

**Clinical Pastoral Education**

**In The Rural Community**

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## **Abstract**

Clinical Pastoral Education in the Rural Community describes how the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) method as usually employed in the general hospital setting and pointed to the pastoral care of the sick, can be adapted to the pastoral care and supervision of students doing ministry in the political, economic, and cultural systems of the rural community. The theological base of the method will arise from 1) St. Luke's gospel of the walk to Emmaus to show the need of developing listening skills 2) St. Mathew's recording of the temptations in the desert, to describe the pastoral care of the citizens search for meaning. Finally, the article will look to the future of this method as used in the general systems of the struggling communities of the Great Plains. The author speaks from twenty-five years of experience as a CPE supervisor in Eastern South Dakota.

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## **Past and Present**

I am one of 600 Clinical Pastoral Educators in the U. S who supervisor the ministry of clergy and laity. These students bring written accounts of their ministry to peer groups in order to get feed back on their performance. Coming to a group for a day a week they increase their listening skills, became more aware of their unique gifts, and come to a deeper understanding of group process. CPE groups are made up principally of pastors of various denominations. Increasing numbers of laywomen are entering CPE groups.

### ***Origins***

CPE was first practiced at Worcester State Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1925. In 2000 the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education celebrated the 75th anniversary of CPE. The typical CPE group is made up of five or six participants and takes place in a general hospital or a mental hospital. This paper will describe a CPE program that for nearly thirty years has taken place in rural churches mostly in Eastern South Dakota. The supervisor took the model of CPE that he and other supervisors used in health settings and adapted it to the setting of rural towns. Instead of students calling on patients and staff of general hospitals the students, themselves for the most part pastors of rural churches, brought reports of events of ministry in their local communities to the CPE group.

I write this paper for my colleagues, CPE supervisors themselves, to share with them some of my experiences doing supervision in this typical setting. In writing the paper I also have in mind the general reader who cares about what the church is doing these days in respect to the teaching of the practice of ministry. There are different ways to educate people for ministry. CPE, an action/reaction method is one tried method of doing the teaching. In this method, as we've said above, the student brings written accounts of ministry to the group for their reaction. For instance, a pastor in the group has a conversation with the mayor of his town. In that conversation he listens to the mayor talk about something going on in the town, goes back to his office and writes up the conversation. On the day of the CPE training the pastor passes copies of the conversation around the group for their reaction. The pastor gradually learns to listen on a deeper level. He learns also something about his gifts. Finally he learns something about the way a group processes material. All this, one hopes is done in a learning, caring way.

What is different about this method is not the group process but rather the clinical turf where the students do their ministry. Our students visit with the leadership of the town and with the people at large who depend on the town's leadership.

A description of the area where I've done my CPE over the years will give some background for the programs that I have done.

### ***The Area***

Passing through the countryside in eastern South Dakota one sees row crops of corn, soybeans, and various small grains. We still feed cattle here, and there are a few dairy barns left. The depressed price of farm produce coupled with the high price of fertilizer and seed is a principle cause of people leaving the land. Two thirds of the counties in the state, decline in population every year. The median age of farmers increases every year. The people are largely of German and Northern Scandinavian stock. They came here from rural areas of Europe. They have been successful farmers for the past hundred years. On arrival they built churches to the point that one of our national anthems speak of our land as being dotted by “temples hills”. With the decline of population many of these churches either closed or merged with other churches. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls, which covers the east river section of the state, has closed 100 churches in the past 100 years. The early pastors were both of European origin or first generation natives. They were educated in seminaries located in large urban centers such as St. Paul and Chicago.

### ***The Author***

The author of this paper is from the state of Rhode Island. He came here to join a staff of an organization sponsored by Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota: The center for Community Organization and Area Development or CENCOAD. There I was educated in the ways of the rural church under the tutelage of Dr. K. W. Mueller a Lutheran theologian as well as a farmer.

I'd like now to describe the method I used to do CPE in this area. While obviously the setting influenced the style of training the author is convinced that this method of doing OPE could be replicated in the urban scene. While my students called on the manager of a grain elevator, the CPE student in Minneapolis could call on the CEO of a corporation in Minneapolis with similar goals in mind. In both instances the purpose of the calls is the offering of pastoral care.

The author is now retired, but is about continuing his contacts with former students. The direction of the center has passed on to Rev. Dean Meeter who continues to describe the programs as community oriented. My students over the years have been of some dozen different denominations.

