

Radio Ministry in the USA:
A history of the WELS' & LCMS' Radio Ministries
& other contemporary trends applied to the future

Senior Church History
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"Broadcast historians have varying ideas as to when the first radio program was actually transmitted. For convenience in documentation, most broadcast historians recognize the presidential election returns of 1920 on KKDA in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, as the first radio program aired by a commercial radio station. There were several broadcasts by radio experimenters prior to 1920.

A Canadian experimenter named Reginald Aubrey Fessenden broadcast a radio program to ships at sea on Christmas Eve 1906. This may have been the first attempt to broadcast for other than experimental purposes. The first program was a Christian one. Fessenden read Luke 2:1-20; a female vocalist sang a piece from Handel's Messiah; a poem was read; and then a violin solo of 'O Holy Night' was played. Finally there was a brief speech which could have been a sermon or a devotional thought. It is significant to note that the first radio program was totally involved with the birth of Christ. It is also significant that in 1920 and for many years afterward, Christian programming was deeply respected" (Fasol p. 55).

The fact that Christians, throughout the course of history, have recognized when a new medium was developed that it could be used to spread the gospel has been substantiated by John Barber in his paper on the media. It is certainly interesting that the radio was immediately recognized as serving the larger needs of the kingdom of God. Men of God pioneered the implementation of this new technology early in its history. Such men as Bishop Fulton Sheen, Walter Maier, Paul Rader, Charles Fuller, and Father Coughlin took to the air waves to preach their own brand of theology. Some were quite controversial and short-lived while others retained a national audience for extended periods of time. Walter A. Maier was a Missouri Synod Lutheran and pioneer in the broadcast ministry. In part I. we will explore the success of the Lutheran hour. In part II. we will examine our own WELS' involvement. And in part III. we will explore ministries and ideas outside of our

circles. Hopefully our study will encourage a vision of new possibilities for expansion of our Synod's present Radio Ministry.

I. Walter A. Maier's "Lutheran Hour" (the RM of the LCMS)

A. Beginnings

It is reported that the advent of radio tickled Walter Maier's fancy right from the start. As God would have it, the young professor of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis lived only three doors away from a young engineering student named Herman Gihring. Their mutual interest in radio led to a long and lasting friendship. They often spent long hours discussing this new technology. This was the era of the crystal set and earphones which could pull in one or two pioneer stations amid much static. One night W.A.M. (as he was called by his best friends) got the electrifying idea to use radio to broadcast the gospel. Walter and Herman discussed the possibilities and the specific problems that would have to be addressed. What about the broadcast causing laziness and drops in church attendance? Would the elimination of the visual sense be prohibitive or advantageous to the message? Finally, Gihring asked the question which gave birth to the newest station in St. Louis, "What if radio stations refuse to take a religious program?" Maier answered, "In that case the church would have to build its own radio stations. Actually, that might be a good plan anyway" (Maier p. 70).

"Herman concurred, but cautioned against broadcasting only religious services: 'Preach all the time and no one

will listen.' Walter chuckled and agreed. He thought the station could offer a variety of other worthwhile features besides a core of religious programming. Since the church should provide leadership in culture, hours of good music, drama, discussion forums, and book reviews might well be presented--and without advertising to hound the hearer. Probably the station could be supported by listener contributions as a charitable agency" (Maier p. 71).

There was some work to be done however, before the station became a reality. Herman attended an electronics exposition in St. Louis where he learned of the new Western Electric radio transmitters. The equipment was available but the question of funding became the ultimate issue. He also needed faculty support for his idea to house the new station in a little room in the attic of the Concordia Seminary. He was able to convince Dr. John H. C. Fritz Concordia's dean that radio was "God's special gift to the church." The success of Wam's earlier ministry had payed off. As former executive secretary of the Walther League (a Missouri Synod Youth organization) and present editor of the Messenger (the League's publication) he was able to make a case for the marriage of radio and gospel proclamation. The effort resulted in \$7000 coming in from the league and this fund was matched by laymen, friends and even seminary students! "A 500-watt transmitter was purchased and soon two tall masts connected by antennae projected above the roof of Concordia Seminary. On Sunday, December 14, 1924, KFUE began broadcasting at 9:15 P.M. with the words: 'This is Station KFUE, Concordia Theological Seminary....' It was an exciting moment for Wam" (ibid p. 72).

The Maier experiment got in on the ground floor of the radio industry. His Thursday evening feature entitled "Views on the News," in which he commented on the major stories of the week from their political, social, and religious perspectives, predated most regular news commentators by several years. Success seemed to crown everything the young man from back east attempted. "Unchurched listeners started showing an interest in religion and writing to admit it. By the end of the first year on the air, thousands of letters had been recieved" (ibid p. 73). This statistic was a highly significant fact in determining the need and success of the venture. In the early years of radio and continuing to the present mail is the single most important factor for evaluating the audience and effectiveness of the ministry. Maier's sermons in the 20's were characterized as "pertinent to the contemporary scene." He tried to relate scripture to the time in which he was living. That made for good preaching--that made for good listening.

B. New Home & Challenges

By the fall of 1926 Concordia had successfully built a new Seminary campus. "Moving along with the rest of Concordia, Station KFUE had climbed down from its attic and was now a large, new building a quarter-mile west of the seminary complex. The station boasted four studios, reception and control rooms, more powerful transmitters, and the latest electronic equipment. New KFUE was an outright gift of the Lutheran Laymen's League, an organization of men in the Missouri Synod whose purpose was 'to aid Synod with word and deed in business and financial matters.' Its purpose was later broadened to include fellowship, educational, and service projects" (ibid p. 85).

As the popularity of the St. Louis station grew Wam wanted to expand his horizons beyond the city to include a national broadcast. The policies of the F.C.C. were in a way unfair to the Lutheran Hour since they provided free air time to churches who were under the auspices of the Federal Council of Churches. This, by necessity, was a restrictive policy and gave air time to Jews, Protestants and Catholics--that is one slot per group. Even if there was some free time available, it became apparent that the Lutheran broadcast would have to be paid for according to commercial rates; they would have to purchase time like any other seller of soap or automobiles.

This, of course, produced an enormous financial hurdle. Weekly costs for air time would add up to \$4500, which in turn would amount to well over \$200,000 annually. The generous Laymen's League resolved to sponsor a national Lutheran Radio Hour over the Columbia Broadcasting System beginning that fall. To save time and money the original program which was one hour was shaved to a half hour but it

was still called "The Lutheran Hour." The program was placed on the Thursday night schedule running from 10:00 P.M. on the east coast to 7:00 on the west coast. "A midweek evening was chosen because there was much concern that the broadcast might conflict with the Sunday church services or be regarded as a substitute for them" (ibid p. 115). The premiere broadcast was aired on October 2, 1930, emanating from WHK in Cleveland.

The Cleveland Bach chorus was the main reason for holding the first broadcast in Cleveland. They provided special music for the program. "Succeeding broadcasts originated in other cities with excellent musical talent, but the majority emanated from KFUC in St. Louis. The addresses thrust into important contemporary issues for which Christianity had a message, and copies were requested by the thousands. Every fourth program was called 'The Young People's Lutheran Hour' and slanted toward the problems of youth. This part of the series was supported by the Walther League" (ibid p. 120). It is interesting to note the use of music in the program's format. The format you could say is very traditional and is more or less a shrunk down church service.

In its first year the broadcast showed phenomenal success. If that is measured primarily by listener response, then the 57,000 letters recieved certainly leave us with only one conclusion. "Many conversions were reported and often confirmed by local clergy. A woman in

Rockland, Mass., joyfully told how she, her husband, and daughter were baptized on Easter Sunday as a result of hearing the broadcast. At the opposite end of the country, a sermon on immorality induced a man in Long Beach, Calif., to accept Christ, and there were many such instances in between. Similarly, an army of backsliders from Minneapolis to Miami were reconsecrated in the faith and recharged for the church, as they and their ministers eagerly reported" (ibid p. 121). Though the program was aired only nine months in its first official season, it had set new records in religious broadcasting. CBS recieved more letters at its New York headquarters concerning the Lutheran Hour than in response to any other network program. And only after one-half year on the air, Walter Maier recieved more mail than did all the programs sponsored by the Federal Council of Churches over the NBC network that entire year.

Unfortunately, the financial crush of the depression was too much for the expensive operation. Listener contributions dropped off in direct proportion to the nation's economy. Soon the station was in deep financial trouble even in spite of a very generous show of support by one, Henry Dahlen of New York, who signed a note for \$50,000 to keep the sinking ship afloat. The decision to conclude broadcasting was forced upon the League, and on June 11, 1931, Walter stepped before his microphone for what appeared to be the last time. "The paradox remained that these

(other religious programs sponsored by the Federal Council of Churches) continued to enjoy free network programming while apparently the most popular religious radio speaker in America was off the air because his broadcast had to be purchased at rates which were financially prohibitive" (ibid p. 125).

C. The Hour Expands Abroad

During the interim period Professor Maier kept himself busy with other projects. Radio, however, was never very far from his mind. The Detroit radio committee was a federation of Lutheran congregations near Detroit who sponsored their own "Lutheran Hour (of Faith and Fellowship)" each Sunday afternoon. Wam preached for this ministry several times in 1932 & 1933. Inevitably, he and the Detroit radio commission discussed the possibility of resuming the national Lutheran Hour. Their plans were more modest than the national network coverage. They began talking about a smaller broadcast area. Key to these operations were WXYZ, Detroit, and the 500,000 watt WLW of Cincinnati. With the power and range of the Cincinnati station the entire east coast could be reached. Again the question of finances had to be squarely met to insure a solid and lasting financial basis from which to operate. A benefactor was found in William Knudsen, the man who later became president of General Motors. He generously volunteered to underwrite the entire cost of the first series of broadcasts betting on the fact that listener contributions would "save him."

