



Issue #46: Winter 2022



Editors' Note:

Tell to the coming generations the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. Psalm 78:4

When the title, "For All Generations" was released as the 2022 NADCE Conference theme, we knew this issue could be a place where DCEs who have served for a long time, particularly in one setting, would have the opportunity to share words of wisdom. One of the best ways we proclaim the marvelous deeds of the LORD is to tell the stories of His people, and these in-it-for-the-long-haul DCEs do just that. We give special thanks to Michele Pavasars, KINDLE executive director, who provided the inspiration for this issue and a beautiful list of prompts for our seasoned DCEs to share their experience.

While reading, we were especially touched by the transitional struggles as told by Sue Steege and rejoiced with Sandy Wendelin as she shared the blessings of long-term relationships. Cheri Selander's story of multigenerational mentoring was inspiring, and Steve Schedler and Michael Harvey's experience with change while serving in one ministry site gave us insight into how to navigate transitions in ministry as well as maintaining vibrancy in service over time.

The *For All Generations* 2022 NADCE conference in Fort Collins, Colorado provided much-needed respite and support for our community, and attendees Laura Kuegele and Christiane Hobbs graciously shared with us their experience as a way for fellow attendees to reflect on their own experience and to bless those who could not attend in person this year.

As we begin this new year, may you keep your eyes fixed on the goal of telling the coming generations of the glorious deeds of the Lord.

Peace,

Molly Poppe and Michaela Seeliger

Editors



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Christiane shares her key takeaways from the 2022 NADCE Conference, particularly regarding ministering to Gen Z.

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After Cheri’s childhood DCE invested so much into her life, she was eager to invest in others in her own ministry. Check out her article to read the benefits of investing in a family for the long haul.

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In her article, Laura shares with us about leading through storytelling, especially during the pandemic, that were taught at the 2022 NADCE Conference.

Quarterly Question and Issue Notes

NADCE Editors

Discover the topic for the next issue, read the Quarterly Question responses, and learn about an exciting new opportunity for NADCE members.



Leading the Next Generation

Christiane Hobbs


Each generation is impacted by the world they grow up in. Gen Z was defined by Andrew McPeak as those born from 2001 to 2018. These individuals were born into a world where terrorism, shootings, and civil unrest are reported instantly to the devices held in their hands. They are confronted with overwhelming social media during their formative years. They live in the anxious shadow of three economic downturns, political polarization, and a pandemic that leaves so many uncertainties. Gen Z needs resilient leaders, as described by Tod Bolsinger, to help them find hope in the midst of times that could otherwise lead to despair.

How can we be leaders who will help Gen Z and other generations navigate the changing world they face? The keynote speakers at the NADCE Conference in January 2022, Andrew McPeak and Tod Bolsinger, shared strategies we can use to be the descriptive and resilient leaders needed to lead through crises and challenges.

Descriptive Leaders

According to Andrew McPeak, Gen Z is looking for “Descriptive Leaders.” Descriptive Leaders meet with learners to identify a goal and allow learners to come up with their own steps to reach the goal. This is contrasted with “Prescriptive Leaders” who set a goal and furnish the learner with a series of precise steps to take to reach the goal. Descriptive Leaders give learners ownership of the process, empower them, and let them prove themselves.

Gen Z learners need Descriptive Leaders because they have instant access to any information they are interested in seeking out. They need leaders who help them interpret information rather than give them information. They need leaders who help them sift through the overwhelming quantity of information that is available. They need leaders who allow them to prove themselves, so they emerge from crises and challenges stronger.




Andrew McPeak shared eight strategies for leading Gen Z through crises and challenges:

1. Make a habit of talking about the silver lining. Help them identify things to be grateful for in the midst of challenges.
2. Help them break down their hardships into digestible bites in their mind. Breaking it down into smaller pieces will help them to process rather than be overwhelmed. Don't try to solve the whole problem at once, but rather find a small piece of it to begin working on.
3. Help them identify cognitive distortions and confirmation bias in their narratives. Challenge them when they say things like: "I will never", "I can't", etc.
4. Remind them of past personal successes to help them develop a positive internal narrative. Encourage them to identify times they have done hard things in the past.
5. Help them practice psychological distancing. Ask them, "If a friend was experiencing this challenge, what advice would you give them?"
6. Tell them stories of those who turned disadvantages into advantages. (Such as from Corrie Ten Boom's "The Hiding Place.")
7. Express high belief and high expectations. Encourage them to work toward big goals.
8. Encourage them to practice affirming self-talk: when you are not hearing the right thing from yourself, you need to start saying the right thing to yourself.

Leading Through Change Requires Tempered Resilience

To lead in a changing world, Tod Bolsinger says we must develop "the capacity to learn, face losses, and navigate competing values." As leaders, we must be willing to say, "I don't know; we are going to learn together."

Leaders of change must develop "Tempered Resilience." Tod Bolsinger defined "Tempered Resilience" as "A grounded identity and resilient character that is shaped through reflection, relationships, and a rule of life in a rhythm of leading and not leading." Resilience is necessary because leaders will face resistance and even sabotage. According to Tod Bolsinger, "Sabotage is normal, natural, and to be expected," and "sabotage is not the bad things that evil people do, but the human things that anxious people do." To remain healthy in the face of resistance and sabotage, a leader during change must have their identity "grounded in something other than their success in




leading change.” As Christian leaders, we ground our identity in the fact that we are beloved children of a faithful God.