In the next chapter, rather than describing my programs over the last decades I will describe how I supervised a two year program in Revillo, South Dakota, a town of 150 inhabitants along the Minnesota, South Dakota border not far from my residence in the north eastern part of the state.

I will describe how I began the program in Revillo going over the preparation I made in my initial call on the town's leadership.

## **The Method**

A half dozen pastors and laity in my area asked me to do a program of CPE. It turned out that the town of Revillo was the one most central to the parishes whence the students came. Among the half dozen was the Evangelical Lutheran pastor.

### ***A Place***

I then called the Roman Catholic pastor who was the pastor of the Annunciation Church in Revillo but who was not a resident in Revillo. He offered the use of the parish hall as a location for the training. On a given date in a summer afternoon I drove over to Revillo.

### ***Getting Established***

As I drove into the town off the highway I noticed the red brick K- 12 school I'd been told serviced two counties including several towns.

I drove up and asked to talk to the superintendent of schools. This official is the top educator in the school district. I was intending to bring an educational program into his territory. I've always thought it a good idea to check in with this official when teaching in a prairie school district. Mr. Arlo Levisen turned out to be a "find". For years he'd been encouraging pastors to "show up" at school affairs. "We need you to set a moral tone for the student body," he reflected.

After a time of explaining about CPE and some specifics of my program I suggested to Mr. Levisen that I visit with the manager of the grain elevator that I'd seen up the road a piece. Mr. Levisen put his jacket on and said that he'd take me to the office of the manager and introduce me. He drove on ahead and I followed. Marty, the manager, took some time out to inform me some of the basics of buying and selling grain. As I walked out he turned towards me and said, "Yes, you can send one of those pastors to see me." After getting directions to the mayor's house on the edge of town I called on the mayor Schultz. The mayor was recovering from an illness. I met him seated and wrapped up in a blanket. He listened as I explained what I'd like my students to do in his town. Among other things he talked about that afternoon was, all the government funds he'd brought to Revillo for sewer and water and other needs. People need to tell their story. The mayor was no exception.

On the way out of town I stopped at the "This and That" grocery where I heard the proprietor express her wish that more of the citizenry buy from her rather than at the urban centers some forty miles from there!

### ***We begin***

A week later I gathered with my students for a day of orientation. There were goals to be attained, contracts to be signed, systems in the town to work with and the ACPE had standards we were to live by.

We would be meeting every Thursday from 8:30 to 4:30 with a break at noon at Charlie's Restaurant. At 11:00 a.m. each Thursdays we would go out into the town to call on a person at the local high school, the health clinic, the bank.... Our purpose was to offer pastoral care in the town. We'd be turning in verbatims of pastoral calls on Mrs. Peggy Schuelke director of the health clinic and on someone at the local filling station. All with the goal of improving one's performance as ministers of pastoral care. Like Jesus we would be out among the people.

Pastoral Care I describe as listening to people's stories and responding in a caring way so as to bring the good news of the gospel to the time and place of people's needs.

I'd hoped and prayed the week before that on this day of orientation that these students would be a sign of hope for the folk in Revillo.

### ***On the town***

What I didn't tell the students on this day of orientation was how they'd start their second day of CPE. On arrival on the second week of September, 1998 I explained that we'd all go down to the front of the town hall and gather in a circle and from there go out to talk to people in the town around the question "What is it like to live in Revillo?" The students were somewhat anxious about this, of course. Well we went down there and I gave some reflections on the town that we'd be getting to know for the coming year. I handed each of them a dollar bill and told them to spend it in this town that needed some monies to increase its capital base! Revillo has one paved street, no curb and gutters and an abandoned bank on Main Street. But when we met an hour and a half later we had stories to tell about our first exposure to life in Revillo.

We spent the rest of the day talking about the objectives of CPE and how these objectives would be met in the remote town in the north central region of the U. S. halfway between New York and San Francisco.

In succeeding weeks we started each day of training at 8:30 a.m. in the kitchen of Annunciation church. Churches being some distance from each other in this area the conversation over coffee and rolls became a major part of the program.

We started the formal part each day at table with devotions, each taking his or her turn. This was followed by sharing stories of the past week. Finally we did "housekeeping" taking care of the details. Many a life long friendship came out of these morning sessions.

We followed with a presentation of a verbatim or a "critical incident" are events in ministry that give the pastor insights into his identity as a pastoral person invariably this brought surprises. The verbatim was a recording of a student's conversation with someone in one of the systems in the town. Each participant was to have chosen a system in the area and to write up a verbatim conversation he'd had with someone in that system. At 11:00 a.m. on each day of CPE Karl, one of the student's, drove over to the health clinic. There he received a warm welcome and a story. He might have to wait a little until the staff was through taking care of an emergency. But the staff had stories to tell Karl.