On Sunday February 10, 1935, the Second Lutheran Hour was born. The speaker had to travel to Michigan each weekend to broadcast the program. Mr. Knudsen had been correct concerning the listener contributions, for after

several broadcasts contributions enabled the chain to add new links. Soon KFUP; WTJS, Jackson, Tenn.; and KLCN, Blytheville, Ark., had joined this modest rebirth of the broadcast. The hand of the LORD was evident in the success of the broadcast from early on. It proved that indeed the people were like sheep without a shepherd. It filled a deep spiritual void in those depressing days. In fact, we can see God's hand even in the tragic loss of the original program in the national network; the first Lutheran Hour sparked national interest and listenership, the response was positive, and thus, the stage was set for a reopening of national broadcasting when the time was ripe. Dr. Maier never forgot who was blessing his efforts. Whenever he was interviewed concerning the great success of his ministry, inevitably, it became an opportunity for Wam to give credit where credit was due.

The god-given ministry has continued right up to the present day without skipping a season. Over the course of the ensuing seven seasons (1935-1942) the ministry expanded to ever-increasing audiences. In time this included foreign broadcasting in various different languages. The first foreign endeavor began in 1939, when Clarence W. Jones, director of the station in Quito, Ecuador "chanced to hear the voice of Dr. Maier during a visit to the States and wrote him, offering the facilities of his station for English and Spanish broadcasts of the Lutheran Hour." The program had to be renamed, "Bringing Christ to the Nation"

(1935) as the audience took on a national appeal, and later "Bringing Christ to the Nations," (1940) to fit the international scope of the program and to downplay a denominational flavor (witness the problems we have overseas with "Lutheran").

A significant change for the third season was the fact that Walter didn't have to travel to Michigan every weekend to do the program since the broadcasts now emanated from his own KFUD in St. Louis. Through the link of the Mutual Broadcasting System, then, it was distributed to many stations nation-wide. The mail also increased for that season (70,000 letters arrived). People with spiritual problems were encouraged to write about them. Pastor Walter Maier faithfully responded to the needs of his "electronic congregation" by returning an answer to correspondence, if necessary, with spiritual counsel. Unchurched people were directed to the nearest Lutheran or, if unavailable, to the nearest Christian church. This would allow for follow-up and instruction classes with a view toward membership. Because of the requests of listeners for a copy of Dr. Maier's radio messages it was most prudent to publish the entire series of sermons per season in one volume. This was done each year and thus the ministry was continued in print form.

Growth characterized every succeeding season. This was no less true for the fourth season. The far West had by necessity been neglected in the rebirth of the Lutheran

Hour, but in the fourth season a breakthrough in negotiations yielded two important western links, KFEL, Denver, and nine stations of California's Don Lee Network. The total number of outlets then was 31 or nearly the broadcasting strength of the first season. Mail now increased by 20,000 pieces and its spread was truly national. More than that, it was continental since even Canadian and Mexican mail was recieved.

The numbers which tell the success story of the ministry become increasingly higher and mind-boggling. In the fifth season the station outlets doubled from 31 to 62. This included outlets in the deep South and the Pacific Northwest which had previously not been covered. The mail jumped another 35,000 pieces annually to bring the total correspondence to 125,000 letters. The Hour also earned a first place rating above any other religious program. In 1963 Paul Maier was able to claim that the Hour has held that position "ever since." Incredibly, only a small fraction of all the correspondence received was negative, i.e. "registering disapproval of any kind." The program, because it preached Christ crucified, had a wide interdenominational appeal, "For non-Lutheran ministers to suggest that their congregations tune in Dr. Maier after their own Sunday services became standard practice in some localities" (ibid p. 175). This certainly comes about as close to being a pastor of the Holy Christian Church as one could hope to come, and this without attempting in popish

fashion to accomplish outward unity but simply by the power of the Spirit.

In contrast to the fifth season which saw listener contributions covering about one half of the broadcast costs, the sixth season ended up supplying three-fifths of the total network costs. The mass appeal of mass media, and the ability for it to reach inside of people's homes and personal lives is demonstrated by a contribution from the president of Warner Brother's Pictures and its accompanying letter which admits the "lack of time for church." Is there a group of people who will go to heaven regardless of their attendance in a Christian church? If we are to allow for that possibility, albeit something to be discouraged, then radio is one way in which to reach and serve the needs of such people. Another 15,000 responses added to the previous year's total in the sixth season. It was estimated that the show had hearers in the millions, though in radio exact figures are always difficult to establish.

As alluded to above the seventh season (1939/40) moved the Hour into international programming. A foreign program department had to be established, and speakers and interpreters had to be gathered to facilitate foreign work. KZRM in the Philippine islands was added near Christmas. Its coverage included New Zealand, Japan, China, Malaya and even India by means of the short wave. Evidently these broadcasts were in English as the halting English in some

Chinese letters suggests. Correspondence soared to over 176,000 pieces, nearly 40,000 above the previous series.

The eighth season was the one in which the program had to be renamed, "Bringing Christ to the Nations." The foreign station outlets went from 12 to 52. Many Latin American outlets joined the ranks, and there were even negotiations with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek "for possible extension of a Mandarin broadcast throughout China." 200,00 letters were received that year.

The Second World War was blazing in the midst of the tremendous growth of the Hour. Wam had predicted the eventual involvement of his own country in the strife. Yet, in spite of the turmoil of the times, the Lutheran Hour continued to turn the eyes of all nations to God and fill the spiritual needs in a war-torn world. English, Spanish and Portuguese were employed in nearly every country in the Western Hemisphere. That year the program also became available on the European mainland and parts of Africa. It was heard by military personnel 20,000 feet up in the air and under the sea. Mail arrived from 36 countries and the count increased to 260,000. "The weekly broadcast audience was now projected roughly at 10,000,000 people a figure corroborated by other means of audience measurement" (ibid p. 184).

The history of the Hour's international involvement is a long one. We just briefly touched upon some of the highlights here, since it is an important chapter in the

history of the Hour. Yet to pursue it much further would take us far afield from our study, since we primarily are concerned with Christian programming that serves to preach the gospel in the United States. The fact that in 1942 the Lutheran Laymen's League adopted a goal to "use every available and suitable station on earth for the proclamation of Christ's eternal gospel" shows their commitment to a world-wide cause and proves the international scope of the Hour.

D. For Christ & Country

As early as 1934 Walter Maier predicted involvement in the war, saying "there will be a second world war, which in some respects will definitely be more horrible than the first" (ibid p. 219). The need for faith in a time such as a war is all the more clear cut, and the Hour ministry rose to the occasion. "Instead of retrenching they resolved to expand wherever wartime restrictions would permit, especially in one very vital area: reaching men and women in the Armed Forces" (p. 222). To aid soldiers training to go overseas he moved many of his wartime broadcasts "on location" at various military installations on the United States mainland. He also created his unique double pledge of allegiance which he introduced at his first military broadcast at Fort Leonard in Missouri. To the pledge of allegiance he added these words, "I also pledge allegiance to the Cross of Jesus Christ and to the faith for which it stands, one Savior-King eternal, with grace and mercy for all. So help me God!" (p. 223). This motto was distilled to the simple statement "For Christ and Country."

As a service to those overseas, many little cards with this double pledge of allegiance were printed out and distributed. They also designed a small lapel pin "which crossed miniature American and Christian flags with staffs constituting a V for victory, beneath which was a scroll embossed with 'For Christ and Country'" (ibid). These were

just as popular as the small metal crosses given out by the Hour during peace time. The crosses underscored their "Bringing Christ to the nations" theme. In addition, Maier served his parish of the airwaves by providing much needed portable devotional materials. He produced a 66 page booklet measuring less than 3x5 which could easily fit into any uniform. The book contained many prayers applying to special wartime needs (For Airmen, For the Seriously Wounded, and so on). The "Wartime Prayer Guide" was so popular that Concordia had to print several hundred thousand copies. Those who had them soon ran out of supply. The Gideons also supplied pocket New Testaments which were distributed by the Hour

In spite of heavy restrictions regarding geographic locations in correspondence there still was sufficient military mail to assume a large listenership in the military. Think of it, by what other medium could a soldier right in the thick of battle be comforted by a sermon than through radio? Naturally, Dr. Maier concentrated on war motifs and illustrations in his sermons to bring them the special comfort of everlasting life through Jesus Christ with death so near at hand. This too, was greatly appreciated by the men who had to suffer through the pains of war. One front line lieutenant in France speaking for his platoon said, "If it wasn't for your program we could never stand up under it all" (p. 228). Even many Japanese Americans in Relocation Centers were comforted and literally

clung to the message of the gospel. Certainly, Maier must have been right when he applied the words of Mordecai the Jew to the advent of radio, "Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

E. Why the Success?

Certainly there were other radio preachers around in those days, but the legitimate question needs to be raised--Why was the Lutheran Hour so successful? For us today studying Radio Ministry the answers and conclusions are highly applicable; indeed we would love to immitate his success at communicating the gospel to his entire world. Paul Maier takes many suggested reasons and proceeds to dispell the myths for what they are. For instance, one argument suggests that the Hour got in on the ground floor of a new medium and thus had an advantage over modern broadcast methods. Although as Maier points out it wasn't the first religious program, yet the fact that it was one of the first is valid. Maier counters the argument of "no competition" with the fact that religious programming perhaps had the fiercest competition of all, since its programming was limited generally to Sunday mornings. Someone else might point to the benefit of a large sponsoring organization, to which Maier says yes, but the entire synodical population only accounted for 1% of the U.S. population. Besides, all funds are non-budgetary. Nor was it a matter of professional direction, production or smooth script writing, but rather one of radio amateurs breaking all the rules.