Tod Bolsinger compared the process of blacksmithing metal to the process of becoming a leader with Tempered Resilience.

- Working - As metal is formed into a usable shape by being worked, “leaders are formed in leading.”
- Heating - Metal is strengthened by being heated and leaders are strengthened through vulnerable and truthful self-reflection. How and when are you able to engage in vulnerable and truthful self-reflection?
- Holding - The anvil holds the metal secure through the shaping process. As leaders, we need multiple types of relationships to hold us secure through our development. We need partners who care more about the mission than about us as individuals. We need friends who care more about us as individuals than about the mission. And we need mentors who invest in us for something bigger than ourselves (some examples of mentors include therapists, spiritual directors, and coaches). Do you need to add more of one of these types of relationships to hold you secure as you develop tempered resilience in life and leadership?
- Hammering - The hammer shapes and strengthens the steel and spiritual practices shape and strengthen us. Our spiritual practices ground our identity and they help us grow more resilient. Tod Bolsinger outlined four categories of spiritual practices:
 - Learning – spiritual practices that help us develop teachability
 - Listening – spiritual practices that help us develop attunement
 - Looking – spiritual practices that help us develop adaptability
 - Lamenting – spiritual practices that help us develop tenacity

Consider what your first spiritual practices were and what your spiritual practices are today. How have they changed? In what ways do your spiritual practices need to be adapted for you to become a more resilient, adaptive leader?

- Hewing - “Resilience takes practice.” As the strength of a tool is demonstrated in the work it does, our resilience will be demonstrated as we respond to challenges.
 - Tempering - In blacksmithing, this is a process of heating the metal and then letting it cool slowly to give it added strength and resilience. As leaders, we
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release stress and grow strength and resilience through a rhythm of leading and not leading. What do your rhythms of leading and not leading look like? Are you giving yourself room to release stress by not leading?

Joys in Leading

Amid a changing world, we remain able to lead and serve with joy as we hold firm to the things that never change. We are held firm by a God whose faithfulness and love remain constant. We hold firm to a purpose that does not change. God continues to use one generation to tell of HIS works to the next generation. The challenges and crises we face reveal the shared need for the light of Jesus to shine on us so we don't fall into hopelessness. The world will always need hope and we have the ultimate hope to share. As Paul wrote in Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Andrew McPeak referenced two books he co-authored with Tim Elmore: *Generation Z Unfiltered: Facing Nine Hidden Challenges of the Most Anxious Population* and *The Pandemic Population: Eight Strategies to Help Generation Z Rediscover Hope After Coronavirus*.

Tod Bolsinger referenced two books that he has written: *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* and *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change*.



Christiane Hobbs has been a DCE for over 20 years. She has served churches in Minnesota, Louisiana, and Texas. She serves as Youth Ministry and Commissioned Minister Specialist for the Texas District of the LCMS. In this role, she provides support for youth ministry workers and assists congregations calling commissioned church workers. She also provides care and coaching for church workers and their spouses as a member of the Texas District Care Team. Christiane and her husband Monty and their two children live in Mansfield, TX, just south of Fort Worth and Dallas. With her family, she enjoys playing games, reading, camping, and traveling.

Relationships Matter: Ministry in One Congregation for a Lifetime

Sandy Wendelin


I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. (Proverbs 29:11)

I never saw it coming, but now I only know the blessing of it. It wasn't by my design; God's plan for life is often different than what we envision or what we can even imagine as the best life ever. What I know about God is that He is good and that He wants the best for his children! Fresh out of school, I moved to the Denver area because I was engaged to a DCE who took a Call to a neighboring church. It was hard leaving the Twin Cities and my family to start a career that would be challenging given we were both trained as DCEs. While our plans to marry did not come to fruition, I realize now how God paved the path to Denver, which led me to the love of my life and to the place he would call me to serve for many, many years! Romans 8:28 might be considered my life verse: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

I have served in this one congregation for thirty-seven years, with one Senior Pastor for thirty of those years. The life-giving relationships God created through ministry at Bethlehem far exceed my expectations and have been a blessing beyond imagination.

I met my husband at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Over thirty years ago, Tim asked out that "cute girl in the Sunday School office," so the story goes. Marriage, however, made decisions more complicated. What would happen if I got a Call? How would that impact my husband? Tim was baptized at Bethlehem, went to school there, did his undergraduate and graduate work close by, and despite receiving job offers across the country, chose to work at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory close to his home and church. Now Tim is an ordained SMP Pastor also serving at Bethlehem!


Tim and I don't have kids. It was a choice we made early in our life together. We knew we would not have a home filled with the pitter-patter of little feet, then big feet with smelly shoes, nor the laughter and, of course, the tears that come with living life together in a



family. Yet God has filled our home with longstanding and rich relationships with friends - friends who are family by choice. The friends we share life with from day to day and week to week are, without exception, from Bethlehem. We have lived through times of new jobs, lost jobs, no jobs, and, now, retiring from jobs. When some were busy raising kids and attending to the demands of family life, we saw them less. But over time, the kids grow up, the nest empties, and a new season of friendship begins. That's how it has been with David and Lynn Langewisch. David came to Bethlehem as a Vicar about thirty years ago. They lived with us when they were "homeless" while their new home was under construction. One of their four kids learned to walk at our house, and we are Godparents to their youngest child. We've explored Hawaii and many parts of Mexico with them. We eat sushi together at least once a month. We treasure ministry and life together with the Langewisches. It is a blessed gift from God.

