

Interview with Pastor Kurt Wied

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Interviewed by John LeDoux and Kurt Nielsen

LeDoux: Okay. This is an interview being conducted for the Central Minnesota Historical Center. The date is July the 12th, 1979. Interviewing today are John LeDoux and Al Nielsen. Today we're talking with Pastor Kurt Wied, is it pronounced? Okay, and we're at the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wadena, Minnesota. Pastor, I wanted to start out asking – by asking a little bit about your personal background. Ah, could you give us your full name, your date of birth, and possibly a little bit about where you were born – your parents and such.

Wied: Ah, yes. I'm Pastor Kurt Wied. I'm 34 years old. I was born and raised in Minneapolis. Ah – primarily of German heritage. My father is Milton Wied. Both of my folks were raised in – in Nebraska and moved to Minnesota in the 30s. Ah, I was raised in the Wisconsin Synod Lutheran Church and later on attended St. Olaf College after high school graduation. And at that time, switched to the American Lutheran Church, and following graduation in college with a major in Business Administration, I decided to go to the Seminary, and then enrolled in – at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul. I graduated from there – was ordained into the ministry of the American Lutheran Church in June of 1971. I served my first parish, assisted three rural churches – predominantly Norwegian background – in the Bemidji, Cass Lake, Walker Area. I served that parish 5½ years before coming here to Immanuel in Wadena in the fall of 1976, where I have been serving until the present time. I might mention that – I might mention that my

wife is – who is Norwegian, is fairly responsible for my being in the ministry of the American Church. Her father is also a pastor of the American Lutheran Church as was his father, and served parishes in Minnesota all of their lives. And it was through my wife’s inspiration and her father that led me into the ministry, I would – I would have to say. Ah, Mary’s grandfather served a parish near Audubon, Minnesota for 45 years, which is extremely unusual, I guess, in this day and age where we see the length of pastors – ah, pastorates declining.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. Now you mentioned you were brought up in the Wisconsin Synod.

Wied: Yes.

LeDoux: Is that ah, oh should I say more conservative in some ways than the A.L.C?

Wied: You – you certainly can say that it’s more conservative than the A.L.C.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Wied: Ah, extremely – extremely conservative. In fact, at one time the Wisconsin Synod was in fellowship with the Missouri Synod, and the Missouri Synod also being noted as being kind of conservative. But the Wisconsin Synod broke away from the Missouri synod because they felt Missouri was getting too liberal. So that may give you an idea of its conservatism – complete denunciation of any secular lodge groups. We were not even allowed to be in Boy Scouts because it might mean saying a prayer with someone who was not a Wisconsin Synod Lutheran. And I guess I felt it was not only stifling, but not really true to the Christian faith as I understand it. I feel much more comfortable – and at ease in the American Lutheran Church which I would... far from being described as being a liberal church – certainly a moderate group of people with open minds, and allows for some theological diversity among its people.

LeDoux: When you were growing up in the Wisconsin Synod... during that time were you inclined to go into the Seminary or was it after you--

Wied: No, not at all. In fact, I was not very interested in the Church at all. I found it to be rather -- especially in the Confirmation program which was extremely rigorous. We met three times a week for two years, and it was pretty much a legalistic approach that - I will say I learned my -- I learned the stuff, but it was not -- did not leave me with a great desire to serve the Church, and ah-- No, I would say the inspiration came from my college years at St. Olaf College in Northfield, and through the influence of the gal who is now my wife.

LeDoux: Okay. I wanted to ask you just a few questions concerning the general history of the church. Was it started by a number of individuals coming together requesting a church or by synod action or how did it start?

Wied: Well, really in the -- in the late 19 -1870s, early 80s, Wadena County had a number of Lutheran immigrants to the area primarily Scandinavian people, primarily Norwegian people. And it was in the 1870s and 80s that two rural congregations were organized in Wadena County. One was affiliated with the United Lutheran Church -- the U.E.L.C., and the other was with the Haugey Synod, which was a very conservative Norwegian Synod, and at that time in Lutheranism, of course, there were many smaller synods rather than the three large ones that exist now. And so, these smaller synods were organized pretty much along cultural and ethnic lines, even down to the point where immigrants from one valley in Norway would be one Synod really, and they would immigrate over here and they would stay amongst themselves. I don't think it was so much because of theological differences, but rather more practical differences. Sometimes it was language, with the Germans maintaining their German church and the Swedes

the Swedish church and so forth. Then in 1912, those two churches united – Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Haugey Synod Church. This was however not on the present site here in Wadena. This was out in – this was again rural. They took one of the churches that existed then. And – and then in the early 20s and into the 30s, this congregation was served by Pastor Berg from Staples who also served in Staples, MN. He wasn't really a resident pastor, but rather he was more of an itinerant preacher who would come maybe once a month or twice a month. There just were not large enough number of people here to support a full-time resident pastor.

LeDoux: Now, this was during, from -- approximately what years were they without a pastor?

Wied: This was – this was about from 19 – 1912 when they had joined together until the formation congregation here in the town of Wadena itself. That was in 1936. So there was about 30 years there where it – it was really kind of a loosely knit group of Lutheran – Christians who made use of whatever resources – human resources in terms of pastors that were available at the time.

LeDoux: Is that unusual, from your experience, learning about some of the other churches in the Lutheran Synod to go without a pastor for 20 some years?

Wied: Well, it wasn't so much that they were without a pastor. I think that ah--

LeDoux: --a resident pastor.

Wied: With a resident pastor. Yes, I think that is quite common. I know in my former parish in the LaPorte, Guthrie, Bemidji area. The first, oh 20 – 30 years of those churches, too, were served by circuit riders, and each pastor would serve approximately 6 to, up to 12 churches, and he would make the rounds each month. But perhaps, getting to the church only once a month. On

the other Sundays that the pastor couldn't come, the people would lead their own worship. And I know, especially in the Lutheran Church, people of Norwegian descent had leaders that within the church, who would lead the worship when the pastor wasn't there. It's called a Kolkker – K-O-L-K-K-E-R. and the Kolkker would lead the singing and he would read the Scripture, and sometimes as well, so there's a strong involvement of the lay people in terms of the life of the parish, and I would say, rather than depending on some hierarchy structure or church body at large with the headquarters, as our headquarters is now in Minneapolis, that was not the situation. And there was no national body, really. The synods were more of a loosely knit federation of people affiliated together, but if anything was to get done on the local level, the people had to – to do the work: build the church, raise the money, make contacts with the pastor, and that was often times negotiated. And I know that in the early 20s and 30s, I remember reading some minutes where it was agreed that the pastor would be paid 30 dollars for the year and – or in another case, 60 dollars for the year, and out of that he had to pay his expenses and so forth. So it was difficult beginning, but these people were used to sacrifice. They had had to sacrifice to immigrate to this country in the first place, and it certainly serves as an inspiration for us, but it's also almost unbelievable to see the way they were sacrificed, and it's very fascinating history, really.

LeDoux: I remember that -- yeah. Was there a particular synod during this time when they were without a resident pastor that they were affiliated with in some way?

Wied: I think they continued to be affiliated with the U.E.L.C. – the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Haugey Synod was much smaller. I think that kind of faded into the past. But then there were a number of mergers leading up to the big merger of course in 1960 where the E.L.C, which is the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the U.E.L.C, and the A.L.C – the

old A.L.C which is primarily German Lutherans, and the E.L.C – the four main synods came together to form the American Lutheran Church in 1960. Two years later, they were joined by many people who were formerly of the Lutheran Free Church, so there was really five synods involved. Although when Lutheran Free came in 1962, it split the Lutheran Free Church in half – half did not want to join with the larger body through theological differences, I guess. It was a more conservative group. So that -- they split off, and to this day have maintained their own federation, you might say or Association, I believe they call it, of Free Lutheran Churches. There is one such Free Lutheran Church in Wadena. That would represent the people who did – who chose not to merge with the American Lutheran Church.

