

Strengthening The Ministry Of Our National Called Workers

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In a Beginning Mission

World Seminary Conference, 1982, Day 4, 1:30 pm.

By Bruce Ahlers

Introduction: THE DIFFERENT SITUATION

The strengthening of the ministry of called workers in a new field presents some very different problems as compared to the strengthening of workers that have been trained by our missionaries in the field or for the field where they are working. The previous training of the workers involved may not be anywhere near our expectations or goals. They may even have been trained in a reformed, liberal Lutheran, or other educational program. They may have been trained in our circles through some previous arrangement that was less than ideal.

Then there are the problems associated with the fact that the venture is a new field of work with new missionaries. The new missionaries often do not understand the culture or the thinking of the called workers in their new country of residence. In their zeal to help them they may make mistakes and push too hard. On the other hand the nationals may already be established in congregations and in their ways of working, which may not be to our liking. They may also feel that they don't need help—they have already gone to seminary, received a diploma, and been ordained. Then there is the possibility that they may be men we would never have considered seminary material or candidates for the ministry in the first place.

These problems can present some great difficulties in strengthening the ministry of such called workers. But it appears that these are problems that are going to be met more and more by us if our world mission program continues to expand. To my knowledge at present there are only two fields where this situation applies directly: Indonesia and Taiwan. In Indonesia we have an ordained pastor who has been working there for several years. He was trained in our circles but under conditions that were less than ideal. He was sent to our seminary in Hong Kong where the language of instruction was English, which neither he nor some of the other students knew very well. He was not only taught by a person of a different culture but had to live in a different culture. It became apparent that other members of his class had false motives for being at the seminary; some were not even baptized! While our man's motives cannot be questioned, he had not been a Lutheran for very long, even though he had already been a baptized Christian for quite some time. We are also working with a man who had his formal training in an inter-denominational seminary with a legalistic and/or charismatic leaning, but who also acquired quite a knowledge of Lutheranism through self-study. He is not a called worker in our church now, but once was, and wants to get back in.

I do not want to delve into these cases any deeper at the present time. Also I do not mean to criticize our former seminary program in Hong Kong or present national pastor. In fact we can be thankful that training did take place considering the circumstances. What I do want to do is to point out the factors that can lead to difficulties in strengthening the ministry of such workers, and to point out the uniqueness of the situation to which this paper addresses itself.

And it is most likely not a situation that is only going to be encountered a couple of times in the history of our synod's mission work. That would make a paper like this a waste of time. Rather it could become more and more common as our mission program expands. As our synod and its position become better known

throughout the world, church bodies and small groups are coming to us requesting help and assistance. There are quite a number of these with which we have contact and which we aid at the present time, and most of these already have called workers that need strengthening in their ministry. While in many of these places the entrance of resident expatriate personnel is forbidden, in other places a requirement for entrance is the presence of such called workers. Such was the case in Indonesia where an invitation from a registered church with a national as its head is the only way foreigners can enter to work. And strengthening the ministry of called workers in other areas with non-resident personnel is becoming an important part of our mission program. Let us then take a look at some suggestions for carrying out this strengthening in three somewhat obvious steps: ANALYZING THE SITUATION, PLANNING THE PROGRAM, and CARRYING OUT THE PLAN.

Part One: ANALYZING THE SITUATION

The first step to carry out in analyzing the situation is to find out where, what, and how much the called worker under consideration has studied previously. Finding out the type(s) of institution he attended (seminary, Bible institute, etc.), its denominational affiliation or theological bent, and the type of degree he received from it are some basic pieces of information that are needed. Perhaps a copy of its catalog and/or curriculum can be obtained. Somewhat more difficult but helpful for analysis would be to determine how deep the training was. A little bit about the work history of the worker can also prove helpful.