Speaking of blessings, let me tell you about my friend, Amy. We hang out and sometimes do nothing and can talk for hours and hours on end. For years we got together with "church friends" for what we called our "Biggest Loser LifeGroup" when the TV show, *The Biggest Loser*, was all the rage. We had a healthy meal together, watched the show, and talked about what God was doing in our lives. For another two years, Amy and I met every week and diligently followed the principles of Financial Peace University (FPU), and then celebrated when a short-lived marriage that left her with \$60,000 of new debt was paid off. Amy is an administrator for a long-term care facility. We spend a lot of time sharing the joys and challenges of leading during COVID and what it's like working with hundreds of people to accomplish our respective missions. We love adventures and find one almost every Friday night, along with our husbands. What is so remarkable is our years of life together started when Amy was a bright-eyed 5th grader with a joy-filled spirit who attended the midweek class I taught on Wednesday evenings over 30 years ago. Now, she is one of my best friends.


Ministry over the long haul, in one location, has also provided the blessing of witnessing miracles that have taken years to realize. When I was working with our Sunday School, we had a team of department leads who would meet regularly for planning and prayer. There were a few women at that time who I considered spiritual giants. I learned a lot about prayer from one of them. Loanna had a recurring prayer for all the years she



served as a leader in the Sunday School. She prayed that her husband would come to know the Lord. What an honor to be invited to pray for someone's salvation and then to see God's work in action - the transformation from spiritual death to life! After thirteen years of praying, we witnessed this amazing work of God.

Then there is the joy of seeing generations in a family celebrating life's significant faith markers from baptism to burial, trusting in the hope and promise of the resurrection. Just coming off the NADCE Conference "For All Generations" in Fort Collins, CO, I think of several multi-generational families through which God seems to weave a specific theme of faithfulness. One family spanning four generations sticks out. God built their family on the theme of being faithful students of the Word. The patriarch was literally from the builder generation and oversaw the construction of our Sanctuary in 1969. I trust he is now helping Jesus prepare a place for us, building heavenly homes. His wife still leads a woman's Bible study every week. A son in the next generation participated in our small group Bible study through Skype while he had a long-term work assignment in California. That was the year God called him to Seminary. His girls are now teachers of the faith: one serves in our day school and the other voluntarily stepped up to lead our children's ministry during a vacancy this past summer. The newest generation of grandchildren can be seen in our day school or singing and dancing in Family Worship. This family lives out Psalm 78, as it says in verse 4, "We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the LORD, about his power and his mighty wonders."

When the editors of the NADCE Quarterly invited DCEs who have served in a single congregation to talk about various aspects of long-term ministry, the thought of writing on the relationships that have formed over the years brought joy to the heart of this DCE. I saw this as a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the relationships that God created in my life over the years. However, what ended up happening is that God transformed this time of reflection into a prayer of thanksgiving for the people He has placed in my life. To know and be a part of how God has worked in the lives of His people at Bethlehem is just one more petition in my prayer of thankfulness for serving in one parish for a lifetime.





Sandy Wendelin had the opportunity to start her ministry at Bethlehem Lutheran in Denver, Colorado in Children's Ministry, and also has served in Assimilation, Small Groups, and the Early Learning Center to name a few areas! She loves to create the vision for a ministry, get it going, and when it is chugging along, move on to the next thing! Currently, she does all things Discipleship. She is married to Tim, who was ordained and called to serve as pastor of care at Bethlehem in 2016.



Keeping Energized for the Long Haul


Michael Harvey

Serving in the “same” congregation for over 20 years has been a huge blessing to me and my family. Seeds that were planted years ago have now blossomed, borne fruit, and spread seeds of their own. Relationships with the community have grown. Children who used to come up for children’s messages have been confirmed, graduated from high school ministry, and now their children come up for the children’s message!

Some of those now-grown children have even received the Call to ministry. Is there anything more energizing than hearing how a former youth goes on to share the Gospel later in life? Is there anything better than having a former youth who struggled in Confirmation class come into their child’s Confirmation class and tell all the kids how this is the real deal and faith in Christ is the most important thing? I could power a city off the energy I feel when Christian parents raise Christian kids who grow up to raise Christian kids.

In my Call, I have served with five different pastors, gone through six Call processes, and two building projects. I have changed my position once and adjusted it countless times. I have met hundreds of people, recruited hundreds of volunteers, celebrated the births and baptisms of hundreds of children, and attended and mourned at the funerals of hundreds of saints. I have sat at the feet of many lay leaders who each taught me something about God and human nature. I have enrolled in many conferences and workshops. I have taught hundreds of hours of classes to all age groups. I have both been given and voluntarily taken on many roles and tasks. I have loved watching God work and have praised Him for using me to start many ministries. I have also seen ministries fail. I have gone through conflict with laity and staff, and I have reconciled with laity and staff. I have seen friendships grow and fade. I have greeted new members and said goodbye to others.

To think that a long Call is just serving the same people for many years is assuming the church stays the same. I have seen changes in so many areas: parents, generations,



leaders, policies, technology, rituals, carpet, building, staffing, and relationships. The church I serve today is light-years away from the church I was commissioned in over 20 years ago. However, through it all God has not changed!