They were pioneers in an uncharted medium who learned as they progressed and came off with professional results.

Firstly, the credit always goes to God. Yet, the whole staff and helpers are also deserving of praise since the Hour was very much a team effort.

"Unsung heroines of the radio crusade were the host of secretaries and clerks at headquarters who processed the huge bundles of mail arriving from many parts of the world. The volume of mail was channeled separately. Over the years, Professor Maier was able to classify human difficulties into 400 categories, and when letters fell squarely into these his replies were composed from forms he had prepared. However, all letters which could not be answered accurately in this fashion as well as those dealing with very serious personal or spiritual difficulties found their way to his desk, after transfer from Lutheran Hour suboffice at Concordia seminary" (Maier p. 195).

A second reason offered in addition to the Lutheran Hour staff help and donated funds is the appeal of the Lutheran music. A wide variety of music was often offered as standard fare on all broadcasts. The quality was top notch. "The rich musical heritage of the Lutheran tradition was presented in its most representative form: the chorale, sung by a chorus a cappella, or occasionally with pipe organ and orchestral accompaniment" (p. 198). Essentially, this is the same music that can be heard in our churches today. This fact made a rise in active participation in corporate worship (even for the unchurched) a less frightening experience in terms of comfort and knowledge.

Certainly, the heart of the message was the gospel in application to modern times. This was the main reason behind it all--God blessed the preaching of the Word. Yet from a purely physical standpoint he (Maier) must have done something right; that is, he must not have placed too many obstacles in the way of those who were to hear the gospel.

Dr. Kenneth Sulston wrote a 600 page paper analyzing the content of Dr. Maier's preaching. Paul Maier does some of his own studying and concludes that in three basic areas of homiletics Maier excelled: preparation, content, and delivery.

Five key points can be made concerning his preparation. Firstly, his preaching was rooted in the Christian church year. He especially used the high church festivals well in teaching about Christ. Yet he was not a slave to this type of preaching that one would expect in a normal Lutheran church for he needed to reach people outside of or on the very fringes of the church. Thus, he was constantly in tune with the needs of his listening audience. He could easily estimate their needs from the correspondence he received. Thirdly, he was keenly aware of national and international affairs which had religious overtones. These he could capitalize on from time to time as a means of communicating the gospel and calling sinners to repentance. A fourth source of preparation helps was his huge filing system (25 four-drawer steel cabinets). He had been an avid reader since his student days, and he continued to read and store information which would eventually come in handy. Last but not least, logically or chronologically, was his study of the text in the original language.

The content of his sermons is also valuable to investigate. Logically, law and gospel was central in all his sermons. These need to have a general balance in the

sermon with the gospel being predominant as Walther's thesis states. A representative sermon was studied and largely this was found to be true. Not only was the message well grounded in scripture but he also was able to add a host of other convincing proofs from many sources.

"He brought all his resources to bear on the task of translating theology into a living message which pulsed with importance for people, which sought to persuade them that their relationship to God was the most crucial factor in their existence. To do this he directed potent appeals to the reason, emotion, and will of any who chanced to tune in. To the intellect he addressed logical proofs of the truth of theism and Christianity in belief and practice, testimonies of renowned authorities in various fields, data, demonstrations, and special information on contemporary affairs which illustrated his train of thought. Regularly summoned was the evidence of past and present leaders in the worlds of politics, business, labor, science, and education to support secondary points in his argumanrrtion" (Maier p.205).

The most evident characteristic of his preaching was his authoritative style. He backed up his points with facts and it must have been quite hard to disagree with him. Thus his delivery could be called one of "dynamic urgency." Both the high rate of speech (130-170 w/min), and his ability to speak spontaneously without being bound to a manuscript contributed to his style of dynamic urgency. He knew the gospel needed to be preached and responded to. He constantly realized that he was inches away from being turned off by a listener, so he strove to hold their attention as best he could. Most importantly, he preached to the people and to their needs.

"Dr. Maier scored the sins of the day, indeed of the ages. He proclaimed the deity of Christ, His human birth, His suffering and death for the sins of the world; all of Jesus' life And work. In this context he offered forgiveness to the sinner and hope to the sick, the lonely, and the

forsaken. Wm. F. McDermott of the Christian Herald called Dr. Maier the 'Jeremiah of the 20th century'" (Kramer p. 100).

It was a sad day for radio ministry when Walter A. Maier no longer graced the air waves. His efforts to preach Christ on the air consumed enough time for one man to do well in that particular field and be satisfied, yet Dr. Maier was a Seminary Professor of Old Testament, a scholar, a father, a husband. Somewhere in between class, family and radio he managed to write a lengthy commentary on the book of Nahum and start a church in the inner city of St. Louis with help from Seminary students. He was a much beloved man, but unfortunately worked himself to death. At the age of 56 on January 11, 1950 Walter Arthur Maier passed on to his heavenly existence. He had suffered several heart attacks and died of congestive heart failure. He made a beautiful confession of his faith and he stopped breathing right at the Amen of the prayer his family was praying together. The world mourned the death of Walter Maier. Truly the numbers who died in Christ because of this man's work will only be known when we get there.

F. Subsequent LCMS Radio Ministry Efforts

The legacy of Walter A. Maier lives on to this very day, as the radio station he was so large a part in developing and the program for which it was principally built (The Lutheran Hour) have remained on the air all these years. Yet the station was a bit unprepared for the loss of its speaker who had been virtually in the prime of his life. There was a bit of a shuffle for a while to fill the position. A series of guest speakers was scheduled until Dr. Lawrence Acker, Lutheran Laymen's League pastoral advisor, became interim speaker. Dr. Acker served until 1953 when Prof. Armin C. Oldsen of Valparaiso University stepped in as the next regular speaker. A program such as this is really put to the test with the loss of its principle voice and subsequently with the lack of continuity which it caused.

Finally, in September of 1955 Dr. Oswald Hoffman, a former student of professor Maier's Old Testament course, became the third regular Lutheran Hour speaker. Dr. Hoffman is said to preach in a style somewhat different from Dr. Maier, yet "his resonant bass voice communicates the same message very successfully." In 1963 Paul Maier could still boast about the Hour, "'Bringing Christ to the Nations' is still the largest non-government broadcasting enterprise in the world, and is heard globally over more than 1,200 stations in 40 languages. In the Far East, a

branch office was opened in Tokyo to handle the 90,000 letters which arrive there annually. Many listeners enroll in the Japanese Bible correspondence course" (ibid p.379-80).

From the 1967 Missouri Synod Convention Workbook some more details can be added. At that time the Hour was being broadcast by 700 U.S. stations and some 500 more world-wide. The program is aired in 135 lands and 40 different languages to an estimated audience of 30,000,000 souls. The Lutheran Hour does appear in varied formats in different places. The format is drama in Japan as it has been ever since its inception particularly because that is what works well for that culture. In other places story telling is used as a technique. By 1969 the Hour had increased its foreign language coverage to 49 languages and it had 24 Lutheran Hour Branch offices world-wide. " it is clear from the massive foreign ministry that this radio work is not just an electronic reinforcement of denominational loyalty, but mission in the classic sense" (Ellens p. 46).

Essentially, the program format has remained largely unchanged as it celebrates its 65 year anniversary this year. The success of the Hour has tapered off somewhat in direct relation to the popularity of network radio, although the slack is picked up by many independent stations today. An interesting scenario developed in April of 1978, when "NBC refused to carry the April 9 program on the grounds that it presents 'one side of a controversial issue' and

that NBC policy forbids sale of time 'for the presentation of views on controversial public issues.' In this case, the issue is abortion" (Matthews p. 56). Tommy Thompson of the Lutheran Hour was infuriated claiming a violation of first amendment rights, saying, "it's fine to have religion on the air as long as it doesn't say anything controversial." He claimed the Hour treated controversial issues only as the gospel applies to them. In an archdiocesan newspaper the archbishop of ST. Louis is recorded as saying, "Hoffman continually proclaims a controversial doctrine: 'Jesus Christ is Lord'" (Matthews p. 57). During the first 25 years Walter Maier served as the Hour speaker; then followed an interim period of 6 years. The next 34 years saw Dr. Hoffman at the mic; and as of May 1, 1989 Dr. Dale Meyer was chosen as the latest Lutheran Hour speaker.

That pretty well summarizes the history of the Lutheran Hour. Yet the story of the LCMS' radio ministry is not complete without mentioning some of the accomplishments of the radio station KFUD which continues to broadcast to St. Louis and vicinity. Since 1930, KFUD has broadcast the two Sunday morning services of Pilgrim Lutheran Church in St. Louis. Besides the Lutheran Hour the station has sponsored many different devotional programs over the years. It has a long-standing tradition to broadcast the morning devotions of the seminary student body at Concordia. In 1953 the morning devotions of Luther High were added to the programming schedule.

In 1957, the two minute devotional program "Portals of Prayer" was developed in conjunction with Concordia Publishing House. By 1959, the program was circulated among 600 stations and boasted an estimated listening audience of 25,000,000. Similar figures were offered in the '62 Convention Workbook. The "Portals" later, in 1982 celebrated its 25 year anniversary and enjoyed wide acclaim. KFUD devotes 30 programs per week to devotions and has many St. Louis area Pastors to thank for their time and talents as speakers and lecturers. In 1973 a new devotional program was added for noontime listening entitled "Christ for Today;" its format was similar to that of "Portals." Finally, in 1981 KFUD announced the debut of its new program "Joy," a sacred choral music program designed to compliment and develop the theme of each Sunday's Scripture lesson.

