I think one of the missing pieces is probably communication within our university system. I could probably say the same thing about our seminaries. I don't know those things for a fact, how often the seminaries communicate and help prepare pastors to be pastors that lead schools.

Principal C suggested pastors that seek to serve congregations with schools may do so because of prior experience in Lutheran schools or “just having a great love for Christian education.”

Principal C also indicated he had not conducted any research into how the universities and seminaries of the Lutheran Church communicate, so he could not give conclusive answers to the question of what might be changed in administrator preparation programs. He concluded, “we can talk about it, or we can seek it out.”

**Principal D.** Principal D acknowledged a “class or even a workshop with pastors there to talk about the pitfalls or strengths of having a really strong ministry and what that can look like in combination with that” could be a positive addition to preparation programs. Principal D shared frustration that what she was hearing from a Lutheran University that has a Masters’ program for administration was it was geared toward principals in the public school realm as a way to generate revenue for the program. Principal D indicated the result of being more focused on public school preparation meant the program did not include principal–pastor relationships as a topic of discussion. In addition, she felt the lack of focus on Lutheran school administration meant discussions of budgets and finance missed the mark for Lutheran school principals because it was geared toward public school administrators and taught by a public school superintendent. A change Principal D described she would like to see was adding components to the leadership courses that would also address what a Lutheran school principal may encounter in his or her own school setting.

**Principal E.** The variance in school settings was a focus for the response from Principal E. She indicated there could not possibly be a one-size-fits-all approach to preparing principals for working with pastors, especially given the variety of Lutheran school settings in which a Lutheran school principal may work. Rather than focus on preparation programs, Principal E wanted to see some sort of consultancy teams developed “to specifically work with new

administrators in their first year.” Principal E indicated such a consultancy would alleviate the current situation that results from not having programs in place at the university or seminary level. Principal E suggested a portion of principal training could be done apart from the pastors, but it would also be helpful to have a portion where principal and pastor learned together.

Principal E also spoke about coursework of pastors designed to help them work with principals of Lutheran schools. Principal E indicated she was unsure about the kind of training for working with principals that pastors received during their time at seminary. Principal E indicated she felt no training was provided based upon her experience working with pastors in a former city where she had served.

**Question Six: How Well-Supported by The Lutheran Church Do You Feel to Carry out Your Work as an Administrator, and Is There Anything the Lutheran Church Can Do to Improve Relationship Development?**

**Principal A.** Principal A was quick to point out that strong district leadership can do much good in supporting a principal in the field. Principal A pointed to the district education executive of one district of the Lutheran Church, as a prime example of “amazing district-level leadership.” Principal A also noted that poor district leadership could have the opposite effect and diminishes anything positive coming from the national level. Principal A summed up his answer to the question about Lutheran Church support by highlighting “the importance of having strong, district-level leadership and a synod that supports that and releases them to do their job and to do it well without dealing with the church politics.”

**Principal B.** Principal B also described Lutheran Church support from the perspective of the district level. Principal B experienced two “really supportive” district education executives in her time at Church and School B. One of the ways the district supported her ministry was by providing opportunities for principals in the district to meet regularly to share ideas and serve as

a resource to one another. Although the principals in Principal B's area got together monthly, she noted there was "not like a manual, or a hey, here's what you should know!"

Principal B indicated as other principals enter careers in the Lutheran school system, many will not necessarily be from Lutheran universities. Speaking of the future, Principal B indicated support from the district and national levels of the Lutheran Church would be important. Principal B suggested one important way would be for districts to strongly encourage principals of congregations in the process of calling pastors to include the principal as a significant part of the call process.

It is imperative that the principal be part of the call process, first and foremost. Umm, that's just got to be a big part of it. Umm, because that's the person I'm working with five days a week. You know, I would joke that I see Pastor B more than I see my family. That's key. Anything that you could do to build that trust, to you know, help those two people realize that church and school are not in competition. That one does not take away from the other. That, you know, building the one, only benefits the other and enhance the other.

Principal B concluded it was important to ensure the two people working together in the principal and pastor positions must be able to work with one another. The Lutheran Church can support Lutheran school principals and pastors alike by encouraging them to spend time together during the call process for some one-on-one discussion. Time spent together can be taken into further consideration when determining who could be a good fit for the congregation with a school. Principal B relied on personal experience to develop this position. Her congregation and school suffered from what she understood as a competition between the two leaders serving before she and the current pastor replaced them after they quit.

**Principal C.** Principal C answered the question of Lutheran Church support by indicating he felt well-supported as a Lutheran school principal. He acknowledged he was familiar with the former Director of School Ministry for the Lutheran Church and the current Director of School Ministry for the Lutheran Church, and he trusted their “intentions to fully support our Lutheran system.” He also indicated there were missing pieces, even with the understanding that intentions were supportive. Principal C suggested the Lutheran Church could do a better job of creating an overall plan that leads to greater support for Lutheran school principals and the Lutheran schools in which those principals serve. Principal C admitted he had seen calls to action for such support from the Lutheran Church, but he has not necessarily seen the action taking place. Principal C pointed to the use of technology such as a Facebook page for Lutheran educators or Lutheran Education Association webinars that provide best practice seminars for those that are willing to invest the time. Principal C acknowledged there is no cohesive plan to support Lutheran school principals from a national level.

**Principal D.** Principal D echoed comments made by Principal A and Principal B when referring to the level of support she experienced from the Lutheran Church as a Lutheran school principal. She pointed to the strong support she received from her district education executive and the area Lutheran school administrators as well as a district-wide network of principals that were able to support one another. Principal D also credited the district education executive for his development of that network within the district.

It’s nice to be able to hear from somebody else and go, ah! I’m not alone in this world.

From synod? I don’t know. I don’t feel like I’ve had a huge amount of support, but I

think they are working on that. I think the [redacted] website—they’re working on that,

and there’s a lot of stuff out there now on governance which is helping with support, so I

think that progress is being made, and specifically, it's at district levels, and I think there is where it more needs to happened, and I think we do it well here.

Principal D reiterated the importance of principals having networks for support and recommended creating more network opportunities for principals that need specific help such as new school starts.

**Principal E.** Principal E recognized she felt supported by her district. She also indicated she did not necessarily see the need for support from the Lutheran Church. She indicated perhaps from her newness to the district in which she was serving at the time of the interview that she had not looked for support from the Lutheran Church. Principal E pointed to the accreditation process as one way the Lutheran Church connected to schools in the Lutheran school system. Although Principal E's school was accredited by the national accrediting agency, she could not quantify how accreditation affected her school or the other schools in her area.

**Question Seven: Is There Anything that I Didn't Ask About that You Would Like Me to Know About Your Collaboration as a Lutheran School Principal?**

**Principal A.** Principal A took the opportunity to answer the interview question by sharing two books that he found helpful. The books, *The Advantage* by Patrick Lencioni and *God Dreams* by Will Mancini and Warren Bird, were helpful to Principal A. He suggested they were both helpful in guiding his work with the pastors of his congregation. In addition, the books he recommended were helpful to him in helping him develop better communication with his congregation. He also noted the books enabled him as a principal to collaborate more effectively with team members that complimented his leadership.