To keep energized and fresh in a long Call I must constantly and passionately grow in a relationship with Christ. For me this happens in many ways:

Prayer: Each day I wake up and, before I do anything else, I talk to God. Throughout the day I talk over struggles with God, praise God for success, and petition Him for those in need. If I say, "I will pray for you," I, whenever possible, pray out loud right then with the person or type out a prayer in an e-mail or text. At night I talk to God until I fall asleep trusting Him with my day.

Scripture: Every morning I am in the Bible. My practice for the last few years has been to read through a Testament or the whole Bible in a year. This has been a huge blessing and has taken me through the whole Bible many times. The Word of God is opening up in new ways! I have heard it said that Bible study preparation is not the same as a devotional life. To that I reply, "then you are doing it wrong!" When I cherish my special-focused devotional time, every opportunity to be in God's Word engages me personally so that the group I am sharing with can grow. I agree that special-focused devotional time must happen and be cherished. You **MUST** take time to engage that Scripture personally so both you and the group you are sharing with can grow. God's Word never returns without accomplishing the task it was sent to do!

God Sightings: Each day I intentionally take time to look for how God is at work. At Redeemer, we share these God sightings often. Satan wants us to feel alone and left out of God's grace, but God sightings help clear away the fog of deceit and grow excitement in joining Jesus on His mission.

One of the biggest hurdles to maintaining a devotional foundation is coming to the understanding that growing in your relationship with Christ is more important than busyness, the demands of others, and even family time. God created us in our mothers' wombs. God walks with us every day, 24/7. God will take us to be with Him forever. Only



in Christ and out of His love can we live and move and have our being. These three practices have made a huge impact on my ministry as they help to center me on the true foundation and encourage me in my relationship with Christ each day. These practices are part of who I am.


Over the years I have found a few other practices that keep me energized and fresh for ministry. If I put these ahead of my relationship with God I start to struggle, but when these practices flow out of my relationship with God, they are very helpful:

Taking Responsibility: I am not always right and I don't always make great decisions. I am not always as prepared as I should be. Despite this, it is often tempting to blame others and make excuses. I have found owning my part in a problem or conflict is far more helpful than denying it. This does not mean I am the whipping boy; It means I admit I am a sinner.

Supporting my team: I feel called to help those around me succeed, including both the Called staff and lay leaders. I work hard to find opportunities to work with others outside my primary ministry area. I ask and offer help when I can., give genuine and heartfelt credit to others as often as I can, and I check in on them, listen to them, and pray for them.

Knowing I always have a choice: For many years I beat myself up trying to work on other people's time frames. I felt like a terrible procrastinator who was doing ministry wrong. As I matured in my role I discovered I need to make the choice to work on the time frame that was most effective for me; doing work too far in advance is not how God made me. What people expected of me was not the only option: feeling trapped by others' expectations often means burnout is soon to follow. Learning I always have a choice and choosing the most positive and God-pleasing option has made a tremendous difference in my life and ministry!

Not taking myself too seriously: I learned this from a good friend and lay leader. He knows how to laugh at himself and find humor and joy in life. Once I stopped taking myself too seriously, ministry became more fun than I ever imagined!



Accepting help: I've found that the benefit of accepting help is not only for the receiver. Doing ministry on our own robs other people of God's calling in their lives to serve.

Learning every day: I have been blessed by KINDLE, Best Practices, NADCE, and dozens of other workshops and conventions. I have read many books, articles, and posts. All have been amazing at keeping me relevant and growing me in my ministry. Still, having the mindset that every day, every encounter, and every experience is an opportunity for God to teach me something has been the heartbeat of staying fresh in ministry.

Cherishing conflict: Whether a Call lasts for one year or fifty years, conflict is impossible to avoid. With any conflict, I found I have to evaluate the amount of energy to give it. If the conflict involves an area or person connected to my ministry position, then I approach it as an opportunity for God to do awesome things. Conflict may not be fun, but when I seek to understand and strive to communicate clearly, I can cherish the growth that God provides.

Encouraging Others: I strive never to encourage something I do not believe in. Instead, I make sure the encouragement I give is heartfelt and specific.

Living out these practices has energized me in ministry and contributed to my longevity! They have energized others to join me in ministry. I have been blessed to stay in the same community for my entire ministry. You may be blessed in the same way or God may choose to call you to several communities to share your gifts. Regardless, as a servant of the Lord, constantly aim to grow closer to Him. Lean on Him when you have no strength. Celebrate every success and joy with Him. Dive deep into His Word and talk to Him continually. Let everything you do and say flow out of your time with Him.



Michael Harvey serves at Redeemer Lutheran in Rochester, Minnesota as their Director of Faith Formation. He and his wife, Erin, have been blessed to raise their 5 children with the Redeemer Family of Believers for 20 years and counting!

Surviving and Thriving Through Pastoral Leadership Change

Sue Steege


So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom. – Psalm 90:12 (ESV)

I first heard God's call to become a Director of Christian Education as a junior in high school when the DCE at my home congregation, Karen, asked me if I ever thought of becoming a DCE. I laughed out loud. I was not from a family of church workers, I was a public school kid, and that idea wasn't even on my radar. But God used Karen to nudge me and soon I could think of no other work for my life. It is still true today. One thing that drew me to the DCE profession was the fact that, from the get-go, I knew I would be part of a team. I was already thinking about how I would work with, hold up, and encourage my pastor and others. I love being part of a team!

In 1984 when I graduated from what was then known as Concordia Teachers College in Seward, Nebraska, I received a call from First Trinity Lutheran Church in Tonawanda, New York. That call remains mine 37+ years later. With that longevity, it is not a surprise that I served through many transitions in my ministry at First Trinity including two significant pastoral leadership transitions.