Neilson: I see. Was there any certain reason why the merger came at that time, or--

Wied: Well, they had been – they had been invited before 1960, so to join at that time. But because of the divisiveness within the Lutheran Free Church at that time, they postponed the decision two years. And when they saw that the divisiveness could not be solved, I guess you would say, those who were for the merger went ahead and split, and the others maintained their – their own identity. They had a – some kind of fear that being part of a larger church body would mean losing some of the individual congregation's economy, and ability to self-determine their future, which I think of course is unfounded – purpose certainly of a national church body with its attendant programs of world missions – seminaries, colleges – is really nothing more than to allow us to accomplish those things in the mission of the church, that we as individual congregations could not do on our own. There's no way we -- just one congregation here could support a seminary, or say missionaries around the world, or even a minister around our own country. And so we delegate those responsibilities to a larger church body, and therefore – and then also financially support their work so that they can carry it out. And I – I feel it's a good –

its good way. The church is certainly on the move; the members certainly feel responsibility to ministry here in in their community, to our own members, to their church, but certainly feel part of a larger mission of the church which extends, as I say, throughout the country and around the world.

LeDoux: As long as we're talking about the subject of mergers, what effect, if any then, did the merger have on the church's doctrines, their particular church's doctrine? Were there compromises that had to be made with the different synods to – to agree on it, and as a result, were – was there a lot of dissatisfaction amongst the churches?

Wied: Uh-huh. Well, I think that's an important question. I saw as I -- although I'm a rather young man, as I read the history, the differences I see were not theological differences between the synods, they were more a product of re-locality in which the people lived and grew up, as I say, which is more of a cultural difference or a tradition-type -- kind of tradition – the way one worshipped: which prayer book you used, which hymn book you used and I did not see, and did not see theological differences that needed to be resolved. Any theological differences affected all of Lutheranism, and all of the synods, it seems to me. In the early 1900s there was a big debate over the nature of pre-destination. Are we as Christians, pre-destined to hell or to heaven, so that it doesn't really matter what we do in this life. And some people were saying, "Yes, that's the way it is – that although we don't know how things are going to turn out, God already knows how things are going to turn out." And the people on one side were saying, "Well, then, God determines who's going to be saved and who's not." And people on the other side of the coin were saying, "No, God knows how it will turn out, but he does not cause it to turn out that way." That may sound relatively picky, but that really did divide the church. But it didn't divide one synod against another synod, it divided people within all of the synods. So the merger didn't

really have an effect on resolving theological differences, more than the Amer -- the fact that America is the “Great Melting Pot” for immigrants, and the longer we are now in history away from those early immigrant years, and the fact of our being a “melting pot” is even more has more of an effect in terms of melting down these cultural differences as well. And it’s very rare now that you’ll find a church that predominantly -- or all Norwegian. I mean I think I probably came the closest in my last parish. I had two churches where there were a lot of Swensons and Olsons and Knutsons and Andersons and Norwegian names. But even there they had – the walls were being broken down. And for instance here in – in this situation here in Wadena, I’m trying to think now. They had conducted all their worship services in Norwegian until 1936, which is very unusual. Well, I shouldn’t say it’s unusual; its sounds strange to me.

LeDoux: Seems quite strange.

Wied: Here they are in an English speaking country, but you see their person -- the people’s religion was the last vestige of stability from the past and from the old country, and it was maybe the one thing that was something solid and familiar that they could hold on to in the midst of a new – a new land. And so I can see the role that it played is very important for the people. One of the things, that when they were -- in 1936, there was a group of these people from those two churches and other Lutherans in the area who met together then to plan the establishment of the Immanuel English Lutheran Church. And that was the original name of this congregation. English was added because it was decided that they were going to switch to the use of the English language, and they did in the beginning of 1936.

LeDoux: So this present church is effect was a concerted effort to start an English ah--

Wied: Right. But it would bring together the many different Lutheran bodies – people in a centralized location and thus this present sight in Wadena was chosen. And so while the congregation may only be officially 43 years old, indeed it is much older than that if you take the people who were living in the area for many years before that and worshipping as Lutherans. But they were worshipping in their own facilities in the rural areas.

LeDoux: These two churches were in the rural areas now. What were the names of those again – two Norwegian names?

Wied: I don't know if I can – if I can answer that question. I might be able to with a little – with a little research.

LeDoux: That's okay.

Wied: It says here United Norwegian Lutheran Church. And if that was the name of it – of the one, that would be the one from U.E.L.C.

LeDoux: Uh-huh.

Wied: And they often times went, “That's the Haugey Church,” rather than having a name like Our savior's or First Lutheran Church.

LeDoux: Uh-huh. You can find that our later. That's okay.

Wied: Yeah.

LeDoux: There were two Norwegian Lutherans in the vicinity of Wadena?

Wied: In the vicinity in the late -- that'd be -- that begun in the 1870s, 1880s and it looks like they were in existence though 1912 as separate church buildings. Now, we know where one of

the sites is because there's a cemetery located there now. That's where one of the buildings used to stand. And as is typical in many rural areas, when you get too small to effectively be served by a pastor, the church is often closed. A cemetery association was formed to care for the cemetery, and -- but the church dissolved. And it's my understanding that both of these churches burned down and so the only thing that remains on the site is the cemetery. In fact, we have the old deed to it around here somewhere -- I've come across it. And there still is a cemetery association that cares for it out there -- descendants, relatives of people who have been buried there.

LeDoux: I'm a little confused now. Between 1912 when these two churches ceased to function--

Wied: Well, that -- I'm not sure that they ceased to function. We don't have any records. I saw a note somewhere that the church records have been destroyed from us. See, there's nothing here after 1912 in this one book.

LeDoux: Was it your impression that these two churches -- members of these -- gradually integrated into the Lutheran churches in Wadena then or--

Wied: I think -- I think so. I think that at least one of the churches must have continued to function and be served by pastors whose main residence was in another town. So the pastor from Staples, I know, is one example. From '24 to '36 he came over here, but it was kind of a part-time job, and it really wasn't -- he really wasn't considered the official pastor of the congregation. And it wasn't until 1940 really that we had our first resident pastor here. Even 1936 to 1940, all we had here was a basement church. There was not super structure, and the pastor served churches in Clarissa and -- and in Long Prairie, I believe. That was Pastor Joseph ___? ___. And yet he was not -- he was not really living here in Wadena. And then in 1936 -- 40, the

parish was served by a pastor Daniel __? __, who again did not live in the area. The first resident pastor then was reverend Orville __? __, who came in 1940. And in 1941 they built the parsonage which up until one month ago sat next door to the church here. And then pastor __? __, who married a local gal here in 1941 was the first resident pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in its entire history.

LeDoux: Now this – you mentioned that Immanuel Lutheran began with, I think, and “E” in Emmanuel.

Wied: Uh-huh.

LeDoux: Now this was -- I’m still a little confused as to -- this church was in Wadena, the Emanuel Lutheran, or was this a country church now.

Wied: Well, prior to 1936 these – these were country churches. Sometime in that – in that time span, according to this, they joined together in 1912. But if -- what that means -- if they just closed one church or one burned down and they moved into the other, I don’t have the records. So there was an Immanuel Lutheran Church beginning in 1912. Now I don’t have any information what happened in 1912 and 1924, but I assume that they were continued to be served during those years by different preachers who would take that on. We do know that from ’24 to ’36 there was a Pastor Berg from Staples, and it was Pastor Berg the in 136 helped them organized the Immanuel English Lutheran Church on the present site.

Nielsen: Do you now about how large the congregation was in ’36?

Wied: I can answer that question too. Thirty – there were thirty signers who drew up the petition in 1936. That might mean thirty families – that represent thirty families, or it could be husbands

and wives. But anyway, they're the ones that indicated their desire to form the church. And we do have much better records from the beginning of this – of the Immanuel English Lutheran Church. In fact, here's the original, the first worship mode that they ever used in 1936. So they... our records get considerably better.