**Principal B.** Principal B took the time to highlight an important part of the discussion about principal-pastor relationships is recognizing churches and schools where principals and pastors do not get along and the difficulty of working through that kind of struggle.

I can't imagine being in that place. I mean, it's unfortunate, and I feel extremely rotten and terrible for the congregations and schools that are in that place. Because it is just so detrimental to the ministry and to those children that are in that place, and I question how well they can prosper and how well the teachers can minister to those families in that kind of environment fully.

Conversely, when it is working well, Principal B concluded, it leads to exciting ministry, such as the baptism of a whole family she had witnessed as a result of school and church working together.

**Principal C.** When given the opportunity to further the discussion about principal–pastor collaboration, Principal C had suggestions that spanned from the individual congregation to the national level. Principal C indicated it was critical for congregational leadership, including principals and pastors, to recognize the importance of healthy teams and to create and sustain them when given the responsibility of leading a Lutheran church and school. According to Principal C, this could be impacted by directors of schools at the district level, and he suggested that perhaps directors of schools “need to work harder at really communicating the need for inclusive staffs.” Those inclusive staffs, that is, staffs in which principal, pastor, and other leaders are seeking to work together and fulfill unified missions, are teams that seek to be healthy and demonstrate that healthy approach to ministry through a variety of ways. Principal C indicated that it could go,

from a simple thing from making sure you are deliberate in saying good morning to a fellow colleague to spending time in prayer, both with them or just as part of the daily routine. I think it also includes visibility on both sides, so a school's got members being visible in the life of the church, and the pastor is being visible in the life of the school also.

Principal C also pointed to the role national offices of the Lutheran Church could play as well as continued support from the National Lutheran School Accreditation process in developing excellence in Lutheran schools, including healthy team development.

**Principal D.** Principal D added she would like to see more from district and synodical levels with regard to training that enables principals and pastors

to learn how to talk to one another and collaborate with one another because when it's working well, it's amazing in churches, and when it doesn't, it just creates such a wall to doing ministry, so I think training people both at the synodical level, at the [seminary] level, you know, in the districts, to lead those workshops. How to lead those times when pastors and principals can sit down together and really work things out because ministry gets busy, and if you're not doing it, it's hard to get it started at your church versus if somebody comes in and goes, "hey, this would be a really good idea for you."

Having had good experiences with her pastors, Principal D indicated it made a huge difference when the principal–pastor relationship was strong.

**Principal E.** When asked if she would like to add anything else to the discussion about principal–pastor collaboration in the Lutheran school setting, Principal E noted pastoral involvement is important not only from a professional level but also the expectation the pastor's school-age children should also be involved in the Lutheran schools in which they work. She shared this may be more difficult in association school settings. Association schools are Lutheran schools operated by more than one congregation. Principal E pointed to a situation she had experienced in which the pastor of a Lutheran church and school sent his kids to the local public school. According to Principal E, the pastor of the congregation attended board meetings and spoke of his support of the school, but for Principal E, the actions did not seem to reflect that support.



Principal E also suggested the support of other principals and pastors would be beneficial. Principal E acknowledged different principals might struggle with different areas of school ministry. She noted it would be helpful to have a better-developed network of principals to assist struggling principals when needed.

### **Ideal Principal–Pastor Relationship**

**Principal A.** When asked what the ideal principal–pastor relationship looked like, Principal A suggested the ideal principal–pastor relationship was like a marriage.

There has to be mutual respect for one another, mutual love for one another. And that has to be obvious to anyone who sees you working together. And if you have that, you can attack anything that comes your way or mission that you might have.

**Principal B.** The ideal principal–pastor relationship for Principal B was similar to the relationship she developed with Pastor B before he accepted a call to serve in another congregation. It was a relationship in which they shared mutual respect and a can-do attitude.

When Pastor B came in, at least I felt like I had somebody there who was like, “yeah, we’re gonna do this. We’re just going to dig in and do this, and we’re gonna have our eyes on something that is bigger than ourselves, and there’s a prize waiting for us in heaven, and we’re going to go for it.”

The trust factor played a critical role in the ideal principal–pastor relationship, according to Principal B. She described her most positive experience with principal–pastor collaboration as being marked with absolute trust.

**Principal C.** Principal C described the “perfect relationship” between principal and pastor included regular meeting time for discussion of ministry, prayer, and mutual support. Ideally, the pastor will always say, “church and school” and not speak of the Lutheran church or Lutheran school separate from each other. Principal C also indicated an outcome of the ideal

principal–pastor relationship is evidenced by the pastor’s visibility in the life of the school ministry, and “he speaks up about the relationship that is there between himself and the principal.” Finally, Principal C described the ideal principal–pastor relationship as a friendship.

**Principal D.** Principal D indicated the ideal pastor-principal relationship led to an overall ministry that is strong. The strength of ministry came from principals and pastors understanding the challenges and the blessings that come with working together for a common purpose. She indicated when principals and pastors were like family, the church and school were more connected, and “cool things happen when the church is actually connected to the school.”

**Principal E.** The ideal principal–pastor relationship was difficult to qualify, according to Principal E. She indicated personalities played an important role in the principal–pastor relationship. She cited clear communication, respect for the other person’s role, and availability as necessary to the ideal principal–pastor relationship. Principal E noted regular meeting or collaboration times were important as well. Principal E concluded presence is an important factor in the ideal principal–pastor relationship. She pointed out that “presence” means the pastor is present and involved in the school, and likewise, the principal is present and involved in the church.

#### **Chapter 4 Summary**

As a Lutheran school principal, the researcher has had experiences working with the pastors of congregations in which he worked. The researcher’s desire to see strong principal–pastor relationships was a motivating factor in designing a case study that included experiences of other Lutheran school principals. From a field of 128 principals contacted, the number of participants in this case study was narrowed to five Lutheran school principals currently serving in Lutheran schools.

The five principals interviewed participated via telephone or video conferencing software. They were asked to describe their experiences as Lutheran school principals through a set of seven questions that were asked in each interview. As a case study approach, personal interviews were well-suited to help the researcher gain a better understanding of the experiences each of the principals has had working with the pastors in Lutheran schools.

During the coding process, four themes emerged for further discussion in Chapter 5. These themes included collaboration, preparation, expectations, and support. These themes were supported by the a priori and emergent codes developed through the iterative process of exploring interview transcripts to better understand the experiences of the principals.

The five principals described collaboration through a variety of lenses. These included the concept of team ministry, health principal–pastor relationships, conflict, meeting challenges, school-church relationships, and communication. A recurring idea of the process collaboration from the principals was their understanding of being in ministry together. That is, none of the principals interviewed described the vocation of Lutheran school principal as an office that required one individual to possess and maintain all of the skills and abilities to operate an effective Lutheran school.

The principals interviewed contributed to a stronger understanding of the preparation that is involved in becoming a Lutheran school principal. Each principal experienced different paths to the positions they held. Each principal tried to describe how they had been prepared for the principalship of a Lutheran school. The principals also shared how they thought preparation programs might be improved. More than one principal acknowledged the Lutheran university system played a role in the development of principal–pastor relationships.

Each of the principals described ways expectations played a role in helping to develop principal–pastor relationships at their respective Lutheran schools. Governance of school

ministry was discussed by four of the five principals as one way of describing and supporting principal–pastor relationships within the Lutheran school ministry. The principals also described how a sense of mission as well as leadership played roles in the experiences of Lutheran school principals.