The next and potentially more difficult step is to determine the present situation of the worker: his knowledge, capabilities, professional growth, and dedication and how much desire he has for more growth and training. In particular it is valuable to find out how much he knows about Lutheranism and why he switched to Lutheranism in general and why he was attracted to our brand of Lutheranism in particular, if he comes from a different background. If at all possible his homiletical, catechetical, administrative, and other practical abilities should be determined from observation, not just to see what level of proficiency he is at, but also to determine if he even has aptitudes in these areas. And then a very basic area to be evaluated would be the man's knowledge of the Bible and how much he appears to be a continuing student of Scripture. And finally an area vital to the successful carrying out of any strengthening program is the man's realization of his weaknesses and needs. Does he have any desire to learn more, to be trained more? Does he view the new missionaries as men who can strengthen him or as nuisances? Also how have age, health, and other conditions affected his ability to study and acquire new knowledge and methods?

The final step in this analysis procedure is to evaluate the possibilities for providing opportunities for the further training of the worker or workers under consideration. Consider the distance and travel problems for the workers to get together with the missionary who is to train them and each other. How frequently can they practically get together, if at all? Can they take time off from their present work? Would it even be possible for them to quit, move, or take a leave of absence for some full-time study?

One final problem to be considered in these possibilities is an ever-present one on the mission field: Should there be a subsidy or scholarship for this training, especially if the man is asked to leave his former work? In the third world countries where most of our missions are, can we reasonably expect these men even to support themselves partially with part-time employment?

As a missionary carries out this analysis of the situation he should keep this in mind: He is a foreigner, and probably a new foreigner, in this called worker's country and culture. He has to be more careful than ever about judging motives and even abilities and knowledge. Also his analysis has to be an ongoing thing as his knowledge of the workers and their culture grows.

Part Two: PLANNING THE PROGRAM

Once the analysis has been done, the information acquired has to be compared to something we know. In our case the best standard we have, and often the only one we really know, is our Mequon program. If we are committed to this program as a minimal requirement for our State-side pastors who normally have a number of colleagues nearby, why should it be anything less for our overseas brethren? The high standards of our Mequon

program should be, need to be, the ultimate goal in our national called workers, especially as the continuing presence of our expatriate missionaries is more and more in jeopardy in so many of our foreign mission fields. They need to be able to stand on their own feet, not only financially and administratively, but also theologically. To do this they need a thorough training in the beliefs and practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, at least equal to that given at our Mequon seminary.

While we may all be convinced of this, we also have to face reality. As a new missionary compares the knowledge and abilities of the called workers in his new field of work with the standards of our Mequon program, he will certainly find some deficiencies, some greater than others. He will not only want to consider the needs of that particular worker but also the needs of the church that he is serving at that time. The missionary may feel, for example, that the worker really should get started with some Biblical languages or a review of dogmatics, but a basic improvement in his homiletical or catechetical skills may be more immediately beneficial to his congregation. To strengthen his ministry it may be more urgent to train him to get a basic law and gospel presentation in his sermons or to get basic Bible truths into his teaching. Training in the Biblical languages, Lutheran symbolics and dogmatics, and even church history will have a part in strengthening his ministry, even in the practical things mentioned above. Therefore this kind of training cannot be left out; it just may not be the first thing that is done.

It is at this point of trying to figure out what to start with and how much has to be done that the missionary may feel that it would be better to start over at the beginning, or he may feel like throwing up his hands in despair. And indeed in some cases starting over may not be the worst option.

But when facing the reality of the situation, a full seminary program probably would not be a workable option, although it can't be ruled out in every case. Where the man or men involved are intelligent, capable men, and willing to undergo such training, and where the prospects for a long stay for expatriate missionaries is dim, such a program may be worth the effort and time involved. Usually a less ambitious program would be indicated. It could even be just occasional pastoral conferences and seminars and/or some type of TEE courses. But I would guess that in most cases a somewhat more intensive strengthening program would be indicated. Intensive one or two week pastoral institutes or seminars, such as have been carried out in areas where we have no expatriate personnel, would be another way to go.