LeDoux: Is it unusual do you think for a church to -- or several churches -- or at least several families to petition to start a separate strictly English-speaking church? It seems like some of the churches we've come across, each church, gradually in its own time, received a pastor that one time would just initiate, on his own behalf, English services from whatever language they were speaking.

Wied: I – I certainly know that happens – often happened that way. I think part of the problem that the earlier churches struggled so much was that they were Norwegian-speaking churches, and so consequently there was no chance to bring in new people, new members unless of course they moved here from Norway. And I think they gradually began to see that if the church was to expand and be faithful in its mission, to grow where they were planted if you will, that it would be necessary for this to happen. As far as building here in the city, Wadena, on this present site, that may have been, come about more by practical considerations with central location and ease of – of getting to church, more so than a kind of formal break with the Norwegian history – the Norwegian tradition. There's no record of that some people split off because they objected to this. And I'm sure indeed that Norwegian customs and dinners ad smorgasbords and things continued even though they may have officially changed the language. I think we need to remember also that the plentifulness of Norwegian-speaking pastors was changing too over the years. A number of the original immigrant pastors were dead. And while some of their sons might have carried on in the ministry, the seminaries here that had started in the turn of the

century were conducted in English, not Norwegian. So it was a number of factors, I think, that contributed to that.

LeDoux: From what you've read, you don't seem to recall of any, oh resistance to changing over totally to English in the services among people in the comm—Wadena community.

Wied: Yeah. Well, judging from the names of the people who were the original signers here, there was plenty of Norwegians that were still predominantly involved in the church, and I'm sure there must have been some resistance. I don't know, sometimes we—we don't record the negative parts that take place. We tend to remember those things that are good.

LeDoux: Sure.

Wied: But the people's culture and their traditions, I know, are very important to them. The Norwegians and the other Scandinavians, and the Germans as well tend to be a very close-knit group and very proud of their heritage. And so, yes, I'm sure some—some problems and usually just amongst the older people. I guess—I guess that's fairly consistent down through the years.

LeDoux: You have nothing—did you have anything more to add on that, pastor?

Wied: Ah, no I guess not.

LeDoux: Okay. I wanted to ask you, from what you've read, between the founding of the settlements and early Wadena County in this area, in the time when the English church was started in '36 -- how would you characterize the ethnic groups in the area? What—were there a great deal of Germans in additions to Norwegians in this area? What different ethnic group came in and what--

Wied: Of course, Wadena and to the north and the west of Wadena is large groups of Finnish settlers. Perhaps one of the strongest, if not the strongest settlement in the whole state of Minnesota. And along with the Finlanders came the Apostolic Lutheran Church, which was the Lutheran church of Finland, and those continued strong to this day. West of here, we have New York Mills, a strong Finnish settlement, and north—we have Sebeka and Menahga. And that—that group perhaps more than any other has maintained their--- their ethnic and cultural traditions. The Norwegians have also been strong, perhaps along with Swedes, the two strongest groups that are a part of the American Lutheran Church. I think that to understand them, and I don't speak as a Norwegian myself, but I'm married to one, and --and know her relatives and her grandparents, it was marked by a rather strong piety. And by piety, it's in the good sense of the word, strong personal faith, a sense of meekness and humility in which one was never—one was taught never to talk about one's self, to kind of down play one's importance. This piety regarding the Norwegians heritage certainly lead to --to people with a very strong, resilient faith. A faith that enabled the people to deal with adversity, and there was much adversity in the early years. These people were primarily farmers—people who were close to the land, and this was not the best farming area. So that certainly lead to some problems; there was no irrigation in those days. The people had...knew what suffering was all about, and yet maintained a rather, a very strong, vibrant faith in the face of this suffering. It lead to a very hearty group of people who did things for themselves, and did not depend upon another person. Along with this went a lot—a lot of beliefs that we might consider strange today. The idea of life insurance was—was a very strange one for many of these immigrants. The idea that you would—you would pay money to be paid when—when a natural part of life took—took place almost seemed to them, in fact did seem to many of these immigrants as tempting God's hand, that we were playing with God, and

that it—that it was sinful to have life insurance. Mary’s grandfather felt that way, and when he died, oh I think he might have had a thousand dollars in the bank and that was it. And that was -- God would provide, and the idea of financial security or planning for retirement, which there really was no retirement in those days until you died or you were unable to care for yourself any longer, was almost sacrilegious to them. And that may seem hard for us to believe now with all our retirement plans and our life insurance plans and mutual funds and tax shelter annuities, and so forth. And indeed, it was very much a reality with these early people. Along with that came, I think, some negative results in terms of – of the life of the people that tended at times to be such a great feeling of self-reliance that this pioneer spirit, “We’ve done this all ourselves”—oh, the self-made people. I think there’s a temptation at times, which indeed carries over to the present days, that the people begin to question really their need for God or for any spiritual sustenance—that hey, “After all I’ve made it myself and I don’t have anyone to thank but my own self.” I think that is a dangerous trap we can fall into. And yet, people seemed to have weathered this temptation, I think, and in the long run this kind of pietism of their faith has been something that has strengthened –strengthened their lives and provided resources for then to deal with adversity.

LeDoux: Ah, you’ve had experience now pastor with both rural churches and the present church in this town. Can you describe any contrast between a church in a larger town or city and the rural churches or does the similarity outweigh the differences?

Wied: Yes, I think there really are some certain characteristics to what would be described as a small, rural church. Not as much between the small, rural churches I served and this church. This church really, Immanuel, is a good mix of rural people. I would say approximately 20 percent of our people are—20 to 25 percent – are rural people from the farm. That doesn’t mean they would be earning their entire income through farming; they may work out off the farm, too. But there is

a good rural—good rural influence in this congregation, as well as the small town people who are professionals. So, we have farmers, we have...then on the other hand of the profession scale, we have four doctors who are members of this church; we have three attorneys. We have at least 20 some teachers too, and this certainly has brought a good mix and -- to the people. It probably would be best for me to compare my first experience with three rural churches with my upbringing in the city of Minneapolis in a very much urban church. And yes, there is indeed some differences. The common—common comments you will hear regarding small church- big church-- If you've from a big church the people will say, "You know, I really like this in the big church. It's got all kinds of programs for my family. And if I'm interested in a choir, there's four choirs at Immanuel Lutheran. There's a children's choir and a youth choir and so, and we can do that." Or if there's a Lady's Aide as they used to call it in the big church they'll say, "Boy, there's about eight different circles and they meet different times. I can go to the evening circle." And the program really is what you hear emphasis on in the larger church—better music, better singing, more youth groups, as a larger staff, maybe a specialist in education, maybe a visitation pastor, and I guess that's what I grew up with. That church had everything – a sound program, good financial backing, not really too many struggles. When I went to my first parish then, which consisted of two very rural, out in the country Norwegian churches. One had an average of about 50, and an average attendance on Sunday morning of about 20 to 25. The second church with about 80 people in it, with an average attendance of about 30 on Sunday morning, and then a very small town church with maybe 100 people there on Sunday morning. It was a new experience for my wife and I, who had both been raised in a large, metropolitan area. My wife in Chicago, Los Angeles and Minneapolis, and myself in Minneapolis. To make this very difficult transition to living in a small town, in fact we lived in the country on a lake, and it was a whole