The five principals interviewed acknowledged a healthy principal–pastor relationship was important to them as leaders of Lutheran schools. More than one of the principals indicated they would like to see greater emphasis placed upon principal–pastor relationship development in congregations. The principals emphasized the importance of support in their ministries, especially for the principal–pastor relationship. The principals interviewed suggested support could come from a variety of areas, including locally, at the district level, and also through national organizations such as the Lutheran Church and the system of Lutheran universities.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

Within the Lutheran school system, there are a variety of ways principals and pastors may interact. This study was designed to answer the question, “what are the experiences of principals as they collaborate with pastors where they serve as leaders?” The study included a sample of Lutheran school principals that indicated an interest in providing information about the experience of working alongside Lutheran pastors.

### **Summary of the Results**

This study to understand the experiences of principals as they collaborate with pastors, where they serve as leaders, was grounded in a servant leadership framework. Servant leadership, as first described by Greenleaf (1972), recognized work within church organizations to be a logical organizational structure. When described in organizational theory (OD) terms, several subsystems may have occurred simultaneously where principal and pastor responsibilities and service overlap. The principal and pastor served as the subsystem of the leadership team. Another subsystem was the congregation. School families made up another subsystem, and faculty and staff also comprised subsystems of the organizations. All of the subsystems of a Lutheran school, working together, demonstrated a dependence upon the principal and pastor as they worked together under the principles of a servant leadership framework.

Because the goal of the study was to understand the experiences of principals working with pastors in Lutheran schools, a case study approach was selected. The relationships between principals and pastors in Lutheran schools represented complex social phenomena, one of the criteria described by Yin (2014) as grounds for using a case study approach. The research question that guided the study was directed at understanding how principals experienced working with pastors in Lutheran schools. No controls of behavioral events were required, and the focus was on contemporary events as described by the principals themselves. These factors supported

the use of the case study method of study as relevant situations for the particular research method used (Yin, 2014).

Case study research was determined by the researcher to be the most effective means of hearing directly from principals working with pastors in Lutheran schools. The personal interview was identified by Yin (2014) as a possible method for collecting data within a case study. Through the interview process conducted in this study, principals contributed to the field of research in their own words and with their own personal experiences. Yin (2014) noted case study research was useful to describe or explain present-day situations.

Principals interviewed for the study were selected from respondents to an email sent to a sample population that included the principals listed in the annual catalog of the Lutheran Church. From the 35 districts of the LCMS, 128 principals were randomly selected to receive an email that invited the selected principals to participate in a survey. The 128 were selected by choosing two or three principals from each of the districts that also had email addresses listed. The survey questions included a Likert-type scale question that requested principals to indicate willingness to participate in an interview that explored principal–pastor collaboration. Response choices included: extremely interested, very interested, moderately interested, slightly interested, and not at all interested. Of the 128 principals contacted, 17 opted to complete the survey. The five chosen from the 11 principals who indicated they were either very interested or extremely interested were self-selected by being the first to return consent forms that indicated they were willing to participate in the study as it continued. One of the principals that had originally responded with a consent form did not respond to additional emails and was replaced by another principal from the list of possible participants.

The five principals selected represented a variety of Lutheran school situations and years of experience. All of the principals had been serving as a Lutheran school principal for three or

more years. Each principal participated in a recorded interview that included the open-ended interview questions (see Appendix D). These questions were designed to allow the principals to share their current and past experiences of working with pastors in the Lutheran school setting. Principals were reminded their interviews were being recorded for the purpose of transcription. Transcripts of interviews were shared with principals via email in an effort to triangulate the data. Participants were given the opportunity to clarify or correct the information collected during the interview. The process used in transcription described in Chapter 4 of this study was followed. Additional items to support data collection included congregation personnel manuals, handbooks, and constitutions as they were provided by the participants. In addition to the interview questions and providing additional evidence such as personnel manuals and constitutions, the participants were invited to add anything they believed the researcher had not asked during the interview.

The interviews were coded through a process that involved listening and re-listening to interviews a minimum of three times before being transcribed. Following transcription, the interviews were listened to by the researcher as he followed along and took notes to indicate vocal inflection, laughter, and other nonverbal cues that may have indicated something of note. A priori codes were used at the outset of the coding process. A priori codes included: servant leader(ship), collaboration, conflict, second-chair leadership, challenges, Lutheran Church support, and expectations. The only a priori code that did not appear to be necessary during the coding process was second-chair leadership.

Additional codes emerged during the process of coding. Codes that emerged during the data review process included: pastor support of school, preparation, school-church relationship, principal-pastor partnership, Lutheran University System, mission, team ministry, governance, school leadership development, Communication, administrative degree programs, leadership,

support, time to develop collaboration, professional principal fellowship, and professional development. The a priori and in vivo codes were used to narrow the understanding of the data into four broader themes. The themes developed were collaboration, preparation, expectations, and support. These repurposed codes served as themes that enabled additional codes to be organized as supporting evidence to the themes themselves.

Each of the five principals who participated in the study provided insight into how each of the principals worked with the pastors of the congregation in which they served. The principals recognized and elaborated upon the importance of collaborating effectively with their respective pastor. The principals described their own individual situations. These situations spoke generally to the need in the Lutheran Church to provide greater opportunities for principals and pastors to develop the necessary skills for collaboration. Principals described situations in which they experienced collaboration with pastors that enabled successful ministry. The principals also described situations in which they perceived a lack of collaboration or purposeful division of principal–pastor teams led to poor outcomes for the Lutheran school ministry in which those individuals served. The five principals indicated suggestions for supporting principal–pastor collaboration in Lutheran schools. In particular, the principals pointed to the leadership of the districts of the Lutheran Church in which they served as potentially positive places to ensure greater collaboration between the principals and pastors of Lutheran schools.

### **Discussion of the Results**

The five principals interviewed for this study provided personal narratives focused around a set of identical questions asked of each of them. As previously stated, analysis of the interviews yielded an organization of data into four central themes: collaboration, preparation, expectations, and support. These themes were supported by a priori and emergent codes developed through the iterative process of reviewing the transcripts of the five principals.



## **Collaboration**

The original research question asked, “what are the experiences of principals as they collaborate with pastors where they serve as leaders?” The first theme that emerged, collaboration, was directly related to the research question. The collaborative nature of principals and pastors working together to lead Lutheran schools was not a surprise. It made sense the leaders of worship life and school life in a Lutheran church and school would be focused on collaboration. In some form or another, each of the five principals described the importance of collaboration within the principal–pastor relationship.

Collaboration was defined by Sipe and Frick (2015) as one of the seven pillars of servant leadership. As principals and pastors worked together in roles as servant leaders, they found ways to accomplish the tasks and priorities of the organizations in which they were called to serve. The principals referred to team ministry as each of them spoke of the importance of working together. The word collaboration was included in the research questions asked of the participants and included in the list of a priori codes as well. The researcher expected the coding process to indicate collaboration as a theme present in the responses given by the participants.

Collaboration was described in a variety of ways by the principals interviewed for the study. Codes emerged in support of the theme of collaboration including team ministry, principal–pastor partnership, conflict, challenges, communication, and school-church relationship. These supporting codes defined the underpinning of the idea that the principals in this study understood their roles as collaborative with the pastors of their congregations regardless of the training or preparation they received.