The first was a two-year pastoral vacancy. The first year we had "pastor of the week," a different pastor preaching every week. In that season especially, I was the day-to-day leader and decision-maker for the congregation. Many of my called ministries (youth ministry, particularly) got short shrift as I had to give attention to other matters. The second year, a friend of the congregation served as interim pastor. This vacancy was challenging on many levels: we were in the middle of a building program, a couple of Church Council members didn't see eye-to-eye and made the meetings contentious, a part-time staff person left in not-great circumstances. With every returned Call, the anxiety ramped up a little more. The workload was enormous.

First Trinity issued six Calls that were turned down during that two-year pastoral vacancy. The seventh Call was accepted (thank You, Jesus) and I serve with that same Lead Pastor,



Chuck, to this day. From my perspective, it was worth the wait, and God provided the right man to be our pastor. I love serving with him.

The second pastoral transition is more recent and involves my DCE colleague, Jason, currently working through the SMP program to become a pastor. Perhaps surprisingly, that pastoral leadership transition has offered some challenges for me as well. The changes here echo some that took place with the vacancy as roles and responsibilities have shifted. Structurally, we moved from having two full-time staff people in discipleship ministries and one pastor, to one full-time staff person (me) in discipleship ministries and two pastors. I simultaneously rejoice that Jason is called to be a pastor (and a very good one) and grieve that there is no longer another DCE on our staff.


Here are some practices that have helped me not only survive but thrive through pastoral transitions:

Remembering it's God's church.

When serving a congregation that is in pastoral transition, it helps to remember that this is God's church. It will not rise or fall on my effort, my right answers, or my strategy. God is responsible for His church. My job is to discern what He is up to and join in. The pressure is off.

Leaning on the doctrine of the Call.

There can be hard days in ministry (can I get an Amen?), and there can be really hard days in pastoral transition. Days when I made mistakes. Days when someone in the congregation was angry with me. Days filled with uncertainty and wondering where a particular ministry was headed, or what in the world I should do? On those days, I remembered that I have a call from God to serve here at First Trinity; this thought was a shelter. I am not here because I am anything awesome. I am here because God called me here. I can rest in His Call and get to work.



Learning to be the less anxious person.


Pastoral leadership transitions foster environments that are ripe for anxiety. When we were in the two-year pastoral vacancy, people in the congregation, including congregational leaders, started asking things like “What are we doing wrong?” and “Why don’t any pastors want to come here?” I learned how to be the less anxious person in any conversation and it was the best thing I could do to help. Focusing on my behavior, the only thing I am responsible for in anxious moments, gave me a path for navigating some challenging waters.

Using my influence for God’s glory.

A key second-chair leader practice is understanding where I have healthy relationships and the opportunity to speak life and hope about the transition. Following God’s lead in this way empowers me to let go of the places where I may not have influence. I also find it helps to intentionally think about and plan words of hope and life so they are ready to come out of my mouth. Things like, “I see God’s hand leading us every day” or “If he wasn’t the pastor for us, then I can’t wait to see which one is” or “I am so thankful for the Call Committee—let’s pray for them right now.”

Cultivating faith and cultivating health.

Simply put, as I led during a time of pastoral transition I realized the importance of paying attention to my own walk with Jesus: my worship life, my Sabbath-keeping, my time in the Word, and my prayer life. I need those things even MORE when times are stressful and uncertain. And similarly, paying attention to my own health: my physical well-being, friendships, fiscal health, and my growth in wisdom was critical to surviving and thriving in a time of pastoral transition. Especially important for me was a weekly “debrief” that I had with my best friend to talk through how I was feeling and what was happening. Those conversations were never gossiping, tearing down, or taking sides, but processing and releasing some anxiety. That weekly debrief continues today.



As I wrote this article, I realized that, while times of transition bring a sense of urgency around surviving and thriving, many of these practices are also important in ministry life where there is no current pastoral transition. One of the great joys of my life has been to walk with this family of faith through many transitions, and for that I am thankful.



Sue Steege is a DCE serving as Director of Transformation Ministries at First Trinity Lutheran Church in Tonawanda, New York. The Bible never stops amazing her. She loves spending time with friends, Buffalo Bills football, her dog Zanmi, and reading.



Shifting Gears

Steve Schedler


The thought of “shifting gears” is interesting. I naturally think about a car’s transmission. Most of us drive automatic transmission cars and don’t think about shifting gears since the complex computer-driven modern transmission takes care of that automatically. Some of us grew up driving manual transmissions. We learned to press the clutch to disengage the transmission, move the gear shift to the proper location, and let off the clutch to re-engage the transmission in a new gear - hopefully in a smooth fashion.

How do you see your life and ministry in the church? Do you see shifting gears as manual or automatic?

I have enjoyed the privilege of serving as a DCE for the past 37 years, 22 of those at my current call to St. Paul’s in San Diego, California. Over these many years, I have experienced numerous seasons of ministry: uphill climbs, downturns, and cruising on the open road. Each required shifting gears. During one season, I went back to school to expand my knowledge base and receive a Master’s in Family Life Ministry. Other times, the gears shifted as the needs of the congregation changed and I moved into another area of ministry. And now, we find ourselves in the midst of a pandemic and again shifting gears to meet the needs of God’s people.