new world, just a whole new world. People were friendly; they really made us feel welcome. They'd go out of their way it seemed to befriend us. I don't know how many gifts from the garden or produce of farm chickens, or side of pork or things that we were given. We were just overwhelmed, and I guess there were many positive things about the rural life. People were genuinely concerned about you. If you weren't in church on Sunday morning, everybody knew it. I mean there aren't that many there, and they were concerned. They would -- if they knew you weren't out of town, they'd call up and want to know who was sick, you know, why aren't you in church? They're -- and that's what I heard from the people. When they talked about the church, they were in some sense so thankful for the small church because you didn't feel lost. And whenever they said, "Whenever we go visit Aunt Minnie in the cities or something, we go to her church and boy I would just never be comfortable there. You just feel like you're -- I mean, it wouldn't matter if you were there or not." Some of what they said, I think, has a good basis. You find in rural churches that the average attendance by numbers on a Sunday morning can run up to 80 percent of the members will be there on Sunday morning. Well, indeed it is basically true in a larger church, the percentage will run down to 40 or 50 percent. Now, there are many reasons for that. Sometimes the larger church is located easily in the city. People are more transient in the city, with more people gone on the weekends, or go to the lake. It is indeed true in this congregation that I serve now. Wadena is in a unique situation in that we are about 25 to 30 miles from any lake area. And a good number of our members have lake cabins. So from May through September, I am missing a substantial number of my members who are gone on the weekend. Now, that doesn't mean that they are not worshipping; they are worshipping in the small rural churches or on the lakes whose membership swells in the summer. That was the case of one of my former churches that was near a lake area. My attendance would double in the

summertime –June, July, and August, and I was at that time reaping the benefits of people who were away for the weekend, and so I have gone from one situation into the opposite kind really, where the busy time, the active time in the life of this congregation is September through May. It's during the school year. People are home; the kids are in school and our attendance doubles here.

Nielsen: Did that bother the members of the rural church to have the new ones come in?

Wied: It did indeed bothersome, and you would—you might think that's hard to understand at first because you would think that since the small, rural churches often times meant that they were struggling financially. As I say, I served three churches simply because one of them alone or even two of them together could not afford to hire a pastor, and I was not paid a great deal. I was comfortable, my needs were cared for, but I was not paid a great deal. And so yes, you would think at first that boy they would certainly welcome these additional people and their support, along with their financial support. And I think there was a good feeling about that. On the other hand, and I guess we talked about the positive part of small rural churches, I think there is some—maybe some negative sides, too. I think number one—there tends to be a little problem with everybody knowing everybody's business. And if they don't know everybody's business, they become very frustrated and make a point that they find out everybody's business. That was difficult for my wife and I at first. We felt that we had no privacy almost, and that it was -- we had to make a special effort after a while to—to set apart a life of our own. We felt that we owed that to each other, and I think pastors especially who usually have a lot of demands placed on their schedules and time away from the family, we needed to do that. And I admit that it took me three years or so in the ministry before I was reminded that really my family came first, and my profession, my job, certainly came after that in terms of importance. When I made that decision

or that discovery and that commitment then, it was good for the family to discover that. Ah, they're talking about negative aspects of small, rural churches—there also tends to be a feeling be a few people in any small church that they're kind of the people in control—the people in charge. There's a sense of power there, and whenever that sense of power is threatened or their feeling of importance is threatened, there can develop some very negative situations. And indeed it was true in this one church where the summer people came in. It was resented because in a sense it meant that the few people who enjoyed the power were feeling that maybe they weren't quite so important anymore. And indeed, they are still just as important in the eyes of the pastor. But I think part of it was maybe a little ego problem that they realized that they weren't really the boss or that they couldn't control the pastor anymore. Indeed it used to be that the pastor was pretty much at the mercy of the beneficence and generosity of the members. And since he was not being paid much, and indeed they weren't, they really depended on the neighbors to provide them with a lot of their needs. It's true now that that pastors are being paid better, and I don't mean pastors just from the big urban churches. I'm talking about pastors from the rural areas. And especially in the American Lutheran Church, have we made an effort through our districts to set minimum salary guidelines, for example. This has been in effect for ten or twelve years now. But a pastor starting out in a parish should be given at least a minimum salary and then a minimum car allowance for operating his car, and then either a parsonage, a place to live owned by the church with all expenses paid, or a housing allowance so the pastor could go out and buy his own house. That is a big change from former years, and while I think most lay people agree that it is good that the pastor not live at the mercy of handouts from the congregation. There are some people again who fear of losing some of their power over another person have resented this change and have resented the fact that now the pastor is a person who has the right to own

property, to own a home, to pay taxes, and more churches are going to housing allowances. This church that I'm in now at Immanuel at a parish house that was used a parsonage until I would say about 1972. At that time because we were lacking space here, the church and the pastor's feeling that he would like to own his own home, they switched over to a housing allowance. And when I came that maintained, so my wife and I own our own home. We pay our—we pay our fair share of taxes, but I think that's positive because it allows me to feel a part of the community, and as a taxpayer to be able to practice some citizenship responsibilities, to be involved in my school as a taxpayer to be rather than having free housing and feelings that since I'm not really paying taxes here in this community I—maybe I should keep my mouth shut. But I wanted to say one more thing on this. Back in the rural areas, as you know over the last ten, fifteen, twenty years, there's a growing feeling that the rural areas are losing their power, that the federal and state government and even the local government in terms of school taxes are removing more and more self-determination from the people, and that you can't really fight the federal government and this creeping regionalism, which is a four-letter word as far as a lot of the people in the rural areas call regionalism. They feel that more and more rights are being taken away from them and that they feel almost helpless in the fact of this – that the only place, just about the only place they have any authority left, any sense of power, is in the local government and in local institutions. They're facing that problem right now in terms of local small rural schools, where in the state of Minnesota, about 10 years ago, the school aid format was changed to make schools less dependent upon the local area to raise their operating revenue. It used to be, oh up to 80 percent was raised locally and it was -- the school districts were not so dependent upon the state. But now that's been clearly changed; the majority comes from the state, and along with that comes some control from the state. It used to be in the hands of the local people, so

here is another instance of where people seem to be losing, or they feel they're losing in self-determination. Now, one of the few places that – that they still have some power of self-determination is the Church – is the local church. And for many of these people, they fight anything that would appear to be outside influence or outside pressure. So, you'll find a stronger negative feeling toward a national church body, the small rural church, because here this is just another example in their minds of somebody far away telling them how to run their lives. And that was indeed a real challenge for me as a pastor, was to raise their sights to see that we do have responsibilities as a people to support our national – the work of the national and international church, as well as painting the outhouse or deciding what you're going to serve for your annual chicken supper, you know something like that. And ah--

LeDoux: Going along with that line regarding changes in the church that made the institute, either by the synod or by some other body or by the pastor himself, anything from the use of new hymnals to the way in which the service was presented. I wonder if you could contrast the urban and rural – your urban and rural church experience to there.

Wied: At first, I guess I came into the ministry rather prejudice in that regard thinking that, oh boy, rural church meant that they're going to be using the worship book that they used 20 years ago in town. The average age, it was true of the people in my rural churches was much older than the town church. For example, I would say the average age in my rural church was maybe 45-47 years old. Here in Wadena, the average age of my congregation is 27.

LeDoux: Twenty-seven?

Wied: Twenty-seven. Now, what that means, well it means a lot of things, but it means number one – you have a far much smaller proportion of young children and youth in the rural church,

and especially in the age group of post high school though parenting age of thirty. A lot of these young people graduate from high school and it's still true today that they will – they will leave the area, either for school or to get a job, to get away, to broaden their horizons a little bit. Many of these people, after an experience of a few years end up coming home, you might say, to raise a family, and realizing that it is a fine place to raise a family, and I agree with that statement. I, having lived both in urban area and rural area, if I were to choose where to raise my family, I think I'm where I want to be right now – a large enough town to have a good school, and Wadena has excellent schools, but small enough that we are perhaps protected from some of the problems. I'm not saying that these problems don't exist in Wadena, such as drug use and crime and so forth. But at least I do not fear for the safety of my children and I feel that they're getting a fine education and those are kind of the priorities in many people's lives. Small town bias towards the small church is also found in the school too, and they make a big deal about small classes where the teacher can get to know the student well. And they emphasize that, where -- and the athletics where anybody can participate – you don't have to be a superstar. But then they tend to forget about things like variety of classes that are offered, and the fact that there is not foreign language in La Porte School where I was. And the science courses are rather limited and the facilities are not what they should be, and we tend to pick and choose those things that we -- support our own case, and ignore those negative parts, I think.