The idea of collaboration in the context of servant leadership may evoke a sense of mutual understanding and of working together, but as the principals noted in their discussion of the topic, it sometimes included conflict and how the principals had worked through conflict as a

part of the leadership of a Lutheran school. For example, Principal B described the fallout of the situation arising when principal leadership and pastoral leadership struggled to work well together prior to Principal B's service. When they refused to work together, the school and congregation suffered and was nearly closed as a result. The idea of not working together was unimaginable for Principal B, and she described it as being detrimental to the ministry. Principal C acknowledged a lack of collaboration in a school as detrimental to the school's long-term survival.

Each of the principals interviewed described the way they were able to collaborate effectively with the pastors of their congregations. From the descriptions of collaborating the principals provided, it was evident collaboration is a process that must be intentional. For Principal A, books proved helpful in developing collaboration. Principal B was intentional with her pastor in the decision to work as one in ministry. Principal C found process pages specific to the task of collaboration were effective. Principal E found her professional principal fellowship helped her to develop skills that enabled better collaboration. Principal D indicated additional support could be offered at both district and national levels to ensure principals and pastors were trained on how to effectively collaborate.

All of the principals interviewed for this study indicated collaboration was important to them, and all five suggested more could be done to encourage collaborative practices either before or after principals found themselves involved in work that required them to work with pastors. "There's some learning that they both need to gain together, as far as how to effectively work together" (Principal A). As this learning takes place, an understanding of how collaboration affects the ministry of principals and pastors becomes more evident. Principal D noted "when [collaboration is] working well, it's amazing in churches, and when it doesn't, it just creates such

a wall to doing ministry.” For better and for worse, a collaborative process is necessary according to the principals interviewed for the study.

As the principals in the study described the importance of collaboration between principal and pastor, they also recommended ways to improve upon how principals and pastors could work together. The principals indicated they valued collaboration and the outcomes of collaborative processes within the principal–pastor partnership. Principal D suggested additional training needed to take place at the Synodical level, including how pastors were trained at the seminaries of the Lutheran Church. Principal D emphasized the importance of developing workshop leaders could help principals and pastors learn “how to talk to one another and how to collaborate with one another, because when it’s working well, it’s amazing in churches, and when it doesn’t, it just creates such a wall to doing ministry (Principal D). Principal E also indicated training would be beneficial with the caveat that separate specific programs for principal preparation and pastor preparation at their respective training institutions may not be a helpful one-size-fits-all approach. Principal E advocated for principals and pastors to participate in a program that “trains them together” in order to promote an opportunity for common understanding.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they worked together with pastors in Lutheran schools. The principals interviewed for this study indicated the importance of collaboration in the work they did with pastors. From their comments throughout the interview process, it was clear the principals valued collaborative efforts and even went as far as to suggest that absent collaboration, ministry was not as effective. As one of the themes recognized through the coding process, collaboration stood out as an important factor the principals sought to experience in their respective schools. As servant leaders, principals and pastors of Lutheran schools ought to be “compassionate collaborators”

(Sipe & Frick, 2015). The principals interviewed in this study described the importance of collaboration with pastors as important to them in their daily work. In some instances, principals described the lack of collaboration as a potential pitfall for effective ministry work in a Lutheran school. This finding supported the work of Durow and Brock (2004) and Dosen & Rieckhoff (2016) which also noted that poor principal–pastor collaboration is a factor hindering principal retention. How the principals had been prepared for such collaborative efforts was also a theme that emerged through the interview process.

### **Preparation**

The principals revealed they had experienced several paths to preparation for work as principals. None of the principals indicated they felt adequately prepared for working with the pastors of their congregations. Although two of the principals indicated they felt that school leadership development programs of the Lutheran Church had made changes that included some discussion about working with pastors, all of them indicated they did not experience formal preparation for working with the pastors of their respective congregations. One of the principals came to the administrative role through an alternative route, and this route would not necessarily have been expected to focus on principal–pastor relationships. The remaining four principals interviewed had studied at Lutheran universities. When asked their administration preparation programs contributed to preparing them to work with the pastor of their congregation, the four described their preparation for work with pastors using terms such as “nothing” (Principal A), “not part of what was taught” (Principal C), “zero prep. for working with pastors” (Principal D), and “I wasn’t. I really wasn’t. So, trial and error” (Principal E).

It is worth noting that principals and pastors certainly cannot nor should not hold the institutions of higher learning where they prepared for careers in church work to be responsible for teaching them how to work together. It is worth pointing out, however, as a theme of the data

collected in the interviews demonstrated, preparation for collaborative work with pastors would have been a helpful addition to training for working as a Lutheran school principal. The principals interviewed discussed alternatives to preparation that had helped them to feel better equipped to work alongside the pastors of their congregations.

The school leadership development program for developing principals was discussed by four of the five principals during the interview process. In general, the principals who participated in the leadership development program had negative or neutral perceptions of how the program prepared them to serve with the pastors of their respective congregations. Principal A indicated the leadership development program was more about how to “deal with the craziness of the school day from a building level as opposed to the craziness of the classroom from the classroom level, and we didn’t really dig into how to work together with your pastoral team” (Principal A). Principal C found the school leadership development program experience similar to Principal A, and he described it as missing any conversations about how to work with the pastor of the congregation. Principal C did indicate he had heard there were some changes made to the curriculum of the school leadership development program that may have refreshed the focus and increased some opportunities to prepare to work with pastors in Lutheran schools. Principal C acknowledged most of the preparation for working with pastors was an “on-the-job training” experience. None of the principals interviewed felt the school leadership development program informed their practice as they worked with the pastors of their congregations.

As an approach used by the Lutheran Church to identify and prepare principals for Lutheran schools, school leadership development programs could have been a program used to address the process of principals collaborating with pastors. If the school leadership development programs included components that helped principals better prepare for working with pastors, such programs might have required better description and clarification for school leadership

development program participants as they worked through the program. Of course, a year-long program such as a school leadership development program was not designed to cover every area of preparation that a principal of a Lutheran school would need as they step into the role of leadership. The designers of school leadership development programs have identified and chosen what pieces of educational leadership are important for the participants as well as the overall outcome for Lutheran schools. It is included here because four of the five principals interviewed pointed at school leadership development programs as places where they did not experience preparation for work with the pastors of their congregations. The school leadership development programs were not principal preparation programs that the participants of this study pointed to as a place where they developed an understanding of how to collaborate with the pastors they would be working with as they led Lutheran schools.

While the principals did not point to school leadership development programs as places where preparation for collaboration took place, they also did not point to Lutheran universities as places where principal preparation included coursework that prepared Lutheran school principals to work with pastors. Again, the responsibility for learning how to collaborate does not rest upon the shoulders of school leadership development programs nor the Lutheran universities. However, as one the principals noted during the interview process, “I think it would help to do a class or even a workshop with pastors there to talk about the pitfalls or strengths of having a really strong ministry and what that can look like in combination with that” (Principal D). The finding of the need for greater emphasis on preparation was supported in the literature by (Nelson, 2016; Durrow & Brock, 2004). Marchese (2004) also noted in a study of principal autonomy in Catholic schools that pastors play significant roles in the autonomy of principals, but the skills necessary for effective principal–pastor collaboration are not taught at the university level. This was true for the participants on this study as well. If collaboration with the

pastor in a Lutheran school setting is an important skill Lutheran school principals need, it should have someplace in the preparation programs of the Lutheran Church rather than what Principal E described as “trial and error.”