The last 22 years at St. Paul’s have been such a blessing as the congregation and I have been open to various shifts in what my ministry looks like. My ministry transitioned from a youth and family ministry focus to international missions, and then shifted again when there was a greater need to serve our local community through expanded service projects and increased mission partnerships. Today, my role as Director of San Diego and Worldwide Communities also includes responsibilities in technology, assimilation, and property management.

Over the years there have been very challenging times of gear shift which felt more like the grinding of gears (those of you who have driven a manual transmission car know the sound of that). I’ve taken new Calls requiring adjustments in ministry. I’ve felt stuck and in




need of new challenges. I've faced family circumstances that called for a new place of ministry.

My call to serve God and His people in whatever ways best fit my skill set has been the only constant through the shifting of ministry gears. Though the shifts in job descriptions have happened numerous times, my calling to serve has never shifted. Understanding who I am as a baptized child of God has allowed me to be open to new, varied, and sometimes challenging ministry gear shifts.

My question to you – who is driving? This is God's church, and I am God's servant. In the gear shifting analogy, my ministry has been in a manual mode: God drives, shifts, and directs. Positive change has not happened automatically as the years went on, rather I have been shifted to his direction. At times that has been smooth. Other times it has taken some time to get into the right gear. That is okay; God is gracious and patient and my congregation has been as well. It has been a beautiful ride. The benefits of staying at a congregation for a long period of time are many, and I have been able to serve God's people in so many ways.

I realize that these exact ministry shifts do not happen in every situation. Sometimes the shifting happens as DCEs take a call to a new ministry opportunity and the shift happens in a new congregational or ministry setting. I pray that DCEs will be open to the direction of God as He may have us shift gears to meet the varied needs of His church and the surrounding community.

When you sense it is time for shifting gears in ministry, I encourage you to share your heart and passion with your pastor and the key leaders in your setting. Pray for God to open and close doors as he leads you. Spend time with seasoned DCEs to gain wisdom, clarity, and insight. Go back to school to expand your knowledge, skills, and understanding. Attend conferences, workshops, and listen to online growth podcasts. All of these can be tools, used by God to shift you into new ways of thinking and even new areas of ministry. I challenge you to be open to new learnings and grow in your awareness of the new realities that God might use to direct a time of shifting gears in your ministry.



The truth is that all of us experience the need for shifts. Having our eyes wide open to God and His direction into new ways of serving at your current Call or His leading to a new place of service is exciting and sometimes full of uncertainty. I am reminded of the word of God to the prophet Isaiah, “I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:9b-10). Through all the years, all the shifting, and even the grinding, DCEs have the incredible privilege of serving an amazing God who upholds us and His church.



Steve Schedler received his B.A. in Religious Studies from Concordia University-Irvine and his M.S. in Family Life Ministry from Concordia University-Nebraska. He completed his DCE internship at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Santa Clarita, California, and then coordinated Youth and Christian Education Ministries at Peace Lutheran Church in Camarillo, California for more than five years. Steve was called to serve as the Director of Christian Education at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Ontario, California, where he led ministries for children and youth as well as the small group ministry for adults for ten years. Steve is currently leading St. Paul's ministry opportunities to the San Diego and Worldwide communities as well as working

as the Pacific Southwest District DCE Liaison. Steve and his wife Cindy enjoy spending time with their family, entertaining, hiking, fishing, camping, and gardening.

Investing For the Long Haul

Cheri Selander


“Stick with what you learned and believed, sure of the integrity of your teachers,” 2 Timothy 3:14 (The Message)

My confirmation verse is 2 Timothy 3:14-17, and The Message version has added to my understanding and experience of how God’s grace has abounded my whole life. As I serve in my 38th year of DCE ministry, I am thankful for how God has helped me to see the big picture of a life of ministry in His Church.

My DCE, Rich Soeken, taught me about the love of Jesus. I experienced his leadership and teaching during my six years of junior high and high school ministry. Although an excellent teacher, I do not remember his individual lessons as much as what he taught me about the love of Jesus by investing in me, befriending me, and handing me the keys of leadership as a high school student. His integrity was a genuine Christ-like love for students like me. He invested in me like no other adult at that time in my life and even loaned me \$300 for my first vehicle, which was a motorcycle. Who would do that? A man who was loved by God and who lived out that love in his calling as a minister of the Gospel. His investment in me enabled me to hear the calling to become a DCE myself. I am so grateful for that!

As I reflect back over the years, I see many other people who invested in me, a church worker who was young, inexperienced, and new to ministry. Arnie and Grace invited me for dinner and helped me learn some good financial practices while doing my taxes. The Johnsons bought me my first study Bible which I still use today. The Hartmans partnered with me in youth ministry and taught me about hospitality with high school students. These great people from my first congregation taught me about God’s Church by welcoming me into their lives. I thank God for their loving investment in me.

One reason I have continued in DCE ministry is the other DCEs who have invested in me. I love being a DCE and love being with other DCEs! I thank God for the veteran DCEs




who welcomed me into their community as a rookie learning the ropes. Steve Christopher and Dave Weidner, along with the District Education Executive Dean Dammann, made sure I was a part of the local DCE cluster and the District DCE gatherings. We carpooled together and they put in a good word with my Pastor so that he saw the value of being together for support and encouragement. They also invited me into leadership in the District and in Synodical DCE and youth ministry opportunities. DCEs like them and others have invested in the long-haul careers of fellow DCEs like me.