LeDoux: Do you feel pastor that the role of the church has changed over the years? Has it expanded to include more social activities, more community activities, rather than just preaching the service on Sunday, especially in a larger town like Wadena?

Wied: Well, I'm not so sure it's changed much in the rural area. I don't think that it really was the social center in early years of the community. In fact, often times was the only chance people

got to get together, and it was indeed for worship and Bible study, but it was also ice cream socials and – and harvest festivals and smorgasbords and it really was the center for the community. The school often times was far away, and the kids had to travel away to another small town to go to school. So there never really was much identification with the school, but it was their church and it was very much the central part of the community. In the town churches, I see it, perhaps you're correct in saying that it is becoming more of a socializing center and fellowship center than before, and I think there's some different reasons for that. I think number one – many Christians have seen the need to provide entertainment and fellowship opportunities that were not just a part of the secular world. Some have come out to the displeasure over maybe the movies that are being seen by some of the kids or weekend activities that were not always on the up and up such as keg parties, and the negative influence of – of increased freedom for young people where freedom can be a good thing of course, but it's true that human beings abuse freedom. So maybe for that reason, we have seen an increased emphasis on providing youth groups. There's always been a Lutheran League in church, but in the past the Lutheran League years ago was simply a Bible study, and then maybe they would have Kool Aid afterwards. That really – I'm not saying we don't do Bible study anymore, we do. But the idea of having the parents involved has not always been a real popular item with the kids; they'd just as soon have a little autonomy and little freedom. And so we try to structure youth activities now where they have their own leaders. They have their own officers. They do their own planning. We have advisers that work with them, participate, but more as what I would call them an enabler than as the boss or the leader. I guess that I'm convinced more than ever that the church has a mighty important role to the – in the lives of people today. I think that there's a lot of different philosophies and beliefs that are competing for priorities in our kids' lives and all of our lives,

adults as well. I think the church needs to strongly emphasize the spiritual aspect of our – of our lives. The fact that we as Christians are to be about seeking first God’s kingdom, and letting the other thing take their proper perspective in life. That’s an increasingly difficult challenge, I think, in today’s world where people are tempted to kind of rest back with the idea that we’ve got things pretty well and that our technology, our standard of living is good, and that we’ve got two cars in the garage even if they’re not paid for, we’ve got a house, our kids are well dressed and we’re well fed – too well fed. And you know, just where does God fit in to this whole scene? That’s always a challenge. There’s a hunger on the part of the people whether they admit it or not, they’re looking for this kind of meaning for the abundant life, and they’re discovering either though positive or negative or even sometimes tragic circumstances that--

Nielson: I was wondering if -- do you have any examples now of -- are kids nowadays, are they becoming – going more away from materialism? Do they seem to be turning more to God and towards other ideas of living?

Wied: It’s hard to generalize because I believe we can – we can no more say kids these days are doing this or that as we could say adults these days -- I think there are pressures in society however that lead us very much to believe that meaning in life comes from financial security, popularity and a good job, a nice place to live. And we see it all around us, certainly the advertising media, television – a new influence in the age of our young people today – the last twenty years. It tells us that – very much that, you know, whoever smells the best or looks the best or drives the nicest cars or drinks the best beer is going to be, you know, that success and that’s where meaning comes from as a person. I think our kids are more savvy today, more mature, more intelligent, able to cope with the world better than in any time in history. I’m not so sure that they’re dealing with their choices any better than in the past. I mean the nature of

people will not change and I think Christians acknowledge that men and women and boys and girls are basically sinful people that they are going to make mistakes and are not always going to be making the right decisions. But I think the information available to our young people today is greater than ever before, and this was pointed out to me very realistically this last year. I have a first grader, a daughter Elizabeth who was in first grade and at the end of first grade she's reading now – she's reading anything. She'll read and... she'll pick up a news magazine, she'll read the paper – at the end of first grade. And I don't think she's particularly a genius because there are other first graders that are reading. And I reflect back to when I was in first grade which was maybe twenty-eight years ago, I was not reading at the end of first grade, and we still hadn't figured out who Dick and Jane and Sally were and Spot the dog. (laughter) But – so in terms of maturity and readiness, I think our young people are ready for more at an earlier age, but that creates problems too because they're not mature in their judgements as they are mature in their knowledge, in their information that they have. But see the real challenge in the Church these days is helping young people know how to make decisions, and decision making, I think, is a very important skill that is taught. It is not something that comes natural. I think that we need to help our young people as well as our adults – I could say this all about adults too – to learn about priorities and values, and the Church indeed is very involved in looking at values. The American Lutheran Church produced a four-part series on values, perhaps you've seen it, it's called "We're Number One?" – question mark. Terry Bradshaw and a few others participated and it was excellently well done. And that's what they looked at, "We're number One?" – question mark. What does that mean – being number one? And yet that seems to be the goal that's pushed at us throughout by society. You might even call it a secular religion, cultural religion. And indeed our country has been founded on the principle of being number one. And I'm sure that ninety-nine

percent of Americans firmly believe that the United States is the best country in the world – number one. But along with that kind of thinking comes some other problems when you start applying that to your personal life, you can't be number one or number two or three, but maybe feels like they're at the bottom of the list. And I think that reflects a real problem in our country that judges a person's work by what they produce, rather than judging a person simply by the fact that that they're a fellow human being created by God and through Jesus Christ is given worth and value and importance regardless of what they do or don't do. And I think we've made a law in church saying that God love me not because of what I've done, but in spite of it – what I've done. And that's kind of hard for some people to deal with because that's not what society tells us. Society tells us that you're only as important as the number of blocks you can lay an hour. I look out here at these guys laying blocks on our new church addition, and they're paid so much a block. The more blocks they lay, the more they get. And the factory worker – the same way. The fewer mistakes they make on assembling their products, the more pay they get. The more hours you work, the more money you make. The more inventive you are, the more money you make. The more degrees you have, the more money you make, I suppose. The more calls the pastor makes, supposedly the more – the better job he's doing and so forth. I think this prevails in all of our lives more matter what your job is – the idea that the more you do, if you're number one, that's the most important thing. And of course the Christian faith, I think, shoots that down – shoots a hole in it because in terms of society's standards if we look even at Jesus Christ himself, he certainly was a miserable failure. Most people rejected him. He was run out of town, he didn't own any home, he didn't have any money, he had no political power whatsoever. When people tried to give him political power he said, "No, my kingdom is not of this world." And eventually he was crucified like a common criminal on a cross. Now that pretty much makes him

a failure in terms of today's society's standards. And yet that's the kind of life that we as Christians are called to lead. And yet it's so alien from what society tells us how we should be – have the best deodorant, and the most blemish-free complexion, and the classiest clothes an all that stuff.

LeDoux: Pastor, I wanted to ask you, we talked about the youth groups. What other services or programs does the church provide and what are your duties like on a day-to-day basis?