### **Expectations**

Preparation programs aside, the principals described the experiences they had within their Lutheran school as informative to developing an understanding of the importance of principal–pastor collaboration. Many of the experiences the principals had with their pastors were indicators of the importance of building strong principal–pastor collaborative processes and practices. Four of the five principals used the word expectations to describe how they help manage collaborative practices within their respective schools. For Principal A, transparency and authenticity were important in communicating the expectations of a leader. People, including the pastors of Lutheran school ministries, needed to know “how they can come alongside you effectively” (Principal A). Expectations for effective communication and pastoral collaboration needed to be laid out clearly to be useful. A review of the governance documents of the congregations represented by the principals in this study demonstrated congregation mission statements, handbooks, and constitutions did not speak directly to how principals and pastors should collaborate in their respective Lutheran schools. The documents provided acknowledged that principal and pastor would work together but did not formalize or give guidance on how that process would or should take place.

The principals participating in this study indicated the expectations for collaboration with their pastors generally came from the principals themselves. Principal C noted it was one thing to state the desired expectation, “but unless sometimes it’s actually part of a manual or a form we look at often, as simple human beings, we have the tendency to forget, and so that makes it a continual reminder having process pages” (Principal C). Principal C used these process pages to

ensure a variety of expectations were met in his school ministry, including communication with the pastoral team. While one principal had formalized how the process of communicating expectations would be handled, others made it a point to discuss the issue with the pastor of their congregation and create a plan informally or formally to work together.

When Congregation B called a new pastor, Principal B and the pastor were able to develop a plan to work together. They met together and laid out expectations they would have a singular mission ministry. “Everything we were going to do was with one mission in mind. There was going to be no separation between the school and the church. Everything was going to be done together” (Principal B.) The principal and the pastor of Church and School B came together to determine the expectations for principal–pastor collaboration. The collaboration between Principal B and Pastor B was a positive part of the ministry story described by Principal B. Principal B acknowledged it was something special that not all principals and pastors experience. When principals and pastors do not collaborate effectively, it can be “detrimental to the ministry and to those children that are in that place. . . . I question how well they can prosper and how well the teachers can minister to those families in that kind of environment fully” (Principal B). When the principal and pastor are not functioning well together, the ministry suffers. The expectations for effective collaboration between principal and pastor should be laid out clearly. A review of the websites of three major Lutheran church bodies in the United States demonstrated little to no guidance for principal–pastor collaboration (ELCA, 2020; LCMS, 2020; WELS, 2020). If expectations are not developed by principal and pastor together, congregations should be finding ways to ensure that the process is formally undertaken. Further, the programs that are developed to prepare principals and pastors for service in Lutheran congregations should, at the very least, help principals and pastors recognize the importance of setting healthy expectations.



## **Support**

In addition to highlighting the importance of collaboration, preparation, and expectations, the coding process revealed support as a theme. The principals interviewed recognized the concept of support as a factor in the discussion of how they work with the pastors of their congregations. The principals acknowledged support or lack thereof in a variety of ways, including pastoral support of the school, Lutheran Church support, and time to develop collaborative practices and relationships. The principals in the study noted the pastors of the congregations in which they were serving at the time of the interviews demonstrated support for their schools.

Principal A described two different situations within his experience regarding pastoral support. He described a time in the history of Lutheran Church and School A as supporting the school, but “less so, publicly for fear of offending those [in the congregation] who don’t choose it” (Principal A). At that time, there were many members sending their children to other schools rather than the school the congregation operated. Principal A described the situation as one in which the pastor was reluctant to appear to back the school ministry completely because it may have been recognized as an insult to those that chose not to use the school. So, to Principal A, a lack of complete support was not present, and the support that Principal A experienced seemed to be “apologetic” (Principal A). When that pastor accepted a Call in a new congregation, the new pastor and Principal A developed a working relationship, “unlike any pastor combination [Principal A] had ever worked with.” The change in leadership meant that Principal A experienced support from the pastor he had not experienced prior. In both situations, support was something the principal was aware of and needed. The partnership Principal A developed with his highly supportive pastor made a difference in how he viewed himself within the ministry.

Principal A acknowledged the support he experienced enabled him to view his pastor as a partner in ministry. Principal A indicated he believed his pastor viewed him as a ministry partner as well.

Principal B also spoke of pastoral support of school ministry from two different perspectives. The pastor and principal of Church and School B prior to Principal B's acceptance of the position demonstrated a situation in which pastoral support for the school leadership was not present. Principal B described a situation in which the principal and pastor did not get along. "The pastor and principal did not like each other, did not see eye to eye, and tore the place apart" (Principal B). Of course, it was not clear what the situation was that led to the dynamic that developed between the previous principal and pastor leaders of Church and School B, but Principal B's assessment was the poor principal-pastor relationship had a severe negative impact on the whole ministry of Church and School B. A lack of support for school ministry, whether it was directed at the principal or the school, in general, was not useful in a ministry that needed to have a unified mission outcome of sharing Jesus with people. Fortunately for Principal B and the ministry at Church and School B, Principal B and the new pastor were able to develop a working relationship in which mutual encouragement and support were the norm rather than division and conflict. The pastor supported Principal B and included her in the development of a vision for the church and school that demonstrated a singular unified ministry. "There was going to be no separation between the school and the church" (Principal B).

Principal C related expectations of pastor support. Principal C related support from the pastor was intentional. Principal C described the ideal situation as two meetings per month that allowed the principal and pastor to meet together to pray, to work through challenging situations, and to work together to make plans for the future. Principal C acknowledged this meeting system was starting to work at his current ministry. Principal C noticed throughout his career at various churches with schools, regular meetings between principal and pastor were not the norm.

Principal C noted that “almost to a school-church situation, my expectation was that [a system of meeting between principal and pastor] is how we do ministry, but there was no place where it was just a normal pattern of ministry life” (Principal C). In each place where Principal C served as principal, he worked to formalize a system in which he experienced support from his pastor. As with the participant interviews, support from the pastor was an important aspect of leadership for a principal in a Lutheran school, but this support could be taken for granted or expected without some initial effort on the part of the principal.

At the time of this study, Principal D indicated pastoral support was important. As a principal of a Lutheran school with several people on the administrative team as well as several pastors, Principal D had the opportunity to communicate with the pastors on a daily basis. Daily interaction translated to a system for Principal D that felt like support, especially from the associate pastors that shared an open-door policy so that daily “they are either in my office or I am in theirs talking about something” (Principal D).

For Principal E, pastoral support was evident in ministry. Principal E acknowledged the pastor of Principal E’s current school was fully supportive. Principal E credited his previous experience as a Director of Christian Education before becoming ordained as a pastor as helping him to understand and recognize the importance of school ministry and the support from the pastor that it requires. Principal E noted although the pastor was supportive, there were times when his support seemed lacking because he did not possess the managerial understanding that may have helped him to be more effective in supporting Principal E through a difficult situation. Principal E gave situations such as dealing with difficult parents or students that would have been beneficial to have the pastor’s backing, and he was not available to the principal to support what was going on. Principal E noted the pastor’s nonconfrontational personality might have not

been a direct lack of support, but it did feel to Principal E as a lack of support in some serious situations.