Besides a constant and rich use of our Lutheran musical heritage, KFUD by law has to provide public service and does so by means of various programs. Although the best time slots are reserved for religious programming, some secular type programs are included. Local and national news is also included as a public service; the advantage is that the news can be delivered from a Christian perspective. KFUD uses no commercial announcements to finance its operation and therefore, the listener is not constantly badgered by these materialistic teasers. Over the years KFUD, with the assistance of the Board for Lutheran Radio, has constantly developed and tested new Gospel programs designed to meet

the varying needs of different types of listeners. Actually, whether this type of programming was initially considered by design or by default, secular programming serves to create public interest in the station and may hold a listener long enough to hear the gospel several times a day during the various devotional programs.

The programs of KFUD include a number of educational programs designed for everyday life: "Juvenile Delinquency, Mental Health, Communism, Capital Punishment, The Christian Family, Single Parents, Church Music in a Changing Age, Alcoholism, Neglected Children, Aging" etc.. Two other programs "Encounter" and "Person to Pastor," concentrate on listener call-ins and maximum audience participation. Thus, with a wide range of programming KFUD provides public service to the community at large and has received several awards for its programs and documentaries.

Originally, KFUD broadcasted only on AM frequency but since 1950 has also had the ability to broadcast on FM until midnight at which time their programming day ends. In the 1975 LCMS Convention Workbook the station was reported to have a stereo broadcast facility "as powerful as any in the U. S.." Not only does the station serve the Synod and wider church by producing The Lutheran Hour and Portals of Prayer, but it also provides service to future radio ministries by training Seminary students acquainting them with the hands-on, daily operation of radio and television studios. For those already out in the field, the station provides

program materials, ideas, guidance and encouragement. For those who want to design their own program or spot, the station makes its staff and equipment available for custom production of such materials. In addition it provides spot announcements for wide distribution, cassette recordings en masse for convention addresses, rallies and so on, and the station has its own sacred music choir consisting of 80 voices (1981 information).

For all of the services the station provides to the Synod at large one would think that a goodly portion of the annual budget would be devoted to the cause, yet from the start the Lutheran Hour, KFUD Radio and all her projects, branches, and agencies have existed on non-budgetary funds coming from the generous gifts of individuals, the Lutheran Laymen's League, The Walther League and various other sources. In 1950 financial support was a big problem. The Synod had pledged \$18,000 annually but was remitting only \$12,000 per year. The Synod in convention was memorialized to contribute \$29,000 per year (this money must have come from a special non-budgetary fund). Three years later the report said that Synod had only contributed \$8000. An ultimatum, of sorts was laid down: Either Synod will contribute more money or underwrite the deficit, Or (2) the Synod will assume operating costs, or (3) KFUD radio would finance the programming by introducing commercials. The author has no knowledge concerning the action taken on this ultimatum. In 1971 a professional broadcasting consultant

was hired by KFUCO to determine the most efficient use of the station's time and money. The news from the Convention Workbook is not rosy, "Rising costs are making it increasingly difficult to maintain high performance quality and a balanced budget" (p. 414). One year around 1975 was underwritten by the Lutheran Brotherhood and finances were said to be on solid footing. Yet, the gift was only temporary and in '83 once again money was scarce, "the need for additional sources of income are readily apparent and are given a high priority" (p.74).

That concludes the information I was able to glean concerning the various radio related activities of the LCMS from inception to present. Really the examples, the struggles, triumphs and successes of KFUCO radio and the Lutheran Hour can teach us much about the industry as it applies to religious broadcasting. First of all, it is expensive. Yet, the costs compared to the returns can be construed as economical if one would compare the audience with the bottom line. The question is, is radio a viable medium for proclaiming the gospel and bringing people to Christ and his gathering of believers? I believe KFUCO proves the answer is a resounding "yes." Does the problem of money suggest that one should avoid station ownership? Or, is there a way to get around a game of high finance? Couldn't one take what has proven effective and produce programs for distribution to many areas of Synod? We will

try to answer these questions as we continue to discover the world of Christian broadcasting in America today.

II. The Radio Ministry of the W.E.L.S.

A. The Lutheran Radio Church Service

The background for the Lutheran Hour is key to understanding the WELS Radio Ministry. At least that was the impression I had until I studied it further. Actually, the Lutherans in the Milwaukee area didn't mimic the efforts of Walter Maier down in St. Louis at all. Both the Lutheran Hour and the Lutheran Radio Church Service were ideas that originated from the needs of the community and the ingenuity of its church leaders. In Milwaukee in January, 1928 A.J. Beyer negotiated an arrangement with Mr. Damm and the Journal Company for an hour each Sunday morning to Broadcast a Lutheran church service. Mr. Beyer, an experienced church layman and attorney, gave birth to the original idea. He was concerned for the spriritual needs of his aging parents who were no longer able to leave their home to attend Sunday services. "According to a historical account of the broadcast, Beyer saw radio as a way to bring the services to them and to others in similar circumstances" (Murphy P. 7).

"Both the Concordia College Pastoral Copnference and a similar conference of pastors in Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod quickly adopted resolutions favoring the venture. Dr. G. Christian Barth, Concordia's president, consented to assume the duties and responsibilities of Radio Director. Wihtin the month, on February 19, 1928, the first Lutheran Church Service was broadcast on WTMJ" (WTMJ p.1).

As mentioned above the first Radio Director was Dr. Barth. After six years Dr. Barth accepted a call to

Cincinnati and could no longer continue in that capacity. For a short stint of two years, then, Prof. Paul Koehneke of Concordia College took the post. He was succeeded by the new college president, Dr. Leroy C. Rincker. The director managed the affairs of the broadcast and secured and managed funds necessary to sustain the program with the able assistance of the Radio Committee: a group of pastors, school teachers, and capable laymen led by A.J. Beyer. Dr. Rincker filled this post until his death in 1953.

"His replacement, Pastor Arnold Wangerin of Milwaukee's Nazareth Lutheran Church, instituted a change in the radio broadcast much appreciated by the preachers, liturgists, and choir members. Instead of assembling on Sunday mornings for a live broadcast, those involved recorded two services on a weekday evening with much less stress for broadcast on the following Sunday mornings. Beginning in 1989, these recording sessions were moved to Wisconsin Lutheran College and the Lutheran Home for the Aging" (WTMJ p. 5).

After only two years of service Pastor Wangerin accepted a call out of the area and was replaced by Rev. William T. Eggers who held the position for the next 25 years. Mr. Beyer was associated with the ministry for 41 years, and our own Prof. Martin Albrecht has also been associated with the broadcast for well over fifty years. After Pastor Eggers retired from the active ministry he was succeeded by Rev. Robert Voss who has since been called to Northwestern College to serve as president. In 1987 Chaplain Thomas P. Hinz succeeded Rev. Voss as Radio Director. He is assisted by Pastor Kurt F. Koeplin, who serves Atonement Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. Together they continue to guide the program's direction today.

The claims of the Lutheran Radio Church Service that it is the oldest continuous religious radio broadcast in the nation are most likely accurate. The only program that comes close is the Lutheran Hour which broadcast for the first time on October 2, 1930 as mentioned above. KFUD, which was started by Maier, began to air its programs on December 14, 1924. According to Missouri Synod records, 1989 is their 65th year with the Lutheran Hour which would mean that their's is older. Yet, as far as I know the program and preaching of Walter Maier was never actually called the Lutheran Hour until 1930. I suppose it depends on whose side you're on. At any rate, no one ever blames the other for stealing a good idea. In fact, the claims of the LRCS can be disputed by broadcasts started in 1923 in Omaha, New York City, and Detroit (cf. Petersen p. 16). Many area pastors speak the message on a rotating basis. One Sunday a WELS pastor will preach, on the other an LCMS pastor is at the mic. This practice developed, it seems, almost by accident, but it continues to be part of the ministry's philosophy today.

"We've never tried to develop a single personality. Every week, there's a different ordinary parish pastor doing his thing on the radio. The continuity of the content has been very comforting and very strengthening, in that we know that we are actually touching lives and making a difference" (WTMJ p.7).

The format consisting of scripture readings, a sermon and choir music has remained unchanged since the program's inception 60 years ago. Cooperation of the two Synods has continued in spite of the break in 1961. Because the

program is non--denominational, in that it specifically mentions no church body in the broadcast, some WELS pastors see no problem with preaching under these circumstances, while others feel the need to refuse to preach. Together the Radio Director and Co-director select the texts for the broadcast a full year in advance. The two other pastors on the committee solicit preachers for the program.

1989 marks an anniversary year for the broadcast--60 years of continuous running. Few statistics are available concerning the success or spiritual value of the program. Yet, as surely as the Lord's word bears fruit everytime it is preached, there is a remnant whose souls are fed week by week.

"Letters then and today indicate that the radio church service is still highly valued by shut-ins and by those in nursing homes, hospitals, and in homes for the aged. But letters also come from joggers, farmers working in their barns on Sunday mornings, truckers passing through the area, prison inmates, and by churchgoers who listen prior to attending worship services later on Sunday morning. Postmarks on letters indicate that the program is heard in southern and central Wisconsin, northern Illinois and Indiana, and across the lake in Michigan" (WTMJ p. 6). The success of the Lutheran Radio Church service, then, I would attribute to the low-budget enterprise which makes use of many volunteers. Only eternity will reveal the harvest of souls produced by the preaching of the Word on the Lutheran Radio Church Service.

B. Beginnings and Discoveries (1973-1979)

The impetus from the Milwaukee Federation Radio Committee carried momentum for helping the Synodical Research Committee's work get off the ground. Since the split of the two Synods in '61, the Federation struck out on its own, though many clergy still contribute to the continuation of the Lutheran Radio Church Service. The Milwaukee Federation, under the leadership of Rev. Kurt Eggert (among others) produced two Sunday morning worship-oriented programs, "Music for the Master," and "Message from the Master."