Wied: Well that's – that's a pretty involved question. This is certainly one of the most involved congregations that I've ever been in in my life. Part of that's because of the size. There's almost 900 members, and that means that we're able to do a lot of things, provide a lot of services and programs for our people. I think that's good. At the uppermost of any program that we have in church, we always ask ourselves questions, you know, are we really serving the needs of – some real needs of our people, and is this related to the spiritual calling that we as a church have? And that is being and living and bringing the Gospel to the people – the Good News. So it covers a lot of areas. Worship, of course, is probably -- I would say worship and education are the two top priorities that we have as a congregation. The worship receives a lot of emphasis around here – sermon preparation. People have a right to expect to receive something from worship for their lives that's relevant and meaningful, as well as to bring something to worship. Education is certainly one of the most vital goals in the congregation. Bible study includes Sunday school, vacation church school, Confirmation program, Bible studies for senior citizens, a women's group, senior high classes we're running. We've done one on creative male and female – sex education. Program. We've don't one on death and dying. We've brought in doctors to talk about Christian faith and the medical profession. We've talked about drug abuse and drug use – any item, any areas of study that effects the lives of people. We've brought in attorneys to talk about

legal ethics and doing business. We've brought in teachers to talk about it, and farmers. We try to help people see how the Christian faith relates to whatever you do – make it a very practical approach. Pastoral care of the members is certainly high on my list and when I -- a Lutheran pastor receives a call that itemizes about fourteen to sixteen duties that he's to be responsible for. Preaching and teaching are one and two. Number three is the pastoral care of members – administering the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion, performing weddings, funerals, visiting the sick and the shut ins, the hospitalized. That job of course is endless, and I don't say that in a negative sense but it's true that it's always there to be done. Maybe one of the biggest frustrations of being a pastor is the inability generally at the end of a day to sit down and say, "Now what did I accomplish today?" And you're not really sure what you accomplished. You may say that I made so many calls, or I saw this people or that people, or I preached this sermon, or I taught this class. But – but what is -- but what happened to those people as a result of that? And I remember one pastor was talking to a doctor once, and the doctor was a little frustrated in his job and he said, "You know, I envy you." Talking to the pastor he said, "Here I'm just nothing but ... nothing more than a high-grade plumber dealing with people's bodies, you know, and if something's wrong I fix it." But he said "You – you pastor, you're dealing with the spiritual matters in life, the things that are really important." And the pastor said, "Well, now I don't really agree with you. I may preach a sermon or teach a class, but I never really see the results." I said, "You in your work doctor, you can see the results. Either the patient gets well or he doesn't." And he said that. And I remember I drove a beer truck during my seminary days in the summer – each summer to earn money. And it wouldn't have to be beer, it could be anything. I would receive my load and I had twenty-two stops to make, and at the end of the day I – if I had made my twenty –two stops and collected the right amount of money and didn't break any

bottles that was an excellent day. It couldn't have been better. And I knew I had done it. I knew I'd be done, and I had punched a time clock and gotten paid for – for that I'd done. I guess that feeling of production, see, is creeping in there. A feeling that we're being judged by what we have accomplished, and often times that's difficult to – difficult to measure, but it's one of those uncertain things, I think, in the ministry. It's hard to measure. I don't know – I don't know how you judge an effective pastor. A lot of nebulous, ambivalent type feelings that are made. Is he well-liked? How do you -- some people may like him, some people may hate him, you know.

LeDoux: The role of the church seems to really have expanded from the larger towns into the community. Do you ever have people who are accustomed to either a rural church or a more, I don't know what to say, traditionally – oriented church that comes up to you and say to you, “Pastor, you know now we think the church is going a little too far out and we miss the days of the traditional service on Sunday.

Wied: The good old days. Yeah, uh-huh.

LeDoux: Does that happen?

Wied: Ah, I would see that more in the smaller church that maybe hasn't expanded its program quite as far. I'm sure that there are people who feel that way, yes. But since these activities in the church today have presented us an option to the people—there are many different options. Music is one, singing in the choir, teaching, being involved in serving—we serve Rotary here every Wednesday noon downstairs. The women take turns; it's a secular organization, and they've done it for years and years and years and years. And yet the women aren't forced to do that—they choose to do that. And there are some women who are opposed to serving a secular organization for money in the church. Well, that's fine. They're not expected to participate in it,

and so we kind of live somewhat in the context of free choice here and participation and those activities that you find meaningful, and if you're not real happy about it we suggest maybe an alternative from activity. But a larger church makes it a little more difficult for 1 or 2 individuals to hold sway over what goes on here. And I think people are doing better job of realizing that they are one individual among many, and we do live here as a body of Christ with many different people with different gifts, and it's a democratic organization. After all, it's one person—one vote, and you know we can't really afford in the Church to be like the little boy who if he didn't win the marble game, he picked up his marbles and went home. I hope we're above that, and yet we need to remember that the Church, the visible church, is a human institution full of sinful people that are going to make mistakes just as any other organization. So, I would hope that we would be living with -- in the context of—of forgiveness and reconciliation. Within our own churches, we expect the people to live in their own families and their own lives.

LeDoux: What changes have you seen since you've been serving different churches in the government of the Church? Has it switched from the deacons to the church councils or what has it done?

Wied: That's a good point. When I was in my rural churches, of course it was deacons and trustees, and the deacons -- this is an old, old customs of course that dated back to the early immigrant church where the deacon was primarily responsible for the spiritual matters of the members. Did they come to Communion once a month, and did they -- were they living their lives according to how they should, and so on. Or the trustees would primarily -- financial and property management. That seems to work well with the small church where you can pretty much deal with any problem that comes up in a council meeting. When I came to Immanuel in '76, they were still attempting to operate under that same organization, and yet they're to do it

with 8,900 people. We also had a parish education board which helped. But it really was not very satisfactory, and in a larger church that type of organization is usually marked by council meetings that run four to five hours when they meet because there's so much business to cover and so many decisions to be made. So I felt one of our first tasks was to reorganize and church structure. Then after about a year of study we did that, and organized ourselves into seven committees with a committee chairman, and the committees are such as: property management, parish education , youth, worship in music, Evangelism and membership, and life and mission—the life and mission committee is kind of compared to what the deacons used to do. And in addition to those seven committee chairpersons, we have five officers: a president and vice-president, a secretary, treasurer, and financial secretary. And then those twelve people actually make up the council. But they meet the second Wednesday of the month as a council. On the first Wednesday, we have committee meetings, and each committee meets separately to deal with their business that concerns them. The members for those committees are recruited from the congregation. Anyone can serve that wants to, and is encouraged to serve. They accomplish their work, and then the following week the council meeting is used simply as a basis for the chairman people to report what has happened. And now we're down to council meeting that last an hour. And in terms of doing the business of the church it works much better, but more importantly it does something else in that it expands your base of decision making and participation of the people from originally maybe ten people to...we have about fifty to sixty people now who are involved in decision-making. And it's true that the more people you can involve in the decision-making, the more people you're going to have supporting that because they had a part in making the decision. And so it's been a very good development here. The presidents used to be very frustrated because they had to carry pretty much the full load around here. Our president now

doesn't really have any problems. He -- if a problem comes up in the church with the janitor, he calls the property management chairman and says get on this and take care of it, and it's done. I think people are surprised how remarkably well it has gone, but the most important thing is that it has helped us to be effective in our ministry and that's -- and that more efficient -- it's been more worth, but it's more effective—does a better job.

LeDoux: We mentioned some rural churches closed—we touched on that briefly. How does the Senate of the A.L.C. feel about the closing of the churches? Are they more prone do you think to keep them open or to close them and have them absorbed by urban churches?