Each of the five principals described pastoral support as an important aspect of their ministry as Lutheran school leaders. In three of the five cases, the principal described situations in which pastoral support was not a given but something that required action from the principal in order to ensure support. All of the principals acknowledged at some point in each of their interviews that pastors play an important part in successful school ministry programs. Four of the principals could not point to programs within the Lutheran Church such as school leadership development programs, Lutheran Universities, or the Lutheran seminaries that directly addressed helping principals and pastors to work together better. In other words, without asking for it directly, the principals may not have experienced pastoral support in a meaningful way. Further, they were not able to point to tools that had been given to them by principal preparation programs that helped them understand how to work with pastors of their congregations. The principals all found pastoral support to be a critical part of Lutheran school ministry.

The theme of support was not limited in scope to how pastors were supporting the principals in the study. Principals were specifically asked during the interviews to describe how well they felt supported by the Lutheran Church to carry out work as an administrator in a Lutheran school. The responses indicated the principals felt well-supported by the leadership of the Lutheran districts in which they served. As with pastoral support, they pointed to strong leadership at the district level that translated to a feeling of support within their position as Lutheran school principals. The responses included a description from Principal A of how poor district leadership might also have a deleterious effect on positive support from the national offices of the Lutheran Church. The response by Principal A indicated where church politics were absent, district leadership could be freed up to support principals within their districts.

Each of the principals in the study placed a high value on the help and support they received through their respective districts. They also indicated they felt that the strongest place for support at a synodical level could take place through the districts rather than developing programs at the national level. Support of principals needing to develop greater principal–pastor relationships could be a function of districts that have a closer connection with the congregations they serve. The district education executives, those leaders in districts called to serve as support for Lutheran schools in each district, were indicated by the principals in this study as being able to help further develop programs and strategies for increasing principal–pastor collaboration in Lutheran schools. The idea of district support for developing the collaborative tools of principals and pastors resonated with all of the principals, especially those that received administrator training outside of a Lutheran university. While there may not be a singular track for the development of Lutheran school principals within the Lutheran Church, each of the principals called or contracted to serve as principals in Lutheran schools of the Lutheran Church would be doing so within one of the districts of the Lutheran Church. Districts would have the opportunity to develop and nurture the skills of principals and pastors alike as they move forward to support principals in a way that the participants in this study indicated. Principal A suggested developing the skills for principal and pastor to collaborate also meant setting aside the time necessary to do so. District leadership of the Lutheran Church has coordinated administrator conferences, church worker conferences, and pastoral conferences for the express purpose of continuing education and the edification of the workers in various districts.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

The literature descriptions in Chapter 2 of this study outlined the servant leadership framework that provided the lens for this case study research. A review of the literature also described a brief history of Lutheran schools in the Lutheran Church. Additionally, studies were

reviewed that sought to understand the nature of the principal–pastor relationship Catholic schools, Seventh–day Adventist schools, and Lutheran schools of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). Organizational Development (OD) was also considered as demonstrative of how subsystems within organizations such as Lutheran churches with schools demonstrate interdependence.

The history of Lutheran schools discussed by Beck (1939) and supported by Rueter (2019) described the role of the Lutheran school as playing a significant role within the Lutheran Church. As a church body, Lutherans dedicated resources to the development and operation of Lutheran schools as congregations developed (Beck, 1939). Lutheran schools provide a service to those enrolled and, at the same time, work to ensure that the Word of God is daily shared with students and families. Rueter (2019) suggested this spiritual work is recognized by the Lutheran Church as an offshoot of the Office of the Public Ministry, an office held solely by pastors. With this in mind, this study sought to understand how principals and pastors collaborated, perhaps with the tension that may arise from the way Lutheran Churches have understood and structured the offices of those that serve in the church. For the purposes of this research study, those offices were limited to the office of the pastor and the office of the principal, which is understood in the nomenclature of Lutheran Churches as a teacher.

The principals interviewed recognized they serve in supporting roles to the pastors of their congregations. They also recognized if a pastor was unwilling or incapable of a collaborative effort with the principal, it would be a challenge to operate a successful school ministry. In fact, one principal in the study indicated a lack of collaboration and collegiality between principal and pastor nearly resulted in the loss of church and school in that particular location. Lutheran publications supported the understanding that church and school worked

together to accomplish the ministry goals of the Lutheran Church, which share a central purpose of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Ave, 2013).

The principals in the study also recognized the role they played as leaders in their schools to ensure the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as they described how their work in harmony with the work of pastors and other congregation members led students and families to inward spiritual growth as well as outward expressions of that spiritual growth such as baptisms. The literature suggested Lutheran school principals often found themselves in positions as the spiritual leader (Nelson, 2015). While the principals interviewed recognized that they did not share the same role as the pastor, they also recognized that sometimes there was overlap in their ministries. This overlap occurred in particular when school families that were not members of the congregation required spiritual care or experienced other needs in which the pastor's role was deemed important by the principal or the pastor.

Schmuck, Bell, and Bell (2012) described the importance of consensual decision-making in organizations that are engaged in tasks that require coordination in efforts among the participants of the organization. Nelson (2015) noted that Lutheran school principals often practiced servant leadership in their role as a church worker. Similar language is used within the church to discuss the role of the pastor. By nature of their vocation, pastors are called to serve as shepherds. So, it was not a stretch within this case study to recognize both principal and pastor were expected to participate in an organizational framework guided by the servant leadership theory recognized by Greenleaf (1972). The literature describing servant leadership recognized one of the most important characteristics of a servant leader is the willingness on the part of the leader to serve first (Greenleaf, 1972). Greenleaf also indicated servant leaders had skills that included focusing on the needs of others, listening, the ability to empathize, and were rebuilders of community (1972). Pastors engaged in ministry with principals demonstrating such servant

leadership skills would most definitely have an easier time collaborating with the leaders called to lead the schools of the congregations.

The principals interviewed for this study acknowledged they found it important to build relationships with their pastors. Relationship-building was a trait of servant leadership described by Greenleaf (1972). Blanchard and Hodges (2018) recognized that servant leaders strive to create great workplaces for all. More than one of the principals that participated in this study described ways in which they worked to engage their pastors in mutually beneficial ways. From process pages to direct conversations, the principals found ways to ensure that what they found to be critical to their success as Lutheran school principals were put into place. When the principals noted it was not in place, they described situations in which difficulties were experienced within the schools and churches without collaborative servant leaders.

The principals admitted they did not feel well-prepared by the institutions that prepared them to be Lutheran school principals. Whether it was the school leadership development program, at a Lutheran university, or both, the principals indicated the concept of principal–pastor collaboration was not something they found in their studies. The principals did indicate, however, that such collaboration was important. As school leaders, principals often find themselves feeling isolated (Sarpkaya, 2014). One way for one of the principals in this study to combat this isolation was to seek a collaborative relationship with her pastor. When the pastor did not seem to be engaged or involved in the life of the principal when she needed it most, the principal felt isolated, and attribute the experience to a lack of understanding on the part of the pastor (Principal C). If principals and pastors were not well-prepared for the challenges of leading together, those challenges could lead to conflict, a feeling of lack of support from both sides, or isolation.