And he tried to offer some thoughts that ultimately came out of the scripture in response. Karl had been in training with me in previous years so he was familiar with the method. I spoke to Karl recently about his experience at the clinic at Reville. He said that he learned from it that people appreciate someone from the church stopping in to call on them in the midst of their ordinary working life. I asked him for a text. He said, "The word was made flesh, he lived among us full of grace and truth."

### ***Clinical time. Home turf***

I don't expect all of my students to spend all of their clinical time in Reville. I'd like them to spend a day in their own communities giving some of that time to calling on people in their working environment. They would also do some pastoral reading, and also give some time to preparing themselves for our day in Reville. I want them to get into the habit of stopping in on business and professional people on Main Street. People who stop at the cafe have stories to tell.

This past year while spending a pastoral day in a rural town with University faculty, I spent twenty valuable minutes with the County Attorney in his office. It was a memorable visit where we discussed his philosophy as a trial lawyer. In the same morning I spent a valuable half hour with the school librarian. Ideally one could go back to the text books in ones office doing some background reading about what one talked about with the attorney and the librarian. Of course those involved would be pleased to receive some feed back, or a copy of an article you have in your file as follow up also.

### ***Systems***

In the CPE program I ask the students to do their Reville pastoral care with one system. When they go back to their parishes they can call on anyone they please during the training year. People in the systems are to be concerned about development in their respective systems. The librarian, about whom I spoke earlier, is trying to put her students in touch with peoples of the globe. If the pastor has any thought on that, the librarian would be pleased to hear about those reflections. For instance the church is a global institution. The pastor is aware from his reading and other resources of how the church participates in exposing youth to the world scene at this time in American diplomacy the *U. S.* is taking a protective stance toward terrorists in its institutions around the world. The church to the contrary is taking an open stance towards people in other lands. On September 11, 2001 the subject of terrorism took on a whole new view. What are the implications of that in a secondary school library in a remote area of Eastern South Dakota? One's preaching in the Sunday assembly could take on a wider perspective were a pastor calling on the manager of the grain elevator and discussing how the trucks going out from Reville filled with grain were headed for barges going down the Mississippi River.

### *Power at a distance*

In the office of the grain elevator there is a TV terminal announcing the price of grain. This is an example of vertical integration. The price of grain on a given day is determined at some distance from Reville.

What is going on forty miles away in our regional service center may not be that well known. We tend not to relate so well horizontally. Thus we can be made familiar with what is going on between the Palestinians and the Israeli but may not know what is going on in Watertown forty miles away. This has political consequences. We don't have much political power when we feel that we, and our work are subject to what is going on away from where we live. For a democracy to work we need access to information where decisions are being made.

The pastor who is in touch with both Reville and the national and global scene can be a part of the international network. He can also help the school principal and the local banker to talk to one another about mutual concerns. If the county extension agent has a friend who runs the cafe or the grocery in a farming town that county agent can stop in for a visit with the owner of the cafe. But the pastor may do this as part of his work. Rural society gives permission to the pastor to call on people in the business and professional world. It is part of the culture. We ought to take more advantage of this permission. If I wished I could call on the administrator of the nursing home in our county seat. All I'd have to do is to telephone the person's office and say, "I'm Father Murtagh making some calls in the area, "and that would be enough. If the nearby grocer or the state's attorney made the same request the administrator of the nursing home would be questioning about what is up I've found that people like to talk about their work. They may not be satisfied about their performance and they may be upset about their not being sufficiently rewarded for what they are receiving. No one wants to be known as a complainer. But a pastor who has had some CPE can learn to listen in such a way that he doesn't judge. What a relief it is to be able to tell what is on your mind and have it received with kindness.

Agriculture is the leading industry in South Dakota. Those involved in the raising of food perform an immense good for the nation and the world. The nation knows that but the people don't have simple ways to thank the producers of food. My students, simply by asking a man hauling grain or combining corn "How is it going?" Find that they symbolize that appreciation. People who've been involved with the program want it to continue.

"The message of the gospel does not consist first off in transmitting doctrines and directives, but rather to put before our eyes the person of Jesus, with his personal destiny, his life, his death, and his resurrection. People search for meaning. This destiny, is seen by us as symbolic of The total destiny of humanity." --Paul Tihon

When one of my students stops in at the “This and That” grocery store and listens to the manager talk about her day that manager sees the student as symbolizing the caring church. If the student can mention, the parable of the grain of wheat falling into the earth that has to die all the better. Jesus needs to be seen as a tangible reality that helps to make sense where at times life doesn’t make a lot of sense. Imagine Jesus working out the mystery of the redemption in history in a conversation in a grocery store!