Yet another way of carrying out this strengthening is to conduct seminary type classes on a part-time basis. In Indonesia, for example, we have set up Wednesday as class day. The two men we are presently working with were coming in the morning from one and a half and three and a half hours away and were taught one half day by each of the two missionaries we then had. We started with each missionary teaching a brief practical course, homiletics and catechetics, to give our national pastor some quick help in those areas. We then started a couple of more in depth courses, dogmatics and symbolics. Our national pastor felt a need for more in-depth training in all these areas, and since we are able to do most of the work in the national language, we hope that he is getting a better understanding in these areas than he was able to get through the medium of the English language in his original seminary training. Also these are all good courses for our other man with his Reformed background. Besides these courses, we are starting to teach them the Biblical languages. Admittedly there is another reason for this besides the inherent worth of such a program. And indeed it is a valuable program for our nationals as we said before, if it is considered important for our Mequon program. In our case there are additional considerations having to do with government regulations in connection with our visa. We are in the country as Greek and Hebrew experts, that is, to provide a skill that the nationals do not already have. And so we have begun to do that, albeit with a limited, long-term program. I used the past tense above in some cases, not because we are terminating this program, but because it will have to be reviewed and revised with the addition of a third missionary and the change in work load carried by our national pastor due to his recent heart attack.

I should also mention that we have a monthly, day-long pastoral conference. Besides giving reports and reviewing our work, we also study a paper or review translation work that one of us has done. These conferences, as well as the seminary classes, have proved beneficial and educational both for our nationals and

for the missionaries. We have been able to learn more about cultural considerations in doing pastoral work in Indonesia, to improve our language abilities, particularly in reference to our work, and to lay some groundwork for developing Lutheran literature and terminology, which is sorely lacking in Indonesia. This give-and-take is important so that we as missionaries can better strengthen our national brethren.

Part Three: CARRYING OUT THE PLAN

Admittedly there are some ways in which this part will overlap with the previous part, but there are a couple of things that come up when a plan for strengthening the ministry of nationals is carried out. One of these is the allocation of manpower to do the training. It seems that there is never enough time, never enough manpower to do all the things that could be done in the mission field. This is no less true in a new field than it is in an older one, especially when it is not even possible to get in with the initially approved quota at first, as was the case in Indonesia. Therefore the major limitation in such a strengthening program will usually be manpower, not need. One way of doing this is to use each missionary, or several missionaries, on a limited basis, and in consideration of their particular gifts, training, and available materials. The man on the field that has kept up his Greek studies the most can teach it with the least expenditure of preparation time. A recent graduate of our Mequon seminary might be able to teach a course from his class notes, such as dogmatics, with less preparation than a more seasoned member of the team. Or another member of the team may have made a study of some book of the Bible for a course or some other reason; he in turn would be in a good position to impart the knowledge he gleaned on to his national brethren. Maximizing the time of expatriates in this way can result in a more effective strengthening program for the nationals involved.

As suggested above, courses and materials for carrying out this strengthening program can be borrowed from our Mequon seminary, although care will have to be exercised in using these materials since, especially at first, they may be too deep for the nationals who are in need of our strengthening. Another good source for these materials would be the seminary programs of our mission fields that have such materials and the materials prepared for the pastoral institutes and teaching seminars used to strengthen nationals in areas where we have no expatriate personnel. These should be viewed only or mainly as starting points, to get a program started quickly. The goal should be at least to adapt these materials to the local situation and needs, and, even more ideally, to develop new materials specifically designed for the church and the workers being helped.

Besides the classroom-type of training, practical helps can also be given. Perhaps the missionary could occasionally exchange pulpits or classrooms with the national so that the national worker could see the missionary's way of preaching and teaching. The national worker's sermons and lessons could be taped for later evaluation and suggestions for improvement. The missionary could accompany the national worker on pastoral and evangelism calls to give pointers or to show him some ways of carrying on this work. These are only a few of the practical things that can only be carried out by the resident missionary, and which should not be overlooked should the opportunity arise to use them in strengthening the ministry of a national worker.