The study conducted by Wojcicki (1982) found respondents indicated the responsibility of pastors to ensure strong relationships with the principals of Catholic schools. The Wojcicki study also indicated principals play a critical role in defining the role the pastor plays within the school ministry. While the findings of a Catholic school study may not necessarily translate to Lutheran schools, the idea pastors need to be prepared to help principals in the task of building strong collaborative relationships is not completely lost. The principals in this study noted they did not feel particularly well-prepared for leading with a pastor. It was also possible the pastors the principals in this study worked with experienced the same seeming lack of preparation. A study conducted by LifeWay Research (2015) including survey data from 734 pastors, including pastors from the denomination associated with participants in the study, aimed at understanding why pastors left the ministry. Of those who left, nearly half acknowledged they were not prepared for the “people portion” of ministry (LifeWay Research, 2015). The literature regarding principal–pastor relationships was limited, but it did indicate strong relationships between principal and pastor were important but not a noticeable priority for principal or pastor preparation programs.

### **Limitations**

Research is limited to the data that is collected. In a case study such as this, it would be difficult to interview all of the Lutheran school principals at work in the United States today to better understand how principals and pastors work together in Lutheran schools. The data collected via interviews, congregation constitutions, and personnel policy manuals for this study was limited to the five principals that agreed to participate. Additionally, the research participants in this study indicated they were interested or very interested in participating in the study. There may be a benefit to including principals that did not express interest in sharing information within the context of principal–pastor relationships to determine whether there may

be an underlying reason for the reluctance to participate. For example, did the respondents not interested in study participation lack interest because they had excellent relationships with the pastors of their school congregations or were the principals nervous about expressing themselves freely concerning such a topic? In either case, hearing from principals that lacked interest for reasons of excellent relationships or those with poor relationships could be beneficial to better understanding the topic of principal pastor relationships in Lutheran schools.

### **Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

The principals in this study indicated principal–pastor relationships were important to them. Further, they indicated in the programs that prepared them to be a principal, they had not received any training on how to work with the pastors of the congregations in which they would serve as Lutheran school principals. As leaders, the principals suggested ways to improve principal–pastor relationships regardless of the preparation they had received. District support was one of the ways principals suggested principal–pastor relationships could be strengthened. Districts could assist principals and pastors by setting aside time and resources to regularly train principals and pastors together outside of already planned professional development opportunities. By coordinating conferences or retreats that focused only on principal–pastor collaboration, principals and pastors could find themselves working on skills that they rarely have or make time to work on even though they acknowledge the importance of said skills.

As institutions that prepare undergraduate and graduate students for work in the Church, Lutheran universities may also note the principals in this study indicated their time in a Lutheran university program did not include time spent focused on understanding the nature of a principal–pastor collaborative effort in a church with a Lutheran school. Consequent to follow-up studies or further research targeted at additional Lutheran principals and pastors could lead to additional, yet important content being added to teacher, principal, and pre-seminary programs.

Further, those students that matriculate to one of the seminaries of the Lutheran Church may also benefit from programs added at the seminary level that help pastors learn and develop skills effective for working collaboratively with principals in Lutheran schools. Where it may not be feasible to add full courses to a program of study because of insufficient numbers of Lutheran school principals or pastors training, it may be beneficial to develop summer continuing education programs or workshops to address the needs of principals and pastors preparing for work as servant leaders in Lutheran schools and their congregations.

The school leadership development program was also recognized by the principals as a place where a greater emphasis on principal–pastor relationships could be expressed. Two of the principals interviewed for this study found the administrators of the current iteration of a school leadership development program had, in fact, included more opportunities for potential principals to develop skills for working with pastors in Lutheran schools. As a response to this study, the administrators of the school leadership development program could also review current offerings within the program and determine whether it may make sense to add additional instructional content that would benefit both principals and pastors by helping them work together better.

Of course, it is not necessarily the responsibility of Lutheran universities, seminaries of the Lutheran Church, or school leadership development programs to ensure principals and pastors know how to work well together. As a practical matter, the Lutheran Church would be better equipped to carry out the mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, where principal and pastor have strong relationships with one another and the communities in which they serve. From a policy standpoint, congregations may also be served by this study. As congregations seek to operate churches and schools that share Jesus with their respective communities, they may want to use the knowledge gleaned from the principals in this study to guide policies for how

principals and pastors work together at the local level. The principals in this study found relationships with their pastors to be important. They did not wait until an outside voice or organization compelled them to work together to make it happen. They found ways and means to engage with the pastors of their congregations and recognized when those strong relationships were not going to be possible.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

At the beginning of this study, the researcher found there were not many studies focused on principal–pastor collaboration in Lutheran schools. Given the five principals interviewed for this study indicated collaboration with pastors was an important and necessary part of working in a Lutheran school, further study of the nature of collaboration between Lutheran school principals and pastors would benefit those preparing for work in Lutheran school ministries as well as those already engaged in Lutheran school ministries. Perhaps a quantitative study that takes into account the responses of both pastors and principals engaged in Lutheran school ministry could broaden understanding of how principals and pastors work together as well as how they are prepared for working together.

As a system of churches and schools with specific doctrinal needs and understandings, the Lutheran Church could benefit from replications of the Wojcicki (1982) and Sieger (1999) studies but with a specific focus on LCMS principals and pastors to ensure results and findings of data gathered were readily transferable to the population the LCMS. In addition, this study could also be replicated using additional principals from the Lutheran Church to continue to broaden our understanding of how principals experience their roles while working with pastors. As a field with limited research, there are many possibilities and avenues for further study for those that would like to see more data with which to improve the overall programs and

preparation for workers in the Lutheran Church and the churches and schools operated by Lutheran congregations.

The five principals interviewed recognized their training and preparation programs had not sufficiently prepared them for the work of serving with a pastor in a Lutheran school. Further research aimed at understanding and potentially improving both pastoral and principal preparation programs in Lutheran higher education would add to the field of research. Potential areas for study could include a closer look at course offerings and requirements for pre-seminary and seminary students seeking to become pastors. In addition, the programs developed by the colleges of education within Lutheran universities could also be studied to determine to what extent program developers include principal–pastor relationships in administrator certification programs.

### **Conclusion**

Principals and pastors of Lutheran schools must regularly work together. There is no doubt that both serve as leaders. This study was designed around the research question: what are the experiences of Lutheran school principals as they collaborate with pastors where they serve as leaders? As case study research, this study was not designed to get a specific answer about the principals and pastors of Lutheran schools, but rather to better understand how five principals experienced their leadership roles in relationship with the pastors of their congregations.

The principals in this study demonstrated as servant leaders, they desired to work collaboratively with the pastors of their churches and schools. They found ways to make collaborative working relationships happen within the context of their individual ministries. The principals interviewed for this study did not experience systematic attention to working with pastors as part of their preparation to be principals. The five participants in this study did, however, suggest that we, as a synod, need to continue to find new ways to develop Lutheran

school leaders that are equipped to work well with the pastors of the congregations in which they are called to serve. As a study of Lutheran principals, this research was part of a very limited field of study that has ample space for further research, study, and understanding.