### ***The Forum***

In discussing my method of doing CPE in the civic community I’d like to present two other unique aspects of the program; the Forum, and our involvement with the university. Every other week the students take their turns inviting a guest from their system to address the group for forty five minutes on the question “What is it like to be a counselor at the high school?” or “a county commissioner” or a parent of a child caught up in the criminal justice system?”

We are learning how to do pastoral care with people involved in community systems. The Forum offers an opportunity for the CPE students to deal with a significant person in the community from the perspective of pastoral care. The student who invited the guest has discussed the program previous to the afternoon of the Forum and one hopes has discussed the relationship of the spiritual life to the guest’s work. We don’t expect a “talk” from the guest. Thus no preparation is necessary. We want to hear, for instance, how the guest feels about his involvement in the community. It often seems that a guest has been waiting for years to talk about his life and his work.

At the Forum I do a little modeling for the students. And the student who has invited the guest learns to take some leadership in hosting the guest.

The guest is lead out after the session and we then debrief the exchange that has taken place. “What did the guest communicate?” “What ethical issues arose?” When the guest will be at table at his home this evening what will he say to his spouse and children about this experience?”

The Forum provides the students with an opportunity to improve their skills of doing theology, psychology, and sociology.

On the odd weeks I myself do didactic sessions on various issues of communication or general systems theory from a practical perspective. Theological topics get dealt with especially if where we are in our group process merits this. In a program that puts so much emphasis on process learning I find that lectures are usually a relief for the students!

## *The University*

The second aspect of the program that has been a part of CPE in only recent years is our involvement with the State University. S.D.S.U.

This all came about quite by happenstance. Some years ago Dr. Dennis Bielfeldt of the Philosophy and Religion department of the university took a program of CPE with me, and my colleague Dean Meeter. Dennis was seeking ordination as a Lutheran pastor. He was instructed to find a program of GRE. On a given Friday afternoon at the end of a month Dennis invited me to sit down with the university faculty to listen and comment on a paper to be delivered by one of the faculty. It turned out that I was invited myself to present a paper before the group the following spring. All this led to my students getting involved with the faculty at the university, and then a few of the faculty coming to Reville to do some process with us.

All the above opened the door to exchange between some of the Reville citizens meeting with university faculty on S.D.S.U. turf. Since the university's mission statement included the call to serve the small towns of this prairie state all of this involvement seemed made to order.

Dennis and I have kept contact. I have also made some contact with other faculty. The opening is there for more exchanges as time goes on. The major obstacle to our involvement with the university is the habitual way in which we live or professional lives: The faculty with their students and Larry Murtagh with his commitments. Crowded schedules.

If our professional lives are to be holistic however, we need the exchange of these two worlds: the parish and the academic life of the university campus.

As for the methods we used in the exchange on one occasion we scheduled meetings with individual faculty members. We found that we over scheduled the day not allowing any time for us as GRE students to be by ourselves. But the exchange was rich.

On an occasion in Reville when we invited a panel of four faculty to listen to the mayor, the superintendent of schools, the bank manager and a woman on welfare to address the question 'what is it like to live in Reville?' I found the citizens performance at the microphone to be outstanding. In the afternoon the panelists addressed the invited clergy in a very stimulating manner. We used a tight process to allow for maximum exchange.

On the evening when our farm couples met at the alumni lounge with faculty what surprised me was the couples ease at expressing their feelings and the quiet of the faculty as they listened. Obviously more such exchange is needed.

## ***Contracts***

A few reflections on contracts, mentors, and accountability might be appropriate here. I had a person in each system where a student chose to do ministry, sign a contract. The person in the system agreed to meet with my students each week himself or with another person in the system. My student signed a contract to make a call on someone in a system. The person agreed to be a mentor for my student and agreed to offer me some evaluative comments on the student several times a year. I would take responsibility for arranging the time and place of the evaluation.

We also agreed to meet in the fall and in the spring as a body. That is all of the mentors, and all of the students would agree to listen to a report on what the students agreed to accomplish during the year.

I also had the Annunciation church council people each sign a contract with me and I with them for the use of Annunciation church hail for the training seminars.

