

⁴ The list is long. Here are a few examples human resources companies specifically devoted to assisting workplaces: Benevity ([benevity.com/resources/what-is-diversity-equity-inclusion](https://www.benevity.com/resources/what-is-diversity-equity-inclusion)), Built In ([builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/what-does-dei-mean-in-the-workplace](https://www.builtin.com/diversity-inclusion/what-does-dei-mean-in-the-workplace)), Center for Creative Leadership ([ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/5-powerful-ways-to-take-real-action-on-dei-diversity-equity-inclusion](https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/5-powerful-ways-to-take-real-action-on-dei-diversity-equity-inclusion)), and the Forum on Workplace Inclusion ([forumworkplaceinclusion.org](https://www.forumworkplaceinclusion.org)).

⁵ “What Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Really Mean,” Ideal, [ideal.com/diversity-equity-inclusion](https://www.ideal.com/diversity-equity-inclusion).

⁶ Ibid., section 1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education ([thefire.org](https://www.thefire.org)) claims that in 2021 almost 1500 people submitted cases to them for assistance when their rights to free speech were in jeopardy.

⁹ See, for instance, Ibram X. Kendi, “There Is No Debate Over Critical Race Theory,” *The Atlantic*, July 2021. [theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/07/opponents-critical-race-theory-are-arguing-themselves/619391](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/07/opponents-critical-race-theory-are-arguing-themselves/619391).

¹⁰ A list can be found at scholar.google.com/scholar?q=diversity+equity+and+inclusion+and+LGBT&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar.

¹¹ M. Kravitz, “The Gender Binary Is a Tool of White Supremacy,” *An Injustice!*, July 14, 2020, aninjusticemag.com/the-gender-binary-is-a-tool-of-white-supremacy-db89d0bc9044

¹² “This article concerning justification by faith . . . is the chief article in the entire Christian doctrine, without which no poor conscience can have any firm consolation, or can truly know the riches of the grace of Christ” (FC SD III, 6, *Trigl*).

Commentary on the War: Toward Gaining Ground in the Ministry

Advice for the Ministry: Productivity

David H. Petersen



little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest; So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man (Prov 24:33–34, NKJV).

The seminaries in North America follow a traditional school year that arose from agricultural needs. Students graduate and are ready for ordination around the end of May. Thus Trinity has become ordination season, and we expect each year to gain a crop of new pastors in June. To that end, I have sometimes used this column to put forth some unsolicited advice and would like to do so again. This year it is not theological but ethical. We need to work at being pastors. We need

to learn how to get things done. Below are some things that have been of great help to me.

(1) The power of after-action reviews

I vividly recall how difficult the conduct of services was during my first year in the ministry. At the change of every season, I had to figure what ceremonies the congregation was used to, what ceremonies would be ideal, and then how and if we could pull them off in our space and how I would then go about teaching and explaining ceremonies. After I had been through one whole year, I thought it would get easier. It did, but not as much as I expected. During the second year, I discovered that I had to relearn and rethink almost everything I had figured out the first year. The third year was much better. Some of that was familiarity, but I think a larger part of it came from the after-action reviews I instituted after every major feast or event in the congregation during my second year.

I learned about after-action review in ROTC, but they are used by many institutions. The basic idea is that after any event, as soon as possible, the participants are gathered together, and the event is analyzed with an eye toward figuring out what could have been done better. The expectation is that no matter how successful the event was, it could be improved. I did this mostly by myself, sitting at a computer.

Here is how it worked. On the day after the first midweek Advent service, I took some notes about what happened. I noted what the set up was, how many people attended, what went well, what didn't, and how it might be modified next year or how I could have been better prepared. It was usually just a half a page of bullet points, maybe a few sentences. It contained things like “People are getting to service late because they're cleaning the kitchen after the dinner. What if we started the meal at 5:30 instead of 6:00 and then ended at 6:30, a full half hour before the service time?” I did the same thing on Christmas Day about Christmas Eve. Then I did it again on the day after Christmas about Christmas. I did this after all the major liturgical events and other events like the Ladies' Aid Tea and the Harvest dinner. The next year, I pulled out my notes for upcoming services and events. They jogged my memory and made planning much easier. They lowered the number of repeat mistakes. I think they also helped to improve these events.