In 1973 a Radio and TV Committee was formed to study the possibilities for radio use on the Synodical level. Their stated aim was to, "effectively seek ways and means to communicate the Gospel in accord with our confessional principles on the basis of scripture to reach as many people for Christ as possible with emphasis on the unchurched." During the March 25, 1973 meeting the committee was seeking direction, trying to get its bearings. They envisioned a combined package for radio, television and print. Yet they didn't have the foggiest idea what they wanted to produce. They discussed jobbing out to a professional firm. But, again, although they knew they wanted quality they didn't know exactly what they wanted to produce. The meeting ended with a goal: to search for a pastor who could spearhead a project of permanent and ongoing radio/television ministry,

and possibly to build and own their own production facilities.

By the February 3, 1974 meeting the committee had written these ideas into its statement of purpose. They sought, "The development of an effective and continuing Mass Media Ministry serving both Synod and its congregations to communicate the gospel in accordance with confessional principles on the basis of scripture to reach as many people for Christ as possible with emphasis on the unchurched." Five very specific goals were formed to carry out this purpose. 1. To establish a communications center with facilities for in-house production. 2. To gather a staff of professionals to assist in production of mass media materials. 3. To setup workshops, institutes and conferences to encourage congregational participation. 4. To appoint a Board of Directors to oversee operations. 5. To hire a coordinator of the ministry to: a. study what is currently being done in other church bodies, b. to establish direction (scope and objectives), and working arrangements for Mass Media Ministry, c. to develop an awareness for synodical talent to be utilized by the ministry, and d. to coordinate a campaign with a large firm to produce quality materials. It was after this meeting that the committee began searching in earnest for a project coordinator.

The next step was to decide whether the man should have primarily theological or technical skills. Obviously, he needed the technical ability to perform the tasks, yet they

would have liked a theological background as well. They decided to shoot for both qualities. By March 24, 1974 they had defined the scope of the coordinator to some specific tasks: 1. get acquainted with the radio committee, 2. guide the project's direction, 3. to develop proposed projects, 4. to stabilize the ministry structure through the establishment of personnel contacts with the goal of permanence. The budget for the one-year pilot project was \$16,000. Early workers on the committee included pastors Norm Berg, Gary Schroeder and laypersons Bud Reth, Fritz Dinesen, Russ Schroeder, and Mr. and Mrs. Arnie Schumann. On April 13 a letter was sent out to Dr. T. A. Kuster of DMLC asking him to serve as project coordinator. Dr. Kuster respectfully declined.

By the time Fall had rolled around the committee had interviewed several candidates and they resolved to call Jim Adermann. Evidently, it wasn't the Lord's will for this to come about, since Jim Aderman was rejected by the C.O.P. as a candidate. This was a rather hard blow to the committee since they didn't know what to do with the proposed budget. The possibility of disbanding was even considered. For the next two years very little information concerning the committees' activities is available.

In September of 1976 a survey went out to approximately 25 WELS pastors who were doing their own broadcasting. There were quite a few congregations who were broadcasting their worship services, but these pastors were doing 1,5,15,

or 30 minute shows of their own. One pastor would start out his program with an everyday sound and then attach a Bible truth to it. Some would have recorded music for a lead-in. One pastor had a catechism class on the air. But overall, the trend was to find time to announce their service times and invite people to come. Some pastors aimed primarily at the sick and shut-ins for their audience, while others were trying to do outreach. Sometimes the pastor would develop his own material, while others would read a condensed version of Meditations or get advice from KFYO's extension service. Most ministers were funded with a combination of budgetary and non-budgetary contributions. In general the impact was effective for public relations and pre-evangelism. Some considered their ministry vital because they could communicate the doctrines and objectives of the WELS. Generally, advertising was done by word of mouth and the best audience was usually the pastor's own members, although some men did mention outreach success.

Some general advice and ideas were suggested by those active in it. The programs needed to have a more professional sound. They needed to be more effective at reaching the unchurched, the youth, the elderly, the handicapped. A priority was placed on spending money wisely by obtaining the best timeslots possible on the most widely listened-to stations. A smaller timeslot repeated more often is better stewardship than to do a longer show only once. Several times there is the problem of not having any

good music to use. Many of these findings will become highlighted later when a more detailed survey is discussed.

Finally, in early 1978 the Committee found its coordinator in the person of Craig Halverson who had been working for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce. With 6 years of graduate work, a P.H.D., and 11 years of experience in the field Mr. Halverson was well qualified for the position, besides all of that Mr. Halverson was the president of his congregation and a fine Christian. By the June 5 meeting the coordinator not only had prepared a paper concerning his findings and format recommendations but he was also ready to hash over the details of a questionnaire to be sent out to every congregation in the Synod. Once these details were squared away, Mr. Halverson presented his paper to the committee.

Several interesting things were discovered. Based upon his study of other church bodies, Halverson suggested that no preaching format be used since this format was outdated. He quotes from Ellens, "spots, interviews, life-situation drama and documentaries may not teach much theology well. But they may be the only chance." Judging from the '78 Yearbook he said largely we are using a worn out approach to broadcasting. This was later supported by the results of his synod-wide survey in which 83% of the congregations who were broadcasting were using a format that "has changed very little since the early days of radio." Secondly, he warned against putting all our eggs into one basket, such as

concentrating on a single program like the Lutheran Hour. Rather, he advocated diversification because of the "segmented nature of the modern radio audience." It was clear that no single show was going to fit into every stations' particular programming format. This way the WELS could avoid having the success of their whole Radio Ministry riding on one approach. One key factor that Halverson pinpointed was the need for a national and local identity which could be created with a theme song. We had to be easily distinguished from other church bodies; we didn't want to just be copy cats.

It was clear to the coordinator that some sort of central control was necessary. He also cautioned us to avoid the "gospel ghetto" (between 7-12 A.M. on Sundays), since radio audiences show marked decreases at these times primarily because of anticipated religious programming. He advocated the establishment of a Media Ministry Center in Milwaukee to produce formats, and develop and use talent. His plans included a recording studio conference room and offices. Halverson instructed the committee not to own or operate a station. He based this conclusion largely upon advice from Tommy Thompson of the Lutheran Hour who argued that a station incurred large expenses, had to hustle with government paperwork, and provided a limited geographical audience coverage in return.

Therefore, Halverson recommended that instead we produce high quality, varied programming to be used

nation-wide. These are his format recommendations. First of all he recommended 60 second spot announcements including the "signature" music yet to be developed. He also wanted to use the Milwaukee produced "Music for the Master" and "Message from the Master" on a national scale. Halverson called for a new show, "Lutherans Live," a 60-90 minute call-in show. And "Belief/Unbelief" was to be a show which would face anti-religious arguments head-on and provide pro-Christian proofs. The Twin Cities federation of churches were interested in the "Master" programs. The best idea proposed was the 'Come to the WELS" program. This would be in a magazine format having four speakers--each with 4-5 minutes of time. Part one ("Scripture says") would be a short message from the Bible. Part two ("The World We Know") is Christian commentary on current events, ideas, and societal patterns. "Living in the LORD," an application of the gospel to the problems and challenges of everyday life, was proposed for part three. And finally, "Youthspeak" was designed to touch the lives of young people. This program was earmarked as the flagship of our nationwide broadcasting thrust dependent upon its success in pilot form.

In August of 1978 Coordinator Halverson published his "Findings and Implications of the WELS Radio Research Survey." This paper reveals many interesting facts about our work which still have validity today. Those who broadcast something other than their Sunday church service are using spot announcements. The trend is that those who

use more spots seemed to realize the most success from the effort. The majority of innovators in radio produce their own material, some with their own equipment, others have access to the studio of the station which broadcasts their program. There seems to be a confusion about formats since "85% do a generalized program not designed for a specific group, but they hope it will reach certain groups nevertheless!" Those who do target a specific audience go for sick and shut-ins. The most telling factor is that "Youth clearly is not a sub-group which the respondents seem to recognize as warranting any special attention. When one compares this to the fact that secular mass media programming is almost entirely (95%) determined by its ability to reach youth, it makes one wonder about our ability to reach the youth for Christ at all in the future. If its true that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world and the only thing rocking the cradle of our youth is Motley Crue or Freddy Krueger then our nation is in deep trouble.

Apparently most broadcasters are in the dark as to who their audience is or what their response is to the message. Many of them have no feedback whatsoever on their programming. Those who target shut-ins by contrast are pleased with the ministry, although from a stewardship angle it might be cheaper just to tape the service than to broadcast it. Besides, the program is doing very little by way of outreach. One always needs to realize that in modern

radio you have to develop a program with a target audience in mind and speak to them in "their (musical) language." A way to assist a broadcast ministry would be to have a congregational committee or task force, yet few who replied had any support. It was also found that there was some isolated musical talent in the Synod but not much. Finally, because of strong support for professionally done spot announcements which could be applied to local circumstances Halverson recommended pursuing this type of programming. He also thought it would be wise to implement the "Master" programs for use by the smaller congregations for their own members to "build internal support for the MMM." Then a greater-and-greater emphasis could be placed on the unchurched. At any rate, he drew the conclusion that a basis for financial support needed to be established.

Bo R a M 1979

Radio Research Committee Report

The General Board for Home Missions (GBHM) was directed by the 1977 Synod convention to "make a feasibility study of radio as a mass communication medium, including the possible establishment of a nation-wide Synod broadcast." (1977 Synod Proceedings, pp 152-153, Comm. 18, Resolution 8). Coincidentally the GBHM
5 for a number of years had planned similar research relative to the possibility of a radio ministry to give support to the outreach of its mission congregations particularly in areas where Lutheranism and the WELS were relatively unknown.

In its initial meeting a committee appointed by the GBHM agreed that its primary objective would be to determine the feasibility of developing "an effective
10 and continuing mass media ministry serving both the Synod and its congregations to communicate the Gospel in accord with our confessional principles on the basis of Scripture to reach as many people for Christ as possible, with emphasis on reaching the unchurched."