The contracts are not meant to be a burden on the persons involved. First off the student decides with whom he will make the contract and about what he wishes to make the contract. Students come into the program wanting to grow. The contract is a document that gives some focus to that intention. As for the person with whom the contract is made this signing gives the person some idea of what is expected of him.

## ***Mentors***

That civic officials should be guides for pastors in their learning is a new dimension to education for the ministry. To have a layperson make arrangements for a call on a local English teacher or school principal to find out how these people are doing is a benefit to both my students and to the school person. We have stories to tell and there are stories to be listened to. Putting this in a document can be a burden but it can also be a blessing.

## ***Accountability***

When one does something well, one wants to tell the world about it. We need not choose to take on great objectives. But we can promise to try to accomplish something. It is nice to be able to do as you please but the high school principal and the manager of the grain elevator have boards to whom they have to report. There can be immense satisfaction on the part of the student pastor in the CPE group reporting that he has met his goals for the year in regards to attendance at a hospital board meeting. There can be a sense of victory when a CPE student gets involved with a committee that is spending federal funds on housing for poor people.

Writing this out gives a dimension of authenticity to the contract and the accountability structure.

Now what is the theological base for the above? What is the faith dimension to the learning? The next chapter gives two passages from scripture that provide an answer to these questions.

The above introduction of the university to CPE and the CPE program to the university brings up the subject of the place of theology in CPE. What can we find in the scripture that addresses the issue of the practice of ministry in pastoral care as found in the gospels? And where does the university with its department of Philosophy and Religion fit into this picture?

## Theology

Now that I have described the CPE method in the program I would like to describe, a theological base for the method. There are two passages from scripture that I have offered my students over the years that give a faith perspective to the pastoral aspect of the offering of the care. CPE is education offered by the church. The agent of the care and the receiver ought to be more hopeful of the good to come out of this care because it is faith based.

### *The way to Emmaus*

The first passage is from Luke 24:13-35 commonly called the Way to Emmaus. In the account, which takes place after the resurrection of Jesus we find two of Jesus' disciples walking towards the village of Emmaus some distance from Jerusalem. They are likely leaving the Holy City out of fear. Suddenly a stranger comes upon them and asks them what they are talking about. Luke informs us that the stranger is Jesus but they do not recognize him. They inform him that he must be the only person in Jerusalem who is unaware of the events of the weekend. They then go on to explain the events of the passion and death and even of the empty tomb. They remained downcast in the telling of the events. They were walking in bright daylight but were dark within.

Jesus then confronts them about their lack of faith. He goes on to explain to them passages from the prophetic writings that spoke about him.

It is evening as they approach the village to which they were going. Jesus made as if to go on but the disciples pressed him to stop at an inn. Jesus went into the inn, set at the table, took bread and said the blessing; he broke bread and handed to them. At this breaking of the bread they recognized him. He then vanished from their sight. They then said to each other. "Were not our hearts burning within us as he explained the scriptures to us?" They began their journey in daylight but were enclosed in the darkness of lack of faith. Now it was dark outside but they were enlightened now in their new faith.

Luke informs us that they set out at that instant to return to Jerusalem where they told their companions of their meeting with Jesus. Note the sequence of the events. Jesus begins by listening to the disciples as they told the story of their weekend in Jerusalem. They do not recognize him. Jesus attributes their blindness to a lack of faith. He goes on to confront them about their lack and then goes on to review the prophetic writings beginning with Moses. These passages were references to Jesus. The third event took place in the inn where Jesus revealed himself to them in the breaking of the bread. Finally they go back to Jerusalem to proclaim what had happened to them on the way to Emmaus.

The four stages of the passage indicate four steps in pastoral encounters:

- First the pastoral agent listens to what people are talking about. People talk about events that happen in their lives but struggle to find meaning in what they are talking about.

- The second stage is for the pastoral person to share from the prophetic writings a passage from the scripture that will aid the party to grasp some meaning behind what they've spoken.
- In the third stage the pastoral agent breaks bread with the persons.
- Finally and only then, does he or she talk about the meeting with Jesus.

Of course all of this does not have to happen in one encounter but the sequence is important. First we need to listen to people, then, offer instruction. Proclamation comes last.

This is also a model for the Sunday assembly. The pastor listens to the stories of his flock during the week. He reads the scripture to them offering reflections on the scriptures as they apply to what is going on in the life of his people. Thirdly he breaks bread with them in the Eucharist. Finally he sends the congregation out into the town to proclaim the gospel by the way that they live with their fellow Christians.

Referring to the fact that in most of our rural towns there are different assemblies that we gather with of a Sunday. Dr. E. W. Mueller said, "People go to church where they profess what they've been taught. Then they go out into their towns and live out of beliefs that are held in common by the community!"