These written reviews are institutionalized at Redeemer as Google Docs. At Redeemer, I have a colleague in the office, Rev. Michael Frese. I also have a musician, a secretary, and a headmaster. Although only Pastor Frese and I typically engage in the documents in a formal way, both in creating them and in reviewing them, many people have access to them, thanks to the Google Drive sharing function. The reviews are a huge aid for

the more complicated liturgical events like the Easter Vigil and Good Friday.

(2) Checklists

In addition to the reviews, Frese and I are big fans of checklists. We have checklists for all that has to be done to ready the building for the Easter Vigil, Good Friday, funerals, and weddings. The lists include things that are peculiar to those services. The funeral checklist asks both if the pall is out and if the funeral directors have been briefed. The Easter Vigil checklist asks if the handheld candles are in the narthex and if the Paschal candle's appointments (nails and year) are in place. The lists also include things that are pertinent to most services: Is the sound system on? Are the oil candles filled? Are the bulletins in the narthex? One of the things the after-action reviews help us with is what to put on the lists for the next year. By keeping these lists on the Google Drive, we don't have to reinvent them every year, and we can both work on them simultaneously.

(3) Time management and boundaries

A calendar can be used for more than simply keeping track of appointments. It can be used to protect time. This is done by writing blocks of time in the calendar as appointments or meetings for specific tasks, such as prayer, sermon preparation, or planning. If these tasks aren't protected, they can get lost by something else taking the time or by procrastination.

The calendar can also be used to control meetings. More than simply setting a time limit for the meeting, you can put an appointment at ending time. My vicarage supervisor had a standing date with his wife on the same night as elders' meetings, scheduled exactly as the meeting was supposed to end. The meeting started at 7. His date was at 8. His dates typically involved him and his wife watching TV in their living room. When it got to be 7:50, he simply told the elders that we had to wrap the meeting up because he had a date with his wife. Because they were used to this and because they couldn't speak against him spending quality time with his wife, the meetings were very efficient. This limit helped prevent the meeting from devolving into social time or rants and posturing. You can do a similar thing with shut-ins, premarital instruction, and the like. Your meeting or appointment that is scheduled at the end of a meeting can be time for prayer, study, or walking your dog. It doesn't matter what it is. It matters that you scheduled it and need to get to it.

The office door can also be used to protect time and enable focus. Pastors should not be available at all times for people's whims. We want to be accessible for emergencies and not be intimidating to the people, but at the same time, there are many things that we get asked that arise either because people just don't know how to make conversation or because they are lazy. The office door

can signal that you're working. When you are working on something that requires focus, such as sermon prep, prayer, or reading, you therefore don't want to be disturbed. At the very least, closing your door will slow down people saying hello or asking you what hymn was sung last Sunday.

Having such boundaries around your time will help the people resist the idea that the pastor is the "go to" person for every situation in the church. The problem is we want to be helpful, and we like being useful, so enforcing these boundaries takes some real effort. It takes time in the beginning, but if you show people how to solve their own problems, they will catch on, and they will become less dependent on you. For example, if someone comes into the office asking where the vacuum cleaner is stored, the pastor can go through a sort of charade where he asks out loud, "I wonder where it is!" and then leads that person around the building looking in the obvious places. The same thing can be done with phone numbers. If someone sticks his head in your door and asks for someone's phone number, rather than sitting at your desk and looking it up and then reading it to him, get up out of your chair, walk out to where the directory is kept, open it up to the person's name, and hand it to the person. Chances are when you start walking toward the closet for the vacuum or pick up the directory, the person will interrupt you and take over by himself. Messages for others can be handled in a similar way. When someone asks that the pastor give the secretary a message, the pastor can hand him a pad of paper and ask him to leave a note on her desk. It is easier for them to write it themselves than for the pastor to transcribe it. So also, the pastor then is not to blame if he forgets to convey the message or gets the details wrong.

(4) Do not multitask.

Multitasking is a fantasy. This has been proven over and over again by hard science, but it is hard to resist. Every time you switch tasks you erode your focus and willpower. You aren't actually working on more than one thing at a time. You are working on one thing at a time but in a sequence. Each mental move costs energy. Don't do it.