Wied: Uh-huh. Well, I think their common belief or stereotype of the large church body, be it A.L.C. or whatever, is that somehow they have the power to keep a church open or to close it down. And in different denominations, that may be true. I can only speak for the A.L.C. Each congregation is autonomous. They have their own boss. They have pledged to cooperate with the American Lutheran Church and to support its program, but gives up none of its autonomy to the A.L.C. unless it would start deviating from accepted theological practices and having witchcraft sessions and doing strange things like that, then they could be removed from the roster. But the A.L.C. has no authority to come into a congregation and say, “You're not big enough anymore. We're not going to give you a pastor.” Because you see in the A.L.C., the church is able to call its own pastor—the only stipulation being that it be a pastor on the clergy roster of the American Lutheran Church. So I was called here to Wadena to be the pastor. I was given a letter of call and it simply said, “we, the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Wadena, hereby call you to become pastor of Immanuel and to fulfill the following duties.’ It is a formal letter---a formal call. “And in exchange we will give you this much money and provide you with a house and (indiscernible). And I 'm free to accept that call or to decline it. There's no pressure applied, and

the A.L.C has no control over that at all. I chose to accept it, and my only responsibility was to let the A.L.C. know that that's what I'm doing. I think where the idea comes that maybe the church has the power to close down the church is that the church finally finds that it can no longer afford to pay enough money to get a pastor and so they send out a letter of a call to the pastor and the pastor looks at it and says, "Wow, I can't even feed my family on that, you know." So the call comes back and maybe that happens five or six or seven times and they can't get a pastor. So the people might go to American Lutheran Church and say, "Hey, we can't get a pastor." And the A.L.C might send in a representative to help work with them to look at the problem and they might say, "Well, you're not offering enough money. You can't expect him to live on that, you know, or you've got to have a place for him to live or something. You've got to probably offer more money." "Well, why can't you help us out? Why don't you give us some money? I mean that's what you're supposed to do, right?" And there has been a real problem. There are some situation in marginal areas where maybe they see potential for future growth at a later date, but they will give a little aid, you might say, but they can't do that throughout the Church. There isn't that kind of money. So often times that's interpreted the -- when the A.L.C. declines to pump some money into a place as meaning they're trying to shut us down. But indeed, as long as a congregation can pay its bills, and keeps it's church doors open and has a pastor, there's nobody that can close it down. It's different in the Missouri Synod. I know that's true because the District President has more authority to -- in other words, a church can't call a pastor unless the District President says okay. And I suppose if the District President in Missouri decided that he wanted a church for us, he would simply refuse to sign the letter of call. That did happen in the rural area up there. The Missouri Synod came and said, ' I'm sorry, you're not big enough. We're not going to certify a pastor for this area.' Boy, people are still bitter about that.

And I think there's where you do get some pretty hard feelings about that. I do think the A.L.C. does have a good approach there. As long as you're faithful to your Constitution and can pay your bills, and pay a pastor, you're still controlling.

Nielsen: You talked about a minimum wage for pastors that they establish--

Wied: Guidelines.

Nielsen: Yeah. That's what the A.L.C-- They just suggest to the Church--

Wied: This is based on a district. We -- see we have 18 districts around the United States. We here are in the northern Minnesota district which is a line from south of Duluth all the way across the state to Breckenridge maybe, or in the southern part of the northern Minnesota district. Each district then has the authority in the district convention every year to adopt whatever rules or regulations or guidelines they would like, and just about every district I think has minimum salary guidelines for pastors. And it's based partly on the size of the church and partly on years of experience. But at least it's a minimum.

Nielsen: Yeah.

Wied: Supposedly enough to keep you from starving. And the districts have voted in convention to adopt these guidelines. Some people really have chosen to do this. It's not—it's nothing that has come from the top down, you might say. It's certainly come from the bottom up. Yes, some churches are a little tight you know. They don't want to follow us.

Nielsen: Yeah.

Wied: But I think that's a problem that can exist in any church --big or little. And the bigger churches sometimes get in debt up to their necks, and they find the money isn't there to pay the

bills and pretty soon the benevolence figures are dropping and the pastor isn't getting a raise and so forth.

LeDoux: I wanted to ask you first pastor, what the role of women in the church -- now does the A.L.C. support the women as pastors having been ordained?

Wied: Yes, this has been a practice for, I would say, six or seven or eight years maybe now. It was probably a rather extensive study that was conducted along with the L.C.A.—The Lutheran Church of America. There's virtually no difference anymore between the L.C.A. and the A.L.C. Seminaries are being urged now -- we use the same book of worship. There will eventually be a merger there. The Missouri Synod I don't see how -- brothers and sisters there coming along with us. But the role of women has been one that's been studied extensively. And both the L.C.A. and A.L.C. found that scripture spoke on both sides of the issues, but that there was no reason in the Scriptures why women could not serve as ordained clergy of the Church. And we have now a number of women clergy, and we have in the seminary maybe twenty to twenty-five percent of the class now are women. So it's definitely something that will remain and be a reality from now on. It's not something that will be revoked or revised. In fact a member of this congregation was one of the first women ordained in the seat. Mary Wile was her name; she's a pastor now. I've never known any women clergymen in the A.L.C. myself. I've never listened to one preach. I'm sure that the problems that they will encounter initially are simply on a tradition and history basis rather than theological problems. But it is true that women have more difficult time getting to call now.

LeDoux: Do they tend to place them, do you think, in the larger town first rather--

Wied: I'm sure so, that's the case. Or in a town that has at least two pastors, so that there'll be at least one male on the staff. That's the case almost in every situation. I noticed that there are eleven Seminary Seniors assigned to our district this spring—one of them is a woman. And then there's a man and wife team. They're both ordained and they're both graduates. They're seeking a job where they'll each work half time for one salary in the same church. That might worry me. But it's going to take a long time for this reality to become accepted, I think.

LeDoux: You mentioned -- you talked about the role of young people in this community, and I think you talked a little bit about participation. Does this church have a relatively low or a relatively high turnover rate for a town this size as far as the members being rather transient—coming out of other areas?

Wied: Uh-huh. Well certainly the turnover rate is higher than in a rural – a strictly rural church where you have more people tied to the lands with farming. We have some industry in town that has turnover; we have a vocational-technical institute in town that has turnover. It is a county seat, so there's county employees. There's a turnover there. There's a hospital, and so yes it's more so than in a strictly rural parish, but I would say overall compared to urban churches, were about average. A lot of my church management skills have come from a gentleman by the name of Lyle Shauer? Who's a teacher and writer of (indiscernible) too, and he says that the average turnover is fifty percent of your congregation should be more than eight years – members for more than eight years, and about fifty percent will be members for less than eight years. As soon as you start to diverge from that mark a great deal then, he said, you might indicate some problems. But, he said, I must make an exception when we start talking about strictly rural churches because their turnover rate will not be that high. In other words, what he's saying is, if your – if fifty percent of your members have been here fifteen years or longer, he said you might

want to start questioning yourself as to how good a job you're doing in bringing new people into the church. Maybe you're falling down there. However, if he says your average turnover rate is about three years, you better find out what you're doing wrong in keeping members in the church. Well, we did that survey and that turned out that we're about seven years, so we're pretty much right down the line. We do have some old timers, but last year we took in over a hundred new members, so it won't be that way every year. But there is a lot of new people. The other phenomenon that has a bearing on--

LeDoux: We were talking about the turnover rate and I guess we finished up on that.

Wied: Uh-huh.

LeDoux: Okay. Now have you participated since you've been here in the civic or political bodies in the community apart from the church?

Wied: In my first parish, I was very involved in civic and political activities. I became involved in a political party. In fact, I was elected the county treasurer for it. That seemed to be okay with the members of the church, because most of them were of the same political party. However, if it had been another political party that might have raised some eyebrows. In here in this community – this community is much more evenly divided between the two parties, and I have avoided any outward activity that I felt would polarize anyone against me as pastor. I feel my first responsibility to the people is to maintain open lines of communication and trust, and not throw any monkey wrenches in there that's going to get in the way of my being a pastor to them. The same would go about any social behavior; I would try not to be a stumbling block to someone, and so consequently I probably wouldn't go down and sit at the bar and drink if I knew that would offend some of our members. Privately – what I do privately – that's a different

matter, but I do feel responsibility publicly. In my former parish, I was elected to the school board – to serve three years on the school board in a small school, two years as chairman. I'm glad that happened – good experience and I did feel a responsibility to be involved there. I feel – I feel that in this community, too, it is very important. I have four children going into school, but the nature of my job here and its time demands just doesn't allow me to take on that kind of added responsibility. So I would say I've served on a child abuse board, I've been working with a citizen's committee at the school to implement a family life curriculum – including sex education. We're working on a senior citizen's program now that we hope we can get into the church next year. They'll provide a hot lunch every noon for senior citizens of the community for a very low cost. We're trying to get that going. There's other things that come up from time to time with the school. I lecture at the high school in classes on death and dying about four times a year. We're trying to get a mental health board set up now a citizens committee to help people become aware of mental health issues. So there's a few things going on outside the church, but basically my family – we just had a set of twins born to us last year – is keeping me pretty well tied down, and this church is certainly busy – a busy place at least during nine months out of the year. Summer is kind of – is fairly quiet. But we started this inter program after I came also. An intern is a third year seminarian who is required to spend a year working in a parish and learning and serving as kind of a practical experience. He is a help to me in our ministry, and I think he gains some valuable experience here, but that requires additional supervision. And we're on our third such intern, and that program has been well received here. And the interns have had good experience.