The committee also determined that the services of a highly qualified professional research-coordinator would be essential to an adequate feasibility study.
15 In contrast to the expectations of many committee members the Lord directed not only a goodly number of qualified candidates to apply for the position but several WELS members who were among the most qualified. The committee selected Mr. Craig Halverson, the current president of Emanuel Church, Lansing, MI, as the project
20 coordinator.

Extensive research was done by means of various surveys as to what is being done by our WELS congregations in a radio ministry as well as by other Christian groups and as to how effective the various efforts are in reaching the unchurched. Early in the research it was evident that the day of a "Lutheran Hour"
25 format and distribution system is over as far as the state of the radio industry is concerned. In radio's current format, programming must be geared to the characteristics of the target audience.

Since "radio is music" the production of a distinctive musical statement or logo which would not "turn off" our target audience was considered essential to introduce our Gospel invitation and message. Again, in our search for a qualified musical producer, the Lord provided what we needed but did not expect to find. We engaged the service of a most qualified musician, not from the "outside", but from our own membership in the person of Mr. John C. Meyer, a member of our Rock of Ages Church, Nashville, TN. Mr. Meyer, a highly successful producer of commercial music, has written our theme song, "Come to the WELS", as a gift to his church and also arranged for its professional recording according to the highest music industry standards.

Another step in the project was the production of five non-traditional radio formats including:

- a rather traditional half-hour program featuring traditional and contemporary church music integrated with messages tied to the church year (Music For the Master)
- one-minute spot announcements introducing the WELS and its basic confessional position to the listener
- one-minute "mini-sermons" delivering a practical high-impact Gospel truth (Points to Ponder)
- one-minute thought-provoking statements, aimed particularly to reach the unbeliever, the skeptic, and the searching. (Belief and Unbelief)
- a series of five-minute programs giving a fuller explanation of Biblical truths, applying them to youth, to daily life, and to current events. (Come to the WELS)

Among producers of program materials were Pastors L. Zessin, R. Stadler, R. Drews, Prof. J. Gerlach, and Mr. Craig Halverson. The Milwaukee Federation of WELS Churches graciously loaned the committee the use of its studio for production of the materials. Members of St. John's, Oak Creek, WI, also donated hours of volunteer labor in the shipping of sample cassettes.

The final step in the research project is the test-marketing of the programs, especially the four shorter formats, in selected "mission" markets, airing them during morning and evening "drive" times. In addition these formats are being tested on

seven national clear channel stations mostly between midnight and 6 a.m. to provide nation-wide coverage. This test-marketing will occur April - August 1979.

It is the opinion of the committee that nation-wide coverage can most effectively be achieved in today's radio market by airing centrally produced broadcast-quality materials in areas throughout the country by locally identified congregations, with the possible addition of the night-time clear channel station programming. The committee is committed to using a radio ministry to advance our mission outreach primarily with and through the local congregations, self-supporting or mission, the "cutting edge" of mission work in our land.

Cassettes with sample programming have been sent to the pastors of the Synod so that all may be aware of and understand the direction the committee is proposing. Reaction to date has been positive, including much constructive criticism. We wish to express appreciation for this demonstration of concern for an effective, faithful, and quality radio ministry.

Please note that the song, "Come to the WELS," may be used by any individual or group within our Synod. Arrangements for broadcast use of the recording of the musical logo must be made through the General Board for Home Missions. The professional recording of the full length song is not available for public broadcasting because of copyright restrictions and production regulations.

Funding for the research project has come from a budgetary allotment of \$18,000, plus grants of over \$11,000 from the Lutheran Womens' Missionary Society given to the GBHM in earlier years for radio research, and a generous grant of \$37,684.00 from the Aid Association for Lutherans. In addition a substantial amount has been received from many congregations, societies and individuals within the Synod. Without this generous support an adequate study would have been impossible. We heartily thank all the donors!

The final results of the program test-marketing and the reaction of our pastors and congregations in areas where the programs are aired will be reflected in a supplementary report to be submitted to the Synod in convention. Our research

and program production experiences and results to date, however, have already convinced us that a radio ministry is feasible and desirable as a mission arm of our Synod.

In the final stages of the research, serious consideration was given the three following options for establishing a mass media ministry which could be adopted singly or successively:

Option 1:

- Establish a radio ministry with volunteer staff, using current limited "borrowed" production facilities and program materials, serving local congregational needs, with funding coming from payment for program materials by congregations and/or mission boards and from non-budgetary contributions of individuals and organizations.

Option 2:

- Develop a mass media ministry office with a professionally qualified director, using current production facilities and program materials, serving local congregations and airing limited nation-wide synodical radio programming, with new program development as funds permit, with funding of the office itself by budgetary funds and program development by non-budgetary offerings (budget of \$30,000 per year "office" costs; \$15-20,000 per year program costs)

Option 3:

- Adopt a systematic five year plan for launching a mass media ministry with an office as described in Option #2, with synodical funding for new programming and synodical airing of programs, supplemented by non-budgetary offerings, with a budget fixed by synodical resolution to permit a national outreach. (Annual budget first year about \$110,000, rising to about \$250,000 in the fifth year).

The results of the study and programming to date have moved the committee to offer the following proposal to the Synod:

PROPOSAL TO THE 45TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Assembled at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin - August 1 - 8, 1979

Subject: Mass Media Ministry

- WHEREAS a radio ministry would serve well the continuing purpose of our home mission program "to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people within the limits of the domestic mission fields of the WELS", and
- 5 WHEREAS such a ministry would assist effectively our self-supporting as well as our mission congregations in reaching the unchurched of their communities with the Gospel, and
- 10 WHEREAS the synodically requested radio research study has indicated that a radio ministry with programming along the lines of the pilot programs produced by the GBHM Radio Research Committee is feasible both as to production and nation-wide marketing, and
- WHEREAS the initial response to the pilot programming has been positive, therefore be it
- Resolved that the Synod establish a mass media ministry, centering on a radio ministry which is to assist congregations and the Synod to reach primarily the unchurched of our land with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and be it further
- Resolved that this mass media ministry be under the supervision of the General Board for Home Missions, and be it further
- 20 Resolved that to the degree that budgetary funds are not available, this mass media ministry be funded by non-budgetary funds received through special gifts and offerings and purchase of program materials, and be it further
- 25 Resolved that development, production, and airing of programs be implemented by the General Board for Home Missions, engaging the necessary professional assistance as program needs require and funding permits, and be it finally
- Resolved that provision be made for editorial responsibility of all materials to be aired

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C. Programs & Progress (1979-89)

The 1979 BoRAM report was included above because of its well written style and data too numerous to copy all over again here. This also was a major turning point for the Synod's radio ministry since the coordinator had completed his assignment and pointed us in definitive directions. The long historical report in the Book of Reports and Memorials also gave the Mass Media Ministry much needed publicity. Early in February 1980 Michael and Dee Froncek of Ramsey, New Jersey were hired as "coordinators and co-producers" for the programs. They received 17 orders that year and served congregations in 10 states. The spots and "Belief/Unbelief" created by Halverson were used along with several new spots for Christams, Easter, VBS and Sunday School. They also offered assistance in program scheduling and air-time purchase through the volunteer efforts of WELS members employed in the radio industry in Milwaukee. One disappointing aspect was the lack of funds necessary to develop the recording studio. You have to spend money to save it nowadays. Another worthy activity (subsidizing air time for new mission congregations to aid them in their outreach publicity to the community) was put on the back burner for lack of funds.

The Mass Media Ministry began to expand its operations in 1981 with the addition of Eric Hansen, a well qualified

WELS member in Milwaukee. Eric specializes in radio and serves as air time buying consultant. The ministry became more closely tied to evangelism as time went on, with the result that it produced the "Come to the WELS" outreach brochures, door hanger bags, newspaper mats, and formats for home and phone canvassing. This trend continued in '82 when the MMM prepared 200 comprehensive evangelism outreach programs using all of the materials at its disposal. They also began to research the possible use of cable tv for evangelistic purposes. In Fall of '82 the Synod's present Director of MMM, John Barber began his work.

All funding was from private donation and non-budgetary. An additional 200 congregations used the services of the MMM (including radio/tv exposure, direct mail, newspaper ads, billboards, etc.) to spread the gospel in 1983. They made 55 recommendations covering more than 100 congregations since August of '81. They also memorialized Synod to include the MMM under the office of Executive Secretary of Evangelism. In '84, 71 more congregations received recommendations from the MMM. Their work also included counseling by phone, developing and shipping print materials, arranging direct mail campaigns and generally keeping track of all outreach programs. Budgetary problems still were a cause for concern. Finally, in 1985 the MMM came under the jurisdiction of the Commission on Evangelism, and the Director looked forward with optimism to the future of the MMM since the past

biennium had proved to be rewarding "in terms of meaningful growth statistics.

Some financial relief was finally found in 1986 when the Lutheran Brotherhood kicked in a \$116,000 grant. Yet, the future funding of the MMM was still said to be unsure. 24 more congregations were helped both in '85 & '86. This was the year that the MMM sponsored Gospel Outreach '86 in the Twin City area. The MMM conducted 52 campaigns with over 200,000 homes personally contacted. In addition to the other mass media tools already mentioned from previous years the MMM produced yard signs and bumper stickers, a training manual for media assisted outreach as well as a companion 10 minute video.

Gradually the theme and "identity"--Come to the WELS--was phased out as a major thrust to avoid wearing it out. In the various campaigns different themes were developed for the accompanying spots which deal with perceived needs of the hearer (eg. "Life has a better headline," "What would it mean to live free"). At the same time, "Come to the WELS" and all other formerly produced spots continue to be offered to congregations where and when they fit the particular outreach effort, so that the widest possible variety of outreach tools is available. The same strategy was planned for the next year G.O. '87 for the Milwaukee area. This campaign enveloped 60 congregations in Milwaukee and turned up 7000 unchurched prospects. Thus the ministry continues to expand its efforts in '88 to the Fox River Valley

Conference, by continuing to develop more spots, and by continuing to plan new campaigns and consult with those already in progress. G.O. '89 is also being planned for all of Wisconsin this year.