### ***The Temptations in the Desert***

The second passage that I've offered to students, as a theological base for the method is Matthew's text 4:1-11 called, The temptations in the desert at the beginning of Jesus public ministry. The Spirit of God lead Jesus out into the desert where he fasted for forty days and forty nights in remembrance of the forty years of the Hebrews march through the desert. At the end of this time the devil approached Jesus and tempted him to change stones into loaves of bread. Jesus replied to the devil, "Human beings live not on bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God".

The devil then took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple. "If you are the Son of God", the devil said, "cast yourself down, for scripture says, he has given his angels orders about you and they will carry you in their arms". Jesus replies to the devil, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." Next the devil takes Jesus to a high mountain. He shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor and says to him, "I will give you all of these if you fall at my feet and do me homage." "Away with you Satan", Jesus retorted for scripture says, the Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage. Then the devil left him. Suddenly angels appeared and looked after him.

For the agent of pastoral care it will be helpful in using this passage to see that there are three traditional domains in the moral order: the economy, political life, and social life. I will explain each of these domains and point out where the temptations apply.

## ***The Economy***

In this area of society we deal with property, material goods, money, work. In the general world of business much of what goes on in relationships in the community both within the systems of community life and in the relationship among systems comes under the title of this economy. Much of what we describe as security in life comes within the realm of the economy. So much of our conversation dealing both with self and our dealing with others comes from losses and gains in the area of the economy thus the need for the church to address this domain. People in their seeking for security in life are tempted to abuse life and relationships in this domain. Many go to an extreme in gambling, thievery, etc in this area of human relationships.

The response from the religious perspective is the virtues of poverty and generosity. Some belonging to religious orders take a vow of poverty. I recall being told by a monk, "There can be no religious life without the sharing of goods." Jesus said on one occasion to a young man seeking perfection. "Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor."

In the first of the temptations of Jesus in the desert the devil tells Jesus to change stone into bread. Contrary to that, in pastoral care we are challenged by the church to live in the real world where gimmicks like changing stones into bread are not to be sought as salvation. We are called to seeking justice by the hard life of living justly with each other.

There is herein a tremendous challenge to the church to be engaged in evangelization so that in times of trial people will have available to them the deeply held value of the word that comes from the mouth of God. Thus from proclamations, that one hears in the assembly, and also what one hears in the family and from witness in the community.

## ***The Social Domain***

This domain deals with the affective area of life in community. In this area we deal with family, with love in community, with tenderness, with relationships. It contains the area of sexuality, with solitude, with the erotic.

In Mark 9:42-50 we are warned that if our eye, our hand, or feet are a temptation for us we should be wary of going to hell over that. If necessary it would be better to cut off these members rather than give into temptation.

In John 2:16 we are told that disorderly bodily desires, desires of the eyes, pride in possessions are from the world not from the Father. The world is passing away. Whoever does the will of God remains forever.

The challenge for the church is to make God and God's plan attractive.

The social domain is found in the church, the school and university, in the arts. The church's promotion of beauty in the cathedrals and in the local church is certainly an aim of pastoral care. The personal religious response can be found in chaste living, in the

celibate life in the generosity of people who make their time, talent, and stewardship available to the community.

I find it curious that there is a repetition of the lie of Satan to Eve “you will not die” from giving into the eating of the forbidden fruit and the temptation to Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Satan said that Jesus would not die if he cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple.

In all in this domain there is a call to be grateful for the love that has surrounded us over the years.

### ***The Political Domain***

Government is described in Webster’s dictionary as the organization, machinery, or opening through which a political unit exercises authority and performs functions and is usually classified according to the distribution of power within it. Politics is the art of science of government. Within government and the art of science of government laws are made, decisions are made and carried out. Politics decides how the money is divided.

In the third temptation of Jesus the devil, the father of lies, promises to give the power and the possession of all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus. “I will give you all these, if you fall at my feet and do me homage”. Jesus replies, “The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage, him alone you must serve.”

In our rural South Dakota towns, political authority is exercised by town councils, locally, and at the county level by the county commissioners. With this much authority local and county government have great possibility to be of service to the people, thus the advisability of the church to be supportive of those in public office.

It is not customary in our area for the church at election time to support particular candidates but the church can call all people to respect people in legitimate public office. In pastoral conversation and in the worship assembly pastoral agents can instruct the people about virtues such as respecting the laws.