Because of their investment, I continue in what I have learned. Investing in others is a marathon that I continue to run as I am on the backstretch of my DCE career. It can be joyful and fun. At times it can be challenging and difficult, but it is exciting when there seems to be a return on the investment for God's Kingdom.

The names in the following story have been changed for confidentiality.

About 10 years into my ministry I became close to a small group of senior high girls. One in particular, Samantha, invited me to her home, to celebrations, and her games and we became close. Later into her high school years, her parents separated and divorced. She was angry and hurt. As a child of divorce myself, I spent time listening, praying, supporting her, and giving her hope in Jesus as she tried to process what was going on in her life. We kept in touch through college and I got to celebrate with her family when she married years later. With moves to other parts of the United States and before social media was common, we lost touch.

Fast forward about ten years. Samantha's dad, Stan, remarried another woman from our church. One day Grace, Stan's new wife, approached me with a young man in tow. She introduced him as their adopted son, Elliot. She thought it was a good idea for him to come to Sunday School and the youth group. Elliot began to be part of everything at church. He was eager to be in God's Word, to serve, to lead, and to connect with anyone he could at church. Grace and Stan encouraged, supported, and loved him with unconditional love. As my fellow DCE and I invested in Elliot, his enthusiasm for Jesus and the Church continued to grow. He was baptized. He took on leadership roles, and eventually, God called him to DCE ministry. It has been a joy to be one of God's many



instruments of His grace and love in Elliot's life. It was a village of people, including his parents, that invested in and taught Elliot about his heavenly Father and the love of Jesus. Who would have guessed years before when I was investing in Samantha's life, that one day I would get to meet her adopted brother and become a part of his faith journey?

God works in time and ways that are mysterious and amazing. Sometimes we see the return of our investment in people, but many times we do not. As I age, I get to see glimpses of God's bigger picture. He wants everyone to have the opportunity for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. I get the privilege of teaching his Word to youth like Samantha and Elliot. God's Word has trained me to be a bridge-builder and collaborator, to keep doors open in relationships, and to be a person of reconciliation, forgiveness, and the peace of God. God's Word and his works continue to enable me to live in the hope and joy of his kingdom at work. As it says in 2 Timothy 3:17, "Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us" (Msg).

I thank God for those who have invested in me with the love of Christ, I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to use me to invest in the lives of others.



Cheri Selander is from Kansas and graduated from Concordia Nebraska. She serves as a DCE at Christ Lutheran in La Mesa, California as Coordinator of Youth Ministry. Supported and encouraged by her husband of 32 years, they have 3 kids and one very old dog. Cheri loves Youth Gatherings, camping with Senior High students, collaborating with the awesome staff at her church, paddleboarding, and solo road trips. Mostly she loves serving God as a DCE.


Reflections for Leaders in a Time of Change

Laura Kuegele

Who doesn't love a good homecoming? This is exactly what the few days at the NADCE Conference felt like - one big homecoming. What happens at homecomings? Well, we tell stories. We relive events and reflect on how life is and was. We tell stories to remember. Our keynote speakers brought this point home for me as we learn to lead the next generation. Andrew McPeak said, "One generation of leaders passes along truths to the next generation." As Christ-followers leading the next generation of Christ-followers, how are we doing just that? How do we tell the next generation of God's truth and faithfulness? We tell stories. The Israelites in the Old Testament passed down God's truth and told of His faithfulness to the next generation through stories of events that happened. The focus of storytelling wasn't to emphasize the "woe is me" narrative, but rather as a way to remind and teach others of God's faithfulness. We have a real God, who did real things through real people so that we would know who He is. How are we sharing God's story and his faithfulness to the next generation?

The last two years have changed the way we look at ministry. McPeak challenged us with this question as ministry leaders: "What are we doing to prepare Gen Z for the challenges they will face?" It's hard to prepare someone for something you've never experienced personally; I never experienced a pandemic as a teenager, let alone as a child. How do we lead the next generation in the faith at a time like this? The answer I kept coming back to repeatedly was to remind them of God's faithfulness to us in a fallen world and see that His promises are true for each generation. When God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land, God reminded them what He did for them. They did nothing, but God rescued them because He loved them. Psalm 33:11 reminds us "But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations." God has a plan even today, even through all the chaos surrounding us. Are we listening to how God is calling us to lead now?

McPeak challenges DCE leaders not to be just informers, but to help this generation by being interrupters. He says, "Today's generation needs descriptive leadership that



utilizes the power of metacognition to put their lives back into their own hands.” Descriptive leadership meets with a learner to describe the goal, then allows them to come up with their own steps to reach it. It is giving them the keys to their own life. To quote McPeak again, “We are the Yoda on their shoulder.”

Our next Keynote Speaker, Tod Bolsinger, helped validate what I am feeling as a leader right now. He said, “there are no best practices right now because no one has ever been here before. We are learning how to lead differently.” Great... now what? How do we lead differently? How do we navigate something we have never had to before? How do we become more resilient?

According to Andrew Zoll, “resilience is the capacity to ‘maintain core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances.’” We need to recognize two phases as we continue to navigate leadership during this pandemic. The first one is the acute phase. In this phase, we are stabilizing, protecting, and buying time. We are only focused on the right now. The second phase is the adaptive phase. In this phase, we can address the underlying issues left unaddressed before the crisis. The pandemic offered us an opportunity to hit the pause button in ministry. Adaptive leaders saw this as an opportunity to hit the organizational reset button and began to take a hard look at the underlying conditions and the areas of ministry that maybe might not be the healthiest.