In the midst of this flurry of activity and apparent success someone was sober enough to make some observations in the 1987 BoRAM, "Locally produced programming more effectively serves to nurture members and the creation of positive identity for congregations in their community. Outreach to the unchurched through the media requires different vehicles than those traditionally identified with religious media" (p. 61). The same author also noted that the conclusions of Halverson in '78 are still valid today. We need contemporary programming, especially that which can touch the youth. Yet, the high cost of national programming and air time are the main prohibitive factors.

III. Radio Ministry in the S.B.C. & Contemporary Trends

A. The Southern Baptist Convention

Since 1949, when the Southern Baptist Convention withdrew from the SRRC, they have independently produced quality programs. They formed a Radio and Television Commission (RTC) headed by the capable Paul Stevens.

"The religious programs prepared by the RTC have a broad scope of appeal and relevance, and are tailored to a variety of specific audiences, interest groups, and needs. Broadcasts are aired in ten different languages--including Russian, Portuguese, Italian, Chinese, and Spanish--and are sent into the homelands of these groups. Technically, the programs are near perfect. Stevens himself had the style, ability and charisma to compete with the great broadcast preachers of any decade. But he has chosen instead to teach, to employ the broadcasting medium as his podium and stage for instruction" (Ellens p. 103).

Following we will discuss several different programs which are produced by the RTC and marketed to Baptist congregations for use in their communities all over the world. For the country music listener they produce "Country Crossroads," a half-hour program which features a comedian DJ who brings in religious material between songs. The idea is not to upset the programming format or the ears of the listener, but to, within that framework, present the gospel and how it touches life. This program is carried by more than 1000 stations according to Fasol and in a recent phone interview with Claude Cox the total has gone up to 1900. Another music oriented show is "Powerline." Cox told me that 20% of all the 10,000 radio stations operating in our

country are playing this show. The concept is similar to "Country Crossroads," but instead of the DJ commenting the show takes time out for two sermonettes which are sandwiched in between the songs. The total religious material adds up to 5 minutes. The songs selected are the top six secular songs in the nation so an audience of fans listening to their favorite songs is almost guaranteed. "Streams in the Desert" also contains a similar format but it is geared to an easy listening audience. "Black Beat" (obviously for the black audience) was produced along the same lines but for reasons unpursued it has since Fasol's article been canceled.

The drawbacks of such a program are the lack of control over the educational content in the songs. No matter how simple or contemporary a song is, no matter if the artist intentionally decided to write about or educate someone about a subject, all secular music has at least a general theme which is undoubtedly communicated to the audience whether consciously or subconsciously. Because of this general rule the use of a program described above most likely will become swallowed up in the broadcasting of the whole day and week--by songs which promote promiscuity and sexual love to a large degree. The themes of the songs they play within the program will often war against their message. Perhaps, then, a better type of program would be one like "On Track." This program has an identical format to "Powerline" with the exception that the songs played

) are the top 6 of 10 of the best Christian Contemporary hits for that week. With this style one could much more easily reinforce his message with the art much like one does in a traditional church service. Surprisingly, Cox tells me that the majority of the stations to which he markets the program are secular stations, although he will market it to Christian stations as well. What a foot in the door--where few Christians venture to tread--the totally secular world of Rock n' Roll.

Those are the music-oriented programs. Now for the message-oriented programming the RTC offers three choices. "Master Control" is an adult type show which features interviews from the ridiculous (Donald Duck) to the sublime (Jim Bakker). Naturally, religious concepts are discussed in the course of the interview, but the message comes across in a less threatening (more entertaining) context. This program is marketed to 1500 of our nation's 10,000 stations. The most message oriented programs are the more traditional religious radio programs "The Baptist Hour" or "At Home with the Bible." They too, have their place in mass media outreach to the more mature audiences. All of these shows leave room for a tag at the end of the tape so that the local congregation which sponsors the broadcast can receive some listener contact. Hopefully, they will become part of the body of Christ as a result.

This is precisely what we will delve into next--how does the RTC go about plugging the listener into the local

church? Of course, the tag is a way of identifying the material with a local Christian congregation, but if the tag gives the address of the RTC in Fort Worth, Texas, and a listener responds he will receive a tract explaining the way of salvation. Cox estimated that the RTC sends out well over 50,000 of these annually. When asked about the success of the programs at gaining converts, Cox estimated that between 40-60 people reported either a rededication or conversion to Christ each month. Once the RTC has people on their mailing list they offer correspondence courses to those individuals. They also offer counseling services to people with various personal problems. Quite often this is where a local church can fill the need that sin has caused in the world and bring the almighty power of God to bear on afflictions. Personally, I feel the approach is an excellent one. Instead of constantly being badgered for contributions by a company who has you on their list, the RTC concentrates on emphasizing the positive service with which the church of Christ can comfort the world. Finally, the fourth step in the process finds the RTC or counselor encouraging the client to attend a local church. Sometimes there may be three or four local Baptist churches to choose from. In that case the client is encouraged to find the one he likes best. Otherwise, if there are no Baptist churches in town, they are encouraged to attend a "Mainline Protestant" church of their choice.

For several reasons, in contrast to the Lutheran Synods, the SBC's RTC is in good financial shape. First of all the financing of the RTC is covered annually by budgetary funds and does not need to constantly be crying about the lack of financial support from individuals. Secondly, the production costs are kept low since all of the air time in which the RTC's shows are broadcast is free, public service airtime! Here when the Lutheran bodies over the past years have spent uncountable sums of money on airtime the Baptists are carrying out a successful ministry without paying a dime for airtime. Their production costs are limited to the salaries of announcers who develop them week by week. The SBC does not receive any special airtime because of its affiliation with the Federal Council of Churches. Nor do they have to pay royalties for any of the music that they play because of the special deal they've worked out with ASCAP. Technically, they don't actually broadcast any music; the station does it for them. This, too, is an ingenious strategy to keep the budget trim.

When the efforts of a few are applied to a nation-wide effort the results are economical. This is all accomplished largely (50-55%) during the infamous "gospel ghetto" on Sunday mornings (from 7 'til noon). Some Saturday and Sunday evenings are other popular times. In fact, the shows aired from 3-5 A.M. Sunday in Chicago boast the largest listening audience. The non-traditional formats mentioned above are also well liked by secular stations since they

provide "buffer" material for their Sunday morning programming schedule. They can be used as a transitional program on either side of a more traditional religious program (eg. to lead into the regular programming for the day).

B. Contemporary Trends

Most denominations are forced to choose the fork in the road when it comes to using radio to preach the gospel. Either they opt to produce a single program (eg. the "Back to God Hour") or a number of different programs (like the SBC): or they own and operate a radio station where they have total control over the day's programming (like KFUP). It's possible that like Missouri a Synod could do both. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the decision to develop program ministries? One of the advantages is the continuity and the lasting audience appeal a regular program could enlist. This was demonstrated when Dr. Dobson, who has a nationally syndicated talk show, was able to influence some legislation on abortion that the Senate was about to put to a vote--his appeal to contact your congressman was received and acted upon by many.

Clearly to develop a regular listening audience is as important as having good church attendance. What is more they aren't going to be listening because they have to, but because they want to. Easy identification of the program is a necessary feature in our society where religious program schedules usually go unpublished. The audience can also be retained easier if the speaker and the format generally stay the same. David Glusker records amazing results in his article; 60 % of his total audience is made up of people "who have no church connection or--usually--any interest in

religion. This group represents the distinctive challenge and opportunity of broadcast ministry" (p. 165). Pastor Michael Sanders also remarks concerning his little radio ministry, "People are talking about our church everywhere" (p. 58). Another advantage of program format is its comparatively less expensive budgetary needs. It has less overhead and government regulations to bow to, as mentioned above.

The debate over the radio drawing off church attendance or making churchgoers lazy is a poor one. Those who build their mass media ministries into a personality cult do so on purpose, to build their own kingdom, and usually are not supported by any Synod or church body. Exceptions to this are perhaps Billy Graham, Dr. D. James Kennedy, or another fundamentalist who is truly trying to build Christ's kingdom and not line his own pockets--"by their fruits you will know them." But on the other hand, those who are supported by a church body, who are committed to outreach will naturally include tags or spots which stress the inclusion into the local, visible manifestation of the body of Christ. The idea behind spot announcements is that a pungent idea can be implanted deeply into the mind and heart of the listener in only a few seconds and he can mull it over the rest of the day. "The Sunday morning ghetto time that networks give religion doesn't reach the people who need it most. But if you can get a spiritual message to the millions who are

watching the SuperBowl--even if it is only a 20-second spot--it's worth it" (Petersen p. 30).

The disadvantages in all mass media broadcasting, especially for the spot announcement, is the intangible scientific evidence of success. But Christians never needed that to preach the gospel anyway. For the many times we may ask for specifics and actual names and addresses the answer still remains--ONLY GOD KNOWS. In such a case how does one legitimately practice stewardship? Who is going to judge? Another very convincing case against program formats is the prohibitively high air rates that are usually paid to broadcast these on networks and independent stations nation-wide. In this case if you want quality air time and unprecedented audience coverage, like Coca-Cola or anyone else, you're going to have to pay for it.