Exploitation is a voice that is always there, tempting those in the political domain. The personal virtue of obedience is the religious response in the political domain. People in religious orders take vows of obedience. The ultimate goal of life in the political domain is fidelity to the plan of God.

When the community is assembled on a Sunday the scriptures are proclaimed in a way that lays out before the congregation that plan of God in detail thus so that we can know and believe what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The apostle Paul informs us in Hebrews 11:1 that it is only faith that can guarantee the blessings that we hope for or prove the existence of realities that are unseen.

People in our rural towns are hoping to survive. That is the basic blessing that they struggle for. That is a reality that is as yet unseen. "Will our town remain alive or will it go the way of many towns that have been blown away by the prairie winds?" The people have a right to hear the word of God that will give them hope in this struggle for life.

I have proposed in this paper that as the pastor and then the community at large listens to the people talk about their life and struggles, Jesus is in their midst listening to their conversations. As people listen to each other their faith is operative. They hear not merely secular talk about the price of crops but also God speaking to people and issues.

Practical decisions have to be made in the political, economic, and social areas of life but only faith can provide any hope that the love the members of the community have for each other will bring the realities that are as yet unseen.

I have tried to offer some tools for social analysis of the dynamics of the life in a rural town. I've tried to provide some practical order of looking at the life of the prairie towns thus to provide a way of going about examining the interaction of the three domains. I've pointed out from my experience that even the elemental tool of listening to people's stories can provide a comprehension of what is going on in towns, providing some freedom to act sensibly in working at issues and not just go ahead aimlessly with trying to provide answers to complex issues.

But if we take Paul seriously one must do theological reflection on issues because hope eventually comes from "the existence of realities that are unseen." Arlo Levisen, the Superintendent of schools put it briefly and succinctly, "Show up." The pastoral agents need to come and raise the question "Hi - How is it going?" Healing for the past and hope for the future can come from listening in on conversations and reporting these conversations to a group of peers.

## Successes and Failures

The methods as described in this paper came out of basic structure found in the standards and objectives of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education. I adopted these standards and objectives according to the circumstances in which I found myself.

Dr. E. W. Mueller, the founder of the Center for Community Organization and Area Development challenged me to use the CPE model within the structure of Cencoad. He was always there teaching me about rural life whether I sought him out or not. I'd mention some practical issue and he'd supply me with the theory and the practice to be used in the situation. He was one of the wisest men that I ever met. I tracked after him from the first time I met him until I was beside him in the final weeks of his life on his home place in Plainfield, Iowa.

This paper is being written for my ACPE colleagues most of whom do not know my colleagues at CENCOAD so that there is no reason for mentioning names of that great team that supported me in those early years. Suffice to say that anyone starting out on a venture such as I did would be well advised to find such a team. CENCOAD has such status that I had merely to mention Mueller and I had an in.

The main reason for my success over the years was that I went into a group with a method of education. The action reaction model wherein the student comes to a group to report an incident and looks for the reaction of a professional educator and a small group of peers is a masterful approach to learning. The CPE method is based on that philosophy. This demands, that the reactors have something to offer to the presenter. People have most of the knowledge within them to solve their own problems. People need a caring group around them to believe in themselves.

The CPE method was given to me. I did not discover it. I learned it thoroughly at Rochester, MN and Richmond, VA at the Medical College of Virginia. Being with Dean Williams sitting at the head of the table for two intensive years of CPE is an extraordinary life giving experience.

There are five categories that make up a professional: A body of knowledge, a number of skills, a body of ethics, belonging to an organization, and finally an altruistic motive and mode of behavior. The ACPE provided me with all five. I came to CPE with a lot of knowledge. I'd studied with the Jesuits in Brussels among other resources. But the skills of doing supervision were the most important of all that I used.

I came to a small town to do a CPE group with confidence to do a program because I had the skills to do it and because I was part of the structure of Augustana College, the institution which sponsored the program. After a period of time when I had had a significant number of units of CPE behind me I had the support of these students and they had remained loyal to me over the years.

In a sense the CPE center has been a grand success. It trained hundreds of pastors and laity to improve their theory and skills of pastoral care. It lives off a history of nearly thirty years of involvement in systems.