The best technique I have found to resist multitasking is called Pomodoro. It is as simple as this: set a timer for twenty-five minutes. Until the timer buzzes, work on one single thing without exception. Do not answer the phone during that time. If someone rings the doorbell, ignore it. If the fire alarm goes off, keep working. You won't die in that short amount of time. You are not allowed to quit, for any reason, before the timer goes off. You're not allowed to do anything else during that time. If you're working on your computer, you will need to be extra strict. You absolutely cannot check your e-mail or otherwise get distracted. Once the timer goes off, you

can stand up, take a five minute break to walk around the building, use the restroom, and fill up your coffee. But this part is not mandatory. If the buzzer goes off and you're in the flow, feeling good, keep going. That is bonus time. Then just keep working as long as it feels good. When it doesn't, take the break. At the end of the break, check your messages and such and deal with what you must. Then start over again with the same task or another.

The stricter you are with this the better the results will be. It is also useful to narrow the task as much as possible. Rather than have a twenty-five minute session for sermon writing, I like to have a twenty-five minute session for exegesis with the Bible and a pad of paper. If that exegesis leads me to questions I didn't expect, I write down what I want to look into on my pad of paper, but I don't get a dictionary or any other tools. I just keep working on the task at hand. Word studies and internet or Logos searches are separate tasks for a different session. If I don't do that, my twenty-five minutes can evaporate while I try to make sense of a single entry in *TDNT* that leads nowhere.

(5) A to-do list

A to-do list of some sort is essential. During your twenty-five minute uni-task work sessions, you might remember something that needs to be done, an idea for a sermon, or even something that you want to ask your mother. Have a notepad so that you can quickly write down whatever pops up and then forget about it. You can't switch tasks, but you can write down an item on your list. If you don't write these things down, trying to remember them will be a distraction. It will erode your concentration. Writing them down frees your mind from them and makes sure you don't forget about them.

A to-do list is more than a running list or place to dump ideas for another time. It is for tasks to be completed and for goals. Most people find crossing items off a list satisfying. It is also useful to get your plans and goals out of your head and committed to paper. Doing so frees up your subconscious to work on them without effort. It also allows you a way to evaluate whether or not a task needs to be done or not. You might write down "look up patrimony rates in Corinth in the first century" during your exegesis task, but when you get to it later, you realize it is just trivia and doesn't matter. Or perhaps you had on your list to lift weights for an hour, to do a Google search on the best quality brake pads, to go grocery shopping, and to pick up the kids from school. Writing this down can help you prioritize. You have to pick the kids up and have to get groceries. But which is more important, making sure you get the best quality brake pads for the best price or lifting weights? Having a list helps prevent us from choosing the less significant task just because it is easier or more pleasant.

Conclusion

The Ministry is a spiritual reality, divinely instituted and filled by Christ. At the same time, the men who are called to this office need to actually work the job. We need to show up. We need to plan. We need to stick with it even when it is uncomfortable or tedious. My hope is that some of the above will help with all of that, and the labor itself will at least some of the time be joy.



Aurora Borealis

Platinum Ponderings

John R. Stephenson



ince our pastor and the other active ordained man in the congregation came down with Covid for Holy Week, it fell to this near-septuagenarian to lead the worshipping flock through the Sacrum Triduum, a gladsome duty experienced as sweet refreshment rather than unwelcome burden. Numbers are still down, but fresh buds of life are noticeable on the vine, and above all it's a change of night and day from what we went through two years ago when the churches were shut, worship was stopped, the sheep weren't fed, and Almighty God was deprived of His rightful glory.

In a world of instant mass communication, political fashion changes overnight. Despite government-controlled media and a two-year propaganda barrage, at least half of Canada was waking up to the totalitarian takeover of this vast land, but all the issues associated with our magnificent Freedom Convoy have been thrust to the back burner as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has usurped the headlines. Popular reaction to this installment of modern warfare, with its roll of military and civilian casualties, has underlined the unreality of "virtual" existence. *Shocked* we may certainly be at the armed assault of the largest on the second largest of the Slav States, and our souls should rightly shudder over the irreducible volume of tragedy that accompanies even the most just of wars. But no disciple of Christ may be *surprised* that nation continues to rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Such has been the way of the world from the beginning, and so it will continue to the end. *Plus ça change . . .*

I write this article on Holy Saturday, this year the actual and the baptismal birthday of Joseph Ratzinger, falling just a few days before the ninety-sixth birthday of the longest-lived and longest-reigning British and Canadian Sovereign. A little while ago I received the kind gift of