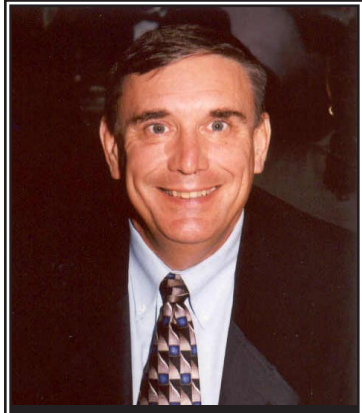


## Personal Influences Instrumental in Church Worker Decisions



### HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORK

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Time and again I ask teachers and pastors how they were led to the decision to become full-time workers in the Kingdom. The most frequent response is, "it was a teacher who first encouraged me" or "it was my pastor." Fully 38% of the incoming students at Concordia Seminary in the Fall of 2006 indicated that a pastor was the most influential person in encouraging them to consider service in the church.

Over the past months, I have asked professional church workers to share their story. This month I would like to share my story.



My godfather — a cousin on my father's side of the family — was a Lutheran pastor. Our relationship was not especially close since he lived on the other side of the state from us, and he was occupied with his parish duties. However, the fact that he was a pastor may have planted the seed of the idea of pastoral service in my life.

The first time that service in the church was formally raised was at the end of a confirmation class when I was in seventh grade. I attended the Lutheran elementary school connected with my home congregation, and Vicar Joel Kuznik was responsible for teaching seventh grade. Just before class ended one day, he told me to leave class and go down to the principal's office to meet with the principal and the pastor — Vicar Kuznik would be coming soon.

My first reaction was that I hadn't done anything wrong, so why was I being sent to the principal's office? When I professed my innocence to the vicar, I was told to be quiet and get to the office. When I went into Principal Wolters' office, he was waiting for me with Pastor Scheffel. Mr. Wolters and Pastor Scheffel were in deep conversation about something and they told me to wait until Vicar Kuznik got there and they would get down to business.

I thought, "I'm really in trouble now, and I don't even know what I have done this time to be in trouble."

I probably should explain that I was an "inquisitive child" and that our school was made up entirely of split grades; that is, one teacher for two grades. That left lots of free time and I thought it perfectly appropriate to use that time to explore the classroom and to converse with my class mates about serious matters. Unfortunately, my beleaguered instructors often didn't appreciate my wandering and inquiring.

After what seemed like an eternity, Vicar Kuznik came into the office and they all looked at me. Pastor Scheffel said, "We have been talking about you recently and we have something to ask you. Have you ever considered becoming a pastor? We think you may have the gifts to be a pastor and we want you to seriously think and pray about it."

**God uses many people as His instrument to call people into church vocations. It was pastors and a teacher working together to influence me to consider a call into ministry. It was the support of parents, congregational members, family and friends that helped me along the way.**

As I remember that day, I can still feel the sense of relief that washed over me. My first thought was, "I'm not in trouble." Then I did a kind of mental double take. "What did he say? Become a pastor? Me?!"

They went on to talk some more about my grades, my attitude, my aptitudes and a whole list of other things they

had put together, but I really don't remember the details. All I know is that these three men for whom I had deep respect were telling me that I might have the gifts to serve as a pastor.

I went home that evening and told my parents about the day's experience. I distinctly remember my mother interrupting me near the start of my story. When I began by saying that I been sent to the principal's office, her response was "Now what did you do?" I'm not sure she was more surprised that I hadn't done something punishable that day than she was about what they were proposing for me.

Once I told them the whole story, my parents were both very supportive of pursuing the possibility of my going into the ministry. After all, what good Lutheran mother in the late 1950s didn't harbor some idea that her son might grow up to be a pastor. Less than two years later, at age 14, I was off to the

synodical boarding high school about 60 miles from home to start a 12-year educational process leading to ordination.



What I would like to highlight about my story is the critical role played by influential people. Mr. Wolters was an

"old school" Lutheran teacher — stern, strict and demanding — but I deeply respected and admired him. To have him tell me that I might have certain abilities made a great impact. Pastor Scheffel was relatively new to the congregation, but he was already well loved by congregational members.

to teach Bible classes. People I only knew as my parents' friends would come up to me and tell me they were praying for me as I studied to be a pastor.

The point of my story is that God uses many people as His instrument to call people into church vocations. It was pastors and a teacher working together

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Again, it made a big impression on me to have this man tell me that I might one day follow in his footsteps in the ministry. Vicar Kuznik was one of the most talented vicars our church ever had: he had great pastoral instincts, he was a good teacher, and he was a wonderful musician. Eventually I again met up with then Dr. Kuznik while a college student. He taught one of my music classes at Concordia College.

The influence and support of my parents was also critical. The prayers and support they provided over the years, especially the early years, kept alive the vision that God was calling me into full time service. I know they made great financial sacrifices to be able to put me through school for all of those years.

The members of my home congregation also provided support by sending me money, by praying for me, and by giving me many opportunities to "help out since you are going to be a pastor." Early on I was asked to read the lessons in church and

to influence me to consider a call into ministry. It was the support of parents, congregational members, family and friends that helped me along the way.



I encourage all called church workers to be ever vigilant for that person, or persons, in your congregation or school who demonstrates the gifts and abilities of a potential church worker. I encourage every congregation to think of itself as a "sending" congregation: a gathering of believers who are intentionally identifying, encouraging, praying over, equipping and supporting congregational sons and daughters for full-time service in God's kingdom.

*If you would like additional information about how the Concordia House of Studies may be helpful to you in this process, please contact Dr. Wayne Wilke, Director of CHS. You can call him in Orlando locally at 407-857-5556, ext 5, toll free at 877-457-5556, ext. 5, or via e-mail at [wwilke@flga-lcms.org](mailto:wwilke@flga-lcms.org).* □

## Andrew Schroeder Installed at Epiphany-Lake Worth

Andrew L. Schroeder was ordained and installed as assistant pastor of Epiphany-Lake Worth, FL, on January 14.

His primary responsibilities will be in evangelism and discipleship. Schroeder joins a ministry team that includes Rev.

Dr. Douglas Fountain, senior pastor, and Deaconess Carol Olday, RN, director of parish nursing.

from kidney failure and multiple disabilities. For the last 19 years, he worked at Home Depot, which provided time and opportunity to care for his wife, who had become increasingly frail. Mrs. Schroeder died in December of 2005, after a long and heroic struggle.

In 1999, Schroeder began the process to colloquy into the ministerium of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. He was certified for ministry and ordination in 2003, at which time he was serving the Church as a lay preacher.

Schroeder's father, Rev. Donald Schroeder, served as officiant for the ordination at Epiphany. Area pastors participated in the service. □



Participating in the ordination and installation service for Rev. Andrew Schroeder (front, center) were Revs. (front, l-r) Richard Arndt, Don Schroeder, Ken Larson, Dan McPherson, (back, l-r) Ed Gross, Doug Fountain, Jim Stillwell, Dennis Glick and Vince Putnam.

Schroeder was unable to enter the ministry immediately because his wife was suffering