Tod shared five areas where many churches saw underlying conditions needing change: the lack of deep, pervasive discipleship for a persevering church; the lack of community for keeping relational connections amidst turmoil and change; the lack of cross-generational engagement that will pass the faith on into the future; the lack of extensive leadership capacity for a distributed church; and last, the lack of prophetic wisdom for addressing challenges for social justice.

Did you hit the pause button in ministry? I want to encourage you that it’s not too late to do so. Hitting the pause button in ministry at least once a year will be a healthy change to how we lead, allowing us to move from an acute phase to an adaptive phase. Edwin Friedman says



“...when any relationship system is imaginatively gridlocked, it cannot get free simply through more thinking about the problem. Conceptually stuck systems cannot become unstuck by trying harder. For a fundamental reorientation to occur, that spirit of adventure which optimizes serendipity, and which enables new perceptions beyond the control of our thinking processes must happen first.”


I want to be a learner of new things and live in a spirit of adventure. This mentality will help me stay grounded in the adaptive phase.

So how do we lead adaptive change? In Tod's book, "Canoeing the Mountains," he shares five principles and practices for leading adaptive change:

1. People don't resist change; they resist loss.
2. For change to last, it must be a healthy adaptation of core DNA.
3. The future is here, it's just in the margins.
4. You haven't succeeded until you've survived the sabotage.
5. Everybody will be changed, especially the leaders.

Tod focused on the fourth principle, sabotage. We need to see that sabotage is normal and to be expected. Sabotage is not the bad things that evil people do, but the human things that anxious people do. For us as leaders, we need to be prepared for and aware of this and learn how to skillfully deal with it. We need to develop leadership resilience. There are two areas to look at, beginning with the failure of nerve. When we have a failure of nerve, we cave to the pressures of the anxiety of the group to return to the status quo. A failure of nerve is a loss of courage to further the mission. Essentially, we lose our focus. The second area to consider is failure of heart. This is when the leader's own discouragement leads them to abandon their people and the charge they have been given.

Oh, my friends, I pray that we fight these two areas until the day we see Jesus face to face. That we challenge the status quo for the sake of the Gospel for this generation and that we find encouragement and are reminded daily of our identity as a baptized and beloved child of God. As Tod Bolsinger reminded us, "You were loved into existence."





Laura Kuegele has served as a Director of Christian Education since 2002 and has served in a variety of ways, from children's ministry to youth/young adult ministry. She has a passion for helping parents be Christ-like servant leaders in their home by leading their children in faith and to leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their child's life.



Quarterly Question

Tell us when you became a DCE
without telling us the year

The year I became a fully-fledged DCE, Left Shark overshadowed Katy Perry's Super Bowl halftime show. - Brittany Nagel

I was installed 9 years before the first NYG in Ft. Collins, CO. - Paul Krentz

Planes fell from the sky and America was forever changed - Andrea Roettger


The year I was commissioned, Mars had a rover for the first time! - Leslie Sullivan

I was proudly installed the same year Kanye West interrupted Taylor Swift. Youth and children have been interrupting me ever since. - Cori Woltmann

I was installed the year the iPhone made its first debut! - Annie Tiberg Anderson

The Mayans said the world was ending... They were wrong. - Amanda Jahnke

We weren't sure computers could make the change at midnight on NYE! - Cassie Schermbeck



Coming in Our Next Issue: Sabbaths and Sabbaticals

In our coming issue, we will ask DCEs to reflect and give insights into weekly Sabbath rest and what it looks like to take a Sabbatical renewal in ministry. If you have a story, experience, or insight you'd like to contribute to the Spring issue, please contact the editors with your proposal by March 31st at nadceeditors@gmail.com.

Tent of Meeting

Did you enjoy this issue? Tent of Meeting serves as an opportunity to engage in relevant conversations with fellow DCEs monthly on Zoom. Save the date for the next Tent of Meeting on Tuesday, February 15 at 2 pm CST, hosted by the NADCE Quarterly on the topic: For All Generations. Information regarding a special guest from this issue and a Zoom link will come to your inbox closer to that date.

“Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the Lord from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.” - Exodus 27:20-21 (NIV)

Notes from the NADCE Board

- Our [Facebook group](#) continues to be a valuable resource for the Christian Education ministry. As we evaluated its usefulness, we also updated the rules of the group. Please review these updates as you continue to connect and share.
- NADCE Nominations are still open. Official voting will take place the first week of April.



NADCE Quarterly Editing Team



Michaela Seeliger, Assistant Editor

Michaela Seeliger graduated from Concordia University Texas in 2016 and now serves as Director of Christian Education at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Wichita Falls, TX where she enjoys working in children, youth, and family ministries. She especially loves VBS, Confirmation ministry, and helping equip parents to teach the faith at home.

Michaela enjoys spending time with her family and friends, reading, and gardening. Although Texas has been her home for many years now, Michaela will always consider herself a proud Oklahoma girl.

Molly Poppe, Editor

Molly graduated from Concordia University Chicago in 2014 with a dual-certification degree in Elementary Education and DCE ministry. After serving in Centennial, Colorado for several years, she has stepped back from career ministry to focus on raising her four babes, Zadok (6), Titus (4), Esther (2), and Basil (newborn); and supporting her husband, Nathanael, in his role as Principal at St. Paul's in Concordia, MO. She stays busy volunteering with international students at St. Paul high school, exploring the outdoors, and building epic race car tracks.