LeDoux: Does the synod make any suggestions, or would it make any suggestions if, for example, a pastor were to become deeply involved in politics? For example, assuming you wanted to run for Congress or some (indiscernible)?

Wied: Uh-huh, that does happen. It happened to a couple of friends of mine. That's really handled by the local church council. I mean I would assume the pastor would go to his council and discuss this matter with them and receive their advice concerning that. They are my employers, after all, and I know of one pastor who was given permission to run for office. It was agreed that if he was elected he would resign his call. I know of another pastor who ran as a State Representative, and it was agreed that if he was elected he would continue to serve the church, and be home to preach on Sundays. But they couldn't afford to pay him a full salary, so that was kind of a worker-priest type of arrangement. And it was agreed on as being a good solution to the problem because you find that more in other churches perhaps where – such a Methodist church and the Baptist Church where the pastor will be employed in secular employment to drive school bus or teach school as well as his duties. You don't find that as much in the Lutheran Church, but in some of the smaller churches it has been found to be a workable solution.

LeDoux: I noticed that your church either has or sponsors religious radio broadcasts.

Wied: Uh-huh.

LeDoux: Is that true?

Wied: That's true.

LeDoux: What type of program is broadcast, and how did this begin?

Wied: Okay. I guess this has been going on for some years, but we have set up a system to tape the Sunday morning early worship at 8:30. And then that tape is taken to the radio station for re-broadcast at 11:00. Of course, it's simply a re-broadcast of our Sunday morning worship, but we are firmly committed to that because of a number of reasons: 1. It does provide the needed service to those members of our who are ill at home – more importantly those who are shut-in and cannot get to worship, those who are in the hospital. Across the street we have a large retirement center called Humphrey Manor, and that has over 200 elderly people who can't get out – who listen to the broadcast. And then it's listened to also by a large number of what you might describe as wither unchurch or uninvolved people who while they're not in church worshipping, who at least receive the Gospel in this way so--

LeDoux: Okay, we were talking about the radio broadcast. Was this initiated by a pastor that was here or by the council or suggested by the synod or who did this come about?

Wied: I believe it was my predecessor who initiated this idea. In fact, it was a very important project for him. But I think gradually the members of the church came to realize its importance as well. Formerly, it was sponsored through specific gifts. I think that broadcasts at that time cost about \$30.00 a Sunday to produce, and people got a little tired of being asked to contribute just for the radio fund. We solved that problem by just putting in on to the regular budget, so it's supported out of our unified budget now. And it's up to \$40 a Sunday now, but I think for \$2000 a year, I think it's a very small part of our budget, but a very important one. And many people do listen, and it is the only Lutheran service broadcast on Sunday morning. I believe the Lutheran Hour, Missouri Synod, Have a half hour broadcast, I mean, on Sunday afternoon. But it's the only local service of any kind within the listening range of the people that it is broadcasted so--

LeDoux: This question really doesn't relate to this church but I was hoping to get a comment from you on it. Different groups, particularly I guess fundamentalist groups (indiscernible) that are getting -- going to relatively great lengths with quite expensive TV networks, entire radio networks and that sort of thing, often times which are tax-free to spread their message. I was wondering how far, in your opinion, should the Church move into this type of area -- into mass electronics?

Wied: Yeah, that's kind of a pet issue with me. I see the garbage that's on the TV, and I guess I preface this by saying there can be no substitute for participation in a local congregation. There can be no substitutes for that, and yet that's certainly one of the dangers of the mass media presentation of the Gospel because it withdraws people from any personal contact with other people. And there really can be no hand drawn contact though a radio or through a tube -- television screen. And yet it's very tempting for many people who, if they send in their two dollars a week or their ten dollars a week to whoever, that somehow they're participating in the life of the church. And I guess that's the biggest danger of it all. Because it's meant to be a money-maker, in fact it had to be a money-maker if they're going to support their costs. Then they have to start appealing to what's popular with the people, and who'd bring in the bigger personalities and make it entertainment more than it is worship. And I find real problems with that in that -- for instance, this Bob Schuller out in California that just built his ten million dollar crystal cathedral or something, who was interviewed once and asked what makes a successful church. How do you get your people to support your church so well? He said, "It's very simple. I just never talk about anything controversial. People don't want to come to church to be upset. They want to be comforted; they want to be told that they're loved. They want to feel good." And I strongly disagree with that idea. I think the Scripture confronts us and challenges us, and

the Law condemns us before we are to be comforted and loved and given grace, and I don't really think that's a practical application to the physical Christianity – to simply kind of lull people to sleep by thinking that everything is right with them in the world. I'm not saying to be effective you have to literally scare the hell out of people, but there has to be an effective application of both the Law and the Gospel. And a lot of this stuff on T.V. is no more than slick P.R. work that has questionable value. Now on the other hand, I think our Christian Church and Lutheran Church has failed to come to grips with the power of the media. This one – this program that they produced this last year – “We're Number One” was excellently well done, and dealt with values and dealt in a very effective way. I think we have to increase our use of the media; I don't condemn the media. It has great power. Advertisers spend billions of dollars a year to promote their products not -- because it works. It has the power to convince.

Nielsen: Do you think that there could be a real fear that producing a film or something to that effect that becomes a big-money maker, that you'd want to reproduce another one? In effect, it would become more of a case of “let's make more money” than (inaudible).

Wied: Well, of course they're not making any money on that film at all.

Nielsen: No, not specifically with the Lutherans, but that there would be a tendency with the mass media that if you do something well the first time and make some money, that you would want to produce something--

Wied: Well, nothing – nothing--

LeDoux: That would possibly depend too much on (inaudible).

Nielsen: Yeah, to--

Wied: Oh yeah. I think there's always been a temptation to substituted dollars for involvement.

Nielsen: Yeah, that's--

Wied: But then again in the eyes of some people, nothing succeeds like success. And if giving away a cross that glows in the dark for a contribution of ten dollars and more works, then they're going to keep doing that kind of stuff. And yet giving of money without the giving of self and touching other people's lives visually and verbally and even physical is still – it's only half an apple.

LeDoux: Al, do you have any more questions?

Nielsen: Not to this.

LeDoux: Okay. Pastor, somehow we managed to get though most of the interview without asking you to give the name of your wife and your children. Would you do that for us please.

Wied: Sure. My wife is Mary, and she and our four children are up at the lake this summer. I get up there Sundays and Mondays and parts of Tuesday to see them.

LeDoux: Excuse me, what was her maiden name?

Wied: Knudsvig.

LeDoux: Knudsvig – how is that spelled?

Wied: Knudsvig – very Norwegian, yeah. It was considered to be a real dark day when a full-blooded Norwegian would marry someone who is half German and a mixture of other things. But I was accepted into the family nevertheless.

LeDoux: How is Knudsvig spelled?

Wied: K-N-U-D-S-V-I-G. We have a daughter Elizabeth who's going to be seven soon. She's in second grade. We have another daughter Catherine who is going on three, and we have twins – Anne and Amy who will be one next week. And they keep us busy.

LeDoux: Is there anything pastor that we haven't brought up that you would like to add?

Wied: No, I've enjoyed it very much. I – it's kind of fun to reflect on things that have happened and hopes for what might happen. Thank you.

LeDoux: Okay, that concludes this interview.