As the strengthening plan is being carried out, attempts should be made to get feed-back and participation from the workers involved. This is needed to see how well the new missionaries are teaching and crossing the cultural gap and also to see what the nationals already know and are learning. While this will at first be just participating in discussions, answering questions, and writing seminary-type essays, it would be hoped that this could develop into the writing of conference papers and seminar presentations and the development other materials that could be used for the strengthening and training of other nationals.

While in Indonesia our program is just starting and is nowhere near the idealistic goals just mentioned, the feed-back has already proved enlightening and beneficial. We have adjusted pace and emphasis accordingly. Sometimes the discussion has gone off on a tangent that has shed light on a problem that the missionaries didn't even know existed. We have also had our problems. Sickness, both involving the worker himself and also involving his family, has delayed and interfered with our program. The travel involved has not always been easy. Other demands on the time of the missionaries and nationals alike have not always allowed the proper amount of time to be devoted to this program. But the program is constantly being reviewed, assessed, and, we

hope, changed for the good. All participating in the program have felt benefited and blessed, even at this early date.

Conclusion: REMEMBER THEM AS BRETHREN

It may be noted in this presentation that the national called workers in our new mission fields are being viewed as our inferiors in terms of theological training. While there could be exceptions, it could be safely expected that the Mequon-trained missionary without any other training would be equipped to provide training for the national worker, rather than the other way around. Such is our privilege as conservative Lutherans growing up in affluent America, who have had the opportunity and financial capability to receive up to twelve years of Christian education aimed specifically at preparing us to be pastors and possibly even eight more years of Christian elementary education. We would have to be accused of wasting our God-given opportunities if we were not the theological superiors of our brethren who have not had this opportunity. But we must always remember them as brethren, not only as brothers in Christ, but also as brothers in the ministry, brothers who, like us, have a call from the Holy Spirit to serve his people with the Gospel. In these respects they are our equals. In their faith they may even be our superiors; in their understanding of their people they are probably our superiors; and in their understanding of their culture, they certainly are our superiors. Remember them as brethren.

And remembering them as brethren involves something that could be considered one of the most powerful tools that can be used for the strengthening of their ministry: Prayer. All we have to do is look at the work and words of our Savior and of the Apostle Paul to see how important they considered prayer to be in the strengthening of the called workers trained by them and entrusted to their care. Can we consider it any less important? Let us then close with this brief plea to our God: Lord of the harvest, remember your called workers in your church throughout the world so that those that have the ability and position would be shown the best ways to strengthen their brethren in all humility, and so that those who have the need and calling would be shown the best ways to learn with all diligence. Amen.

Strengthening The Ministry Of Our National Called Workers In A Field With Widely Scattered Workers

World Mission Seminary Conference May 31, 1982 - June 4, 1982

By Harold Essman

The Holy Scriptures require that the pastor be a well trained person who is not a novice. He is to be one that can properly divide the Word of Truth. To that end, our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has established and maintained a seminary program in Mequon and post-graduate programs including a summer quarter and Bible institutes at Mequon and other centers.

If post-graduate courses are considered to be important and even necessary for our stateside ministers of the Gospel, they should be equally important and necessary for our national ministers in foreign lands where the curriculum and standards of our world seminaries may not match those which we consider adequate in the United States.

Particularly I have been asked to comment on strengthening our national workers in their ministry carried out in widely scattered fields. This would certainly provoke comment about our Mexican field in particular and our Latin American fields generally. Today we have national workers in Mexico that include one pastor 90 miles southeast of Mexico City, one in Mexico City itself, two pastors in Guadalajara about 350 miles west of Mexico City, and one pastor in Ciudad Juarez which is 700 miles north of Mexico City. In Colombia we have one evangelist and expect to have one national pastor in a couple years.

A brief outline of the history of these fields might explain why the congregations and pastors are so widely scattered in Mexico. These widely scattered congregations in Mexico were not by design but came about because of historical development. Original work in Mexico was begun by Pastor Ernest Zimdars, who arrived in our El Paso mission field as Spanish missionary in that city in 1966. He carried on work in Mexican homes in Juarez. We hoped in that way to establish a beachhead in Juarez for future work in Mexico. In 1968 our plans were changed. When Pastors David Orea Luna and David Chichia came to us by colloquy the work of these two men in Mexico City and Guadalajara was continued. Still later Pastor Avendano from Puebla was accepted by colloquy. Thus the three widely scattered mission areas in southern Mexico were made a part of our work.