As a principal himself, the researcher found a group of colleagues that not only recognized a deficiency in the programs that helped prepare them for the Lutheran school principalship but worked to improve it. As servant leaders, the participants of the study were committed to building up the communities in which they served as they also improved the opportunities for their pastors to lead better with them as well. The servant leaders that committed to sharing their experiences through this study demonstrated a powerful tool Lutheran churches and schools have to accomplish powerful ministry that seeks to develop collaborative principal–pastor relationships, the principals themselves.

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## **Appendix A: Initial Letter Requesting Assistance in Study**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Lord be with you! As a fellow administrator in a Lutheran school, I want to thank you for taking a moment to read this email. I am writing to request your assistance as I study how principals, pastors, and congregations of Lutheran schools collaborate. As a Lutheran school principal, I am deeply interested in how to develop stronger collaborative relationships between principals, pastors, and the congregations in which principals and pastors serve. In order to begin the process of developing stronger relationships, it is important to study those that already exist. You may be of great assistance in helping me to examine current principal–pastor and principal-congregation relationships.

I have been an active Lutheran commissioned minister since 1997, and since that time, I have taught kindergarten, first grade, and middle school. I have served as principal or teacher in both large and small Lutheran schools, and I am proud to be part of the Lutheran system of schools, which so many before me have diligently nurtured and tended.

This study is not intended to cast a negative light on the responsibilities of principals, pastors, or the congregations in which those principals and pastors serve, but rather to take a closer look at how principals of Lutheran schools currently view the relationships they have with pastors and congregations. Hopefully, it will also lead to more in-depth studies that lead to improved preparation and support for principals, pastors, and congregations seeking to begin or to continue to share Lutheran school ministries in the communities in which God has called them.

I am looking for several principals leading Lutheran schools to participate in case study research. The research would involve an interview-style questionnaire that would allow you to share your thoughts and experiences as a Lutheran school principal. The interview should last

approximately one hour, and it would give a voice to your experiences as a Lutheran school principal. The research would also include your submission of pertinent documents that may indicate how your congregation facilitates collaboration between you and your pastor. For example, congregation constitutions, handbooks, and personnel manuals may be of benefit to supporting the interview process. Although follow up interviews may not be necessary, I would welcome your input at any time.

All respondents and responses will remain confidential. Possible identifiers such as congregation, city, state, and names will be changed to protect your identity. In this way, each principal responding may give an honest, uninhibited account of their personal situation and experience without fear of repercussion or other consequences. The interview will be recorded and recordings will be archived for 90 days following the acceptance of the final dissertation produced as a part of the study. After 90 days, recordings and any markings identifying the respondents will be destroyed. All data collected will be kept in a secure locked location only accessible by me, the researcher.

There is no pay offered for the study. However, your interest and input may provide useful information to leadership of the Lutheran Church and how administrators, pastors, and congregations are prepared to serve together in Lutheran school ministry. Your input is important and valuable, and I greatly appreciate your consideration as you prayerfully consider taking part in this study.

If you feel that this is something that may interest you, and you would be willing to commit a small portion of your time to assisting with the study. Please follow the link below to be taken to a consent form and brief online survey. I would like to have all surveys completed no later than March 30, 2017. If you are chosen to complete an interview, please know that you may



withdraw from the study at any time. Whether or not you are chosen to participate in the study, all information you share, including the responses on the enclosed card, will be kept confidential.

All interviewees will receive a copy of the final study when it is completed. Thank you for your help. May God bless you as you serve Him in your leadership of a Lutheran school.

In Christ,

Corey Brandenburger

## **Appendix B: Click to Consent Form**

The purpose of this study is to better understand how principals and pastors in Lutheran schools of the Lutheran Church collaborate. Since the nature of the position of a Lutheran school principal includes working with pastors, then those in positions to develop leadership skills among potential, future and current Lutheran school principals should have a strong understanding of how the principal–pastor relationship plays out in the experiences of Lutheran principals in the field. The first phase of this study is this online survey. I expect to contact approximately 100 principals via email to determine interest and willingness to take an electronic survey and possibly be contacted again to ask them to participate in the second phase of the study. The survey can be completed between March 15 and March 30. This online survey will ask you questions about your Lutheran school leadership experiences. Completing the survey should take less than 20 minutes of your time. The survey will ask you how many years you have served as a Lutheran school principal and other information. I will ask for your email contact information so that I can contact you and ask you to participate in an interview. If you choose to provide this information, I will contact you and provide you more information so you can decide if you want to participate in the second phase of participation.

There are no risks to participating in this study other than the everyday risk of your being on your computer as you take this survey. The benefit is your answers will help me to develop a diverse group of Lutheran school leaders to participate in the second phase of the study. The completed research, although you may not choose to participate, may help you better understand your relationship with your own pastor as well.

Your personal information will be protected. This survey is firewall and password protected so that only the researcher (me) can see your answers. I will keep this in strict confidence. The information/topic of the questions are not sensitive or risky. However, if you were to write something that might allow someone to possibly deduce your identity, we would remove this information, and we would not include this information in any publication or report. Any data you provide would be held privately. All data will be destroyed three years after the study ends. You can stop answering the questions in this online survey if you want to stop.

Please print a copy of this for your records. If you have questions, you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Corey Brandenburger at [redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

**Click the button below to consent to take this survey.**

## Appendix C: Survey Questions to Screen Prospective Participants

1. Name
2. Current position in a Lutheran school
3. The number of years serving as principal in a Lutheran school
4. Indication that the principal responding currently works in a school operated by a congregation that employs a full-time pastor
5. Gender
6. Ethnicity
7. Name of school
8. Address and district of school
9. Number of years served in current school
10. Willingness to participate in a study of principal–pastor collaboration
11. Pathway to administration of current school (i.e., did you participate in a school leadership development program, and administrative licensure program, called from a teaching position or called from a principal position, etc.)
12. Degree(s) held
13. Lutheran institutions of higher education attended
14. Best means of contact for the study; and Additional information that you would like the researcher to know.

*Note.* Data collected on this form was completed by prospective participants after reading the Click to Consent Form (see Appendix B) and clicking to consent.

## **Appendix D: Interview Questions for Principals of Lutheran Schools**

1. Describe your current ministry.
2. Please share how you work with the pastor(s) of your congregation.
3. Help me understand how you work with the congregation that operates your school.
4. What did your administration preparation program contribute to preparing you to work with the pastor(s) of your congregation?
5. What, if anything, might you change about the program(s) you took part in as preparation for leading a Lutheran school?
6. How well-supported by the Lutheran Church do you feel to carry out your work as an administrator? Is there anything the Lutheran Church can do to improve relationship development?
7. Is there anything that I didn't ask about that you would like for me to know about your collaboration as a Lutheran school principal?

## **Appendix E: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of Academic Integrity**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations**

#### **What does “fraudulent” mean?**

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to, texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### **What is “unauthorized” assistance?**

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

**Statement of Original Work (Continued)**

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources have been properly referenced and all permissions required for the use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Corey J. Brandenburger

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Digital Signature

Corey J. Brandenburger

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Name

May 27, 2020

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Date