In a town such as Revillo the people's needs are met by people in systems. At the beginning of the day, people go down to the post office to pick up the mail. Some stop at the restaurant for breakfast. The mayor over a period of time tries to see to it that the town gets its share of state and federal funds. What people do in the systems is the ordinary way of expressing their love for one another. One of the ways to judge the success or failure of the CPE program is whether in the course of the unit people in the program form the habit of consciously calling on people in the systems just to ask "How is it going?" Pastor Andy Oppodahl informed me some time after the program was over that while he was doing the unit he stopped regularly at the local school to talk to people in the school system. He admitted that because he had taken the program when the school's principal stopped to see Andy at the parish office he was able to hear the principal with some depth. He however no longer called on people at the local high school. He did not have a support group among the local clergy as he had had while he was in the CPE group and thus did not have the motivation to make those pastoral calls that he knew he should be making. Yet some years after that he informed me in a Christmas letter that he'd given a lot of time to public service when he moved to a larger city. The motivation for this came out of his initial CPE unit.

Much of the success and failure of the CPE programs could be spelled out of that information from Pastor Andy. Visiting the people on their working turf is not in the pastor's letter of call. But I think that once the people get accustomed to having the pastor stop in at the lumberyard, in the midst of the day the Pastor Andy's will find their support growing. I believe that the expectation could grow so that that kind of ministry could become part of the initial interview by the call committee as they prepare to call a new pastor.

The CPE program over the years has enticed the students to have a new vision of calling on people in systems. In the week of orientation the new participants go out and make those calls. That entices them to start. That is one of the great successes. The failure is that probably most of the students do not continue those calls on a regular basis when the program is over. It would be interesting to do some research around this issue.

A caring pastoral visit on the part of a student can be an occasion for the patient to tell the pastoral agent some life stories.

It is one of the aims of a Care for Community CPE program to promote a faith perspective in the program. It is relatively easy to build in a requirement that each student sign a contract with a significant person in a system with agreement to work with that person all during the unit. To integrate that proposal into the whole unit is very difficult. This would demand some heightened enthusiasm for the task that is not sufficiently emphasized in programs that I've supervised. I could imagine the students sitting down with one or two persons in a system and talking about that system in some detail with the

student taking responsibility for the theological aspects of the discussion. I wish, I would have, challenged more students to undertake that kind of an assignment. An assumption here would be that the program is organized some weeks before the starting date. The thought of that kind of commitment on my part, let alone the student's part, excites me.

Students are interested in their own personal growth. There is a long tradition of that in CPE. I am calling for a renewed interest in putting more focus on ministry to the whole community. Such a comment fosters wholesome human growth. The emphasis in this paper is on the supervision of the student involvement with in the civic systems. I've not refused to supervise the pastoral activity in other areas of ministry. There is a limited amount of activity that can be supervised in these various programs so I encourage students to limit their clinical material to events that relate to pastoral care in the civic community. I do my teaching about general systems in the context of this aspect of their ministry also.

One of the problems in introducing my method of doing CPE is the failure to expect student to be adept at social analysis. I would like to see the expectation introduced into the certification process. Another way to say this is to bring sociology more into the front of CPE.

I have made it clear to my students that one of the outcomes expected from this supervisor is that a student know something of what general systems theory is, as lived out in the towns where the programs take place. I'd like to believe that a specific style of ministry comes out of the programs, namely that students live out some of their ministry on Main Street. I'd like to see this as part of the certification process for my students.

As I look back over the years of my supervising students in this systemic approach to ministry in our rural towns I wish that I could report that where ever my students are they are meeting with fellow clergy and laity to study local concerns. I wish I could say that they are doing social analysis around these issues and that one continues in local communities what began in the CPE group. I don't know that this has taken place formally in any community. I assume that it has taken place informally in many places in so far as clergy have done some discussing of community issues in local meetings of the ministerium and that the student's training has enriched and even initiated some of that discussion.

## **The Future**

This program was lead out into the desert nearly thirty years ago. It has undergone numerous temptations. But it is alive and well in my former students and especially well in Revillo and in the supervision of my colleague of many years, Dean Meeter. My vision is that God is calling it to new scenarios and that all of us who have profited from its existence will continue to experience new births along the way.

Some immediate objectives:

1. To continue to meet with the leadership of the town Revillo as I continue To build a model there, for a Caring for Community CPE in the rural Community.
2. To recruit among my former students potential supervisors for programs of CPE.
3. To recruit students for a fall program of CPE in Revillo.
4. To keep people who have shown interest informed about the progress of The program: The Good Samaritan Society, Bethesda Christian Counseling Center, The North Central Region of the ACPE, Judicatory Leadership, and former students of our program.

Jesus announced that the Sprit of the Lord was upon Him to bring Good News to the afflicted. That mission lies upon the church in our day. I look forward to having some of my colleagues experiment with the model in a variety of venues and I would welcome hearing from them in the future.