Added to this we then have Spanish world fields in Puerto Rico (1963) and Colombia (1974). The common denominator and advantage which our Latin American mission field has is the Spanish language so that unlike southeast Asia and to some extent Africa, where English may not be known by all national workers, our advanced instruction can be carried out in Spanish, no matter if it be in a country with widely scattered stations or the entire field with widely scattered mission areas.

Now, how does one provide post-graduate training for pastors and evangelists in widely scattered fields and areas within a field? I am going to suggest five ways in which we are or might carry out a post-graduate training program for national pastors and evangelists.

- 1) Workshops
- 2) Pastoral Conferences
- 3) Latin American Conference
- 4) Week-long institutes
- 5) Theological Education by Extension

1. WORKSHOPS.

A method for continued study in our widely scattered fields could be workshops held in connection with other meetings, such as pastoral conferences or synod conventions. Workshops have been used in our mission field in Mexico. The length of time of the pastoral conferences has been extended by one or two days. These extra days are devoted to the study of some subject. In our case, the subjects were of a practical nature. One dealt with the aims and procedures in holding a vacation Bible school. The national pastors were also involved in the presentation of the papers for the workshop. Topics that might be considered in such workshops are: How to conduct a vacation Bible school; Making the Sunday school more Effective; Teaching the Catechism to Children; Evangelism Methods; Stewardship principles for our Congregations; etc.

2. PASTORAL CONFERENCES.

Not to be overlooked as a means of giving further training to our pastors and evangelists is the regular pastoral conference. As in our American setting, so also in the foreign setting, these conferences can deal with a wide range of subject matter. One that that should be explored is that when synod conventions or pastoral conferences are held, time would be extended to provide time for a workshop or institute. In this way costs of getting widely scattered workers together would be minimized and not duplicated.

3. LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE.

One method for continuing the training of our national workers that is unique to our Latin American mission fields is the Latin American Conference. This conference, ordinarily held every two years and conducted in Spanish, is attended by all expatriate and national pastors. It is a valuable aid, not only in drawing together our mission fields as a unit, but also in giving opportunity for continued study. The conference is about three days in length. The morning sessions are devoted to the study of a particular subject by means of papers written by expatriates and nationals alike. The afternoons are spent in discussion of practical matters while business matters are discussed in the evenings. Such a conference is possible in our Latin American mission

fields because of the common language. Such a conference draws our men together as a unit and also provides opportunity for in-depth study of some subject.

4. WEEK LONG BIBLE INSTITUTES.

This method could be used to advantage in a single country where the pastors could be brought together without great cost and without great loss of time for travel or even in widely scattered mission areas where the need would be present to have such week-long institutes.

Week-long institutes were used on several occasions in the early history of our mission in Mexico. When your speaker was supervising the work in Mexico on a part-time basis during the first two years of the history of that field, two such institutes were held. Two men, Pastors E. Zimdars and Venus Winter, conducted the institutes. They were held in Mexico City and Guadalajara. The topics discussed at those institutes were doctrinal in nature.

My suggestion for this type of institute is

- 1) That they be held in countries where pastors, though scattered within a country can be brought together at reasonable expense and little loss of time for study for four to five days. In areas where men from various fields are brought together a two-week institute might be considered.
- 2) That these institutes be used to discuss subjects where it is desirable to have considerable input from both the instructor and the student.
- 3) That the subjects be in-depth studies of subjects, especially in the area of doctrine. Examples:
 - Creation and the Fall
 - Christology
 - Sanctification
 - The Church and the Ministry

or in the area of exegesis.

Example: Using parts of scripture that also make application to doctrine and practice such as:

- Holy Communion
- Baptism
- Pastoral care

- 4) That the Instructors in these institutes be expatriate personnel, even exchange professors and if possible national workers who are capable of providing in-depth instruction of the topic at hand.

5. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION.

This brings us to a final suggestion and one that deserves a good deal of attention because

- 1) It allows for the additional training of both evangelists and pastors.
- 2) It can be used in any language area because it needs only to be translated into a specific language when the original study programmed materials are written.
- 3) It permits the pastor or evangelist to proceed at his own pace.
- 4) It does not entail a great deal of expense for travel or housing for the participants.
- 5) A payment of a fee to engage in such a course of study may be an incentive for the participant to conclude the course of study.

On the other hand theological education by extension requires

- 1) Someone to periodically meet with the participants.
- 2) Programmed study materials.
- 3) Authors of such study materials that may need special training to produce the programmed materials.

While theological education by extension was designed for the Bible institute and seminary training of men in their home environment, I wish to apply the technique to the post-graduate training of our national pastors and evangelists.

Ralph Covell and C. Peter Wagner in their book *An Extension Seminary Primer* state, “A leader of the Indian church says: ‘The average pastor in India does not know how to lead a soul to Christ or to preach expository messages.’ Those of us in theological education need to be concerned about this kind of situation. This points out the need for in-service training, perhaps to an even greater degree than for pre-service training.” While we would hope that our national pastors are better trained than those spoken of above, yet, we too need an in-service training program for our national pastors and evangelists. Theological education by extension provides a way to extend our seminary program. We are not eliminating present structures, but are supplementing our seminary programs in a complementary and not a contradictory way.

Covell and Wagner observe “On most mission fields where indigenous church principles are applied, missions have found that one of the last aspects of the church-related work which can be turned over to the churches is the ministerial training program. This is due largely to the economic structure. . . . “ This might also apply to post-graduate training. The theological education by extension program may be a program that would reduce costs of post-graduate training in widely scattered fields and even permit such post-graduate training after our expatriates may have left the field.

The extension seminary came into existence in Guatemala in 1962 when the need to train more pastors was evident. By 1963 the value of programmed, self-instructional materials had been widely accepted by the participants.

Ralph Winter has listed five advantages of theological education by extension recognized by Guatemalans and later others throughout Latin America, Asia, and Africa. These include:

- 1) The door was opened for leaders who desired to reach a higher level of training.
- 2) The leaders could receive their theological education within the context of their own sub-culture.
- 3) The system permitted those students who had low motivation to leave without losing face.
- 4) Instead of lowering academic levels, it was observed that the extension student learns better and develops better habits in his home.
- 5) The project is more economical than the conventional seminary, and it saves much time for the professor.”

All of these advantages except perhaps number four could apply to post-graduate training for national pastors using the theological education by extension method.

In order to carry out a post-graduate program by theological education by extension it is necessary to have

- 1) Students. This program begins with the students. This is the starting point.
- 2) Faculty. Obviously teachers are needed. Since theological education by extension makes demands on professors that are quite different from the conventional teaching job, all professors are not prepared to participate in this kind of program.
- 3) Self-teaching materials. These are special programmed materials that need to be well prepared. This is the most difficult aspect of theological education by extension. The subjects that we might consider for such courses would likely be more factual in nature. These might include church history, Old Testament and New Testament Isogogics, Comparative Symbolics. I would suggest that such programmed materials be supplemented by cassettes and other visual aids.

Theological education by extension is by no means a complete solution to postgraduate training of nationals in widely scattered fields, but it is a method that should be given some consideration.

CONCLUSIONS

I am sure that this conference will come to the conclusion that to have a competent national ministry in our sister churches in the world, we will need to have a thorough post-graduate training program for evangelists and pastors.

There are methods being used in our world mission fields such as pastoral conferences, workshops, institutes, Latin American Conferences, which can strengthen the understanding and broaden the horizons of the theological knowledge of our national evangelists and pastors.

These methods can all be used to a lesser or greater degree in areas where evangelists and pastors live in close proximity to one another or are greatly widespread.

However, the content of the papers at these conferences are not always developed to reach a particular goal. Also, each mission field may be going about this work in a way that is unknown to other fields and without input from the other mission fields.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I would propose therefore

- 1) That a committee or individual be appointed to give a considerable amount of study to the development of post-graduate curricula for advanced training of both evangelists and pastors.
- 2) That this committee not only establish such curricula but also outline the courses of study to be used in order that an in-depth study of the various areas of theology might be arranged.
- 3) That this committee give attention to developing these courses so they can be used in a one or two week post-graduate type of Bible institute program.
- 4) That this committee study the possibility of developing a theological education by extension program for post-graduate training and that this study include
 - a) means to provide programmed study materials, and
 - b) means to meet regularly with students engaged in such a post-graduate theological education by extension program.
- 5) That this committee also study the advisability and produce guidelines for the use of national pastors to conduct post-graduate training for both evangelists and pastors.

The Lord has blessed our previous efforts in training a national ministry so that we have a number of national evangelists and pastors in our world mission fields today. May the Lord in heaven bless our continuing efforts to develop a national ministry in our sister churches that is apt to teach. May he especially bless our efforts today in the area of post-graduate training of the workers He has graciously given to us so that we may have unified and common goals and effective methods to reach our goals in the post-graduate training of these God-given workers.

Strengthening The Ministry Of Our National Called Workers In a Church Which Has Come of Age

World Seminary Conference 1982

By Harold Johnne

Some of the things I have jotted down here would also apply to the other two types of field already covered in the previous presentations. If you wish, I shall be happy to skip those sections as I read this paper to the conference. I might also mention that many of the things said about post-graduate professional growth might also apply to this present subject.

How can we help strengthen the ministry of our called national workers?

1. We can pray for them. We need to pray for them and their ministry daily. We need to pray also for the ability to help them and for the ability to receive help from them.
2. We need to remember that our national workers are brothers, fellow workers, fellow believers, fellow human beings. We need to establish a give-and-take rapport, and where possible, friendships with them and their families.

3. In pastoral conferences we can try to establish an atmosphere where our national Pastors and we can speak freely about methods we have been trying recently, apparent success or failures, events of interest in our work. In Japan for example, a recent funeral always calls for a report by the pastor. Exchanging ideas, sharing joys in our work in pastoral conferences certainly can serve to strengthen the ministry of our national called workers. Other suggestions for pastoral conferences are offered in the essay in professional growth.
4. Visitation can serve to strengthen the ministry of called national workers. The field superintendent or the chairman of the church body can be the visitor. If this becomes too much for him, visiting elders can be elected or appointed. I personally feel that a visitation should be made about once a year.

Visitation obviously requires tact, an attitude of sharing rather than investigating. We need to respect the national worker's call from our Lord.

In a visitation I think we need to discuss as many facets of a pastor's work as possible. This might include sermon methods, Bible classes, Evangelism, efforts to win back those who have strayed, professional growth through reading, etc. I think that the discussions should include the pastor's health and that of his family. I believe that, if possible, the visitation should also include a discussion of the pastor's finances.

5. We should do what we can to assure our national workers an adequate salary. By adequate I mean a salary that will enable them to maintain a standard of living that is reasonable for their culture and society. If a pastor has to worry about finances to a great extent, this will most likely have an adverse affect on his ministry. If he needs to work at another job in order to make a living, this will certainly make inroads into his ministry. The salary a pastor receives may have a direct effect on the tools he buys for his work, such as a bike or motor bike, or car, for example. This in turn will most likely affect his ministry.
6. I believe that the pastor's paper work and his organizational or administrative work should be kept to a minimum. What I have in mind are such things as statistical reports, financial reports, projections, guidelines, handbooks, attending meetings, tending to the functioning of the organizational structure of the church, etc. These things are a necessary part of the life of the Church in this world. These things should be done. They should be done well. I believe, however, that they should be kept to a minimum. We should constantly strive to enable our national workers to give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word, the way the Apostles did in the mother congregation in Jerusalem. This too will strengthen their ministry.