On the other hand, it would seem a whole lot easier, then, to own the station and be able to save the best times for your most important programming. Perhaps it isn't all that easy. First of all, if you're going to start a brand new station you are going to need quite a few conditions fulfilled for the FCC. Many of these very technical details are recorded in the Religious Broadcast Management Handbook and don't need to be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the equipment you are going to need for the station start up: the land, the tower, the transmitting line and antenna, monitor, studio equipment and so on would run anywhere from \$38,000 used to \$111,000 new--and that's for a "small

station" (cf. table 4.1 on p. 54). To apply for an FCC construction permit you need to: 1. form a legal entity or corporation, 2. get the finances together and have proof of ability to pay, 3. find an appropriate tower site on high ground which has been checked for interference with stations already allotted frequencies in the immediate community, 4. have an expert prepare the engineering part of the application and file when the appropriate 80-90 FM window is open (if engineering figures are faulty the FCC will throw out the application). Besides the start-up costs there are the four basic operational costs: airtime, production, promotion, and market research. One can immediately recognize a need for income to supply qualified, technically able personnel to operate our new little station on a daily basis.

As long as we have discussed the very real difficulties involved in station ownership we might as well continue with a list of disadvantages. Not only is the scenario given above a prime example of exorbitant costs, but we can bring again the example of KFUD. Their biggest problem has always been money, and large amounts of it. I believe this is why Tommy Thompson discouraged Craig Halverson from pursuing the purchase of a radio station. Rausch gives us an idea of the exorbitant costs of operation in her article. "Many communities, hungry for Christian radio, can afford neither the money it takes to build a station nor the \$50,000 to

\$200,00 needed each year to operate it" (p. 132). How then can secular stations do it?

Frankly, commercial advertising finances almost every secular station; the ones that don't use commercials can usually be found spending their air time soliciting funds. That is the sad part about the industry. The whole concept is viewed as a business with an eye to profits. Can you imagine someone interrupting the traditional religious radio program (i. e. your sermon) with a "word from our sponsor," Lite beer or Tide laundry detergent? Fasol mentions the incompatibility of religious radio and commercialism as the main reason why religious broadcasting was relegated to a time which "was not especially desired by sponsors" i. e. Sunday mornings. This happened at a time when Walter Maier was at his peak, the Second World War was over, and church attendance was (compared to today) quite a bit higher. After all, if most of the people were in church on Sunday who needs to advertise their products on Sunday morning (there weren't any stores open anyway).

Consequently any religious broadcasting of a church service would naturally be quite effective in reaching the few who could not make it to church--the format fit the times. But, O how times have changed. Commercial announcements naturally appeal to the baser, impulsive, materialistic instincts in people. Their design is profit and profit now, and so it goes. The whole idea of a Christian message which is essentially other-worldly being

financed by a commercial, money hungry appeal seems to be totally out of place. Didn't Paul say do not be yoked to unbelievers?

The greed for money has even found its way into "CHRISTIAN" radio stations and record companies. Tom Bisset relates a fewd between Christian artists who are members of the American Society of Composers and Performers (ASCAP) and Christian radio stations. The stations feel that they shouldn't have to pay the exorbitant percentages affixed to any station which uses ASCAP artists throughout the course of the year. The problem is that only a small percentage of the wide gammet of music available through the ASCAP is actually religious music. "Religious broadcasters are required to buy the use of the entire 400,000 selections, including punk rock, jazz, pornography, and disco" (P.92). Yet they're caught between a rock and a hard place, since most of the best Christian artists belong to the association. The stations feel that for the artists to sue would be like biting the hand that feeds you, since the stations after all, promote the music they produce. On the other hand the artist is always looking out for his/ her right to recieve pay for their unique gifts. The outcome of this particular court battle is unknown to the author.

Dinwiddie relates other examples of money-grubbing in the Christian church over the new Christian music being played on Christian stations. He sees the immitation of secular artist's styles (down to the detail of like attire)

as going too far. He claims that often the "marketing image" is more important than the actual spiritual content of the lyrics. Several secular entertainment giants like MCA, Columbia, and ABC have "either purchased controlling interest in leading Christian companies or are considering plans to do so" (p. 17--this article is already 8 years old!). He lists the large amounts that Christian record companies, artists, and radio stations gross annually, and we're talkin' into the millions. This causes a problem of greed in the artist when they see the process begin to work. It also keeps the smaller churches from pulling in a quality artist because they can't promise them the high fees they get for showing up. Record companies will court radio stations and Christian bookstores to sell their artists' music and "their product." The whole thing could easily degenerate to a filthy mess.

Yet, although there certainly is a great risk for a Christian to be involved with such a high finance operation, one could still own and operate a station without going overboard, and without selling out the real Jesus for a watered-down, sellable, marketable Jesus. A Christian station manager could conceivably see to it that the commercial announcements are in good taste. This is often done already for the Classical music listening audience. Certainly, he would tone down the aggressive, TV Lenny, screaming style that is often heard. We cannot skeptically assume that all of the 1000 religious radio stations and

more than 200 television stations (cf. Schultze) are money hungry, materialistic and unfruitful for the kingdom. According to Petersen the nation is averaging 52 new religious stations per year.

One of the most influential and important reasons I can think of for owning one is the control over the programming that you would exercise. People listen to radio often all day long at work. How many Christians have a choice but to be dragged down by all of the trash that is promoted on secular radio? Wouldn't it be really nice for a Christian to share his faith clearly taught in music and song for all his unchurched friends to hear? Wouldn't it be great for the Christian to be built up and become stronger and firmer in his convictions to Christ day by day instead of the way it often is now--broken down by constant droning of romantic, sexual, love themes? This advantage of saturation--programming the Christian to live for Christ each day is mentioned by Barber in his paper as an advantage which the medium of radio has in today's culture. Grady and Sesso enthusiastically relate the benefits of Christian shopkeepers playing Christian stations in their stores and teens enjoying the sound along with lyrics that won't drag them down. If the church ever wanted to help her people grow daily in the Word and not just on Sundays I couldn't think of a better way to do it. "The man who doesn't understand the media element is missing a great tool for evangelism, nurture and ministry" (Barber p. 13).

Another distinct advantage available to owners of Christian stations is the fact that they can break all of the rules and still get away with it. In other words they aren't so locked into the tight formatting of private broadcastrs. "So on the better religious networks, dramatic shows, interviews, concerts, call-in programs give the listener more variety than he could possibly get from a 'rock around the clock' station or an 'all-news' station" (Petersen p. 30). Grady & Sesso relate the story of KCFO of Tulsa Oklahoma, which has turned commercial and seeks to "share the gospel with believers and non-believers alike entirely through the message of music" (p. 75). The sales manager Bob Lepine makes a case for the use of advertising sales to finance the station saying, "After all, broadcasting costs money for equipment, electricity and facilities." To balance out the need for teaching programs for more mature Christians the station bought a high powered AM staion which concentrates on the more traditional concepts in religious broadcasting. The result was that the station did poorly on the ratings but turned a profit because the preachers bought their airtime. In contrast the all-music station recieved high ratings, reached a younger audience and thus has much more valuable commercial airtime. You've got to understand how it works to make efficient use of it. Sometimes I get the feeling that it is not considered a worthy radio ministry unless it is consuming large amounts of money. Or it is always wrong to turn a

profit from quality Christ-centered work. Lepine characterizes the programming as "edifying entertainment."

What is on the horizon for Christian broadcasting is truly amazing. The Moody Broadcasting Network revealed its plan to set up a satellite system by which it could increase the ability for a small church to receive and broadcast the MBN programming for a fraction of what it would cost them to build and operate their own station (\$20,000). Famous Bible teachers like Chuck Swindoll would teach bible lessons and answer calls from the nation-wide program. Dr. Dobson would give advice on the family while an assortment of children's programs and Christian music would be mixed in, to supplement the teaching. All of this is possible through the amazing technology of satellite transmission.

One open door, or window I should say, which is largely unexplored in our circles is the possibility of operating stations at our training schools. This is an integral part of the seminary training at Concordia in St. Louis, and many Baptist Colleges have their own Student body stations (not to mention many secular institutions). Many of our schools, often situated on or near the highest point in the city, are ideal for the low watt stations that are allotted for educational purposes. Since the deregulation of 1981, many windows are opened periodically by the FCC. It is possible to receive allocation for up to 1000 watts of power on a class IV station (cf. Durfey and Ferrier for specifics). Each individual case would have to be studied by a

) professional to determine possible interference problems in the particluar area. It is possible that only 15-50 watts would be allocated for the educational station. Even if the power was so low that the station would never provide much community outreach, yet it would be training future kingdom workers to use the media which play a large part in our society. For a smaller station the elecricity bill would be smaller and the original set up cost would be lower in direct proportion to the allocated wattage. It is possible that the equipment would be no less expensive for the small station as it is for a larger one, although sometimes if you are in the right place at the right time you can obtain free used equipment from a large station which is upgrading its present studio.

C. Challenges for the Future

It's obvious that there are many different avenues to take in our exploration into the possibilities which the modern mass media present to us for preaching the gospel. It is apparent that unless the MMM of the WELS can receive budgetary support it will never be able to put its full energies into developing some new contemporary programs. These could have a larger impact on a community in the long run than any campaign of spot announcements could or has had. The group which especially needs attention is the youth. Statistics can tell us a lot about what is going on in our culture. Gaddy predicts a decline in religious media because of the aging audience, "If the effect of aging is in fact a cohort effect, then in the long-term the religious media may decline as the younger less religious, and lower viewing and listening cohorts, take the place of the present more religious older people" (p. 300). This will definitely happen if we fail to reach out to them. Pennington comments that radio reaches 96% of all individuals twelve and over. Hale says, "A recent survey found that in the United States radio's weekly audience includes 92% of all persons 18 and older, 99% of all teenagers, and 94% of all people from 24-49. The lack of success of religious radio programs cannot be blamed on a dying medium" (p. 5). Between 1980 and 1981 a survey reported that 71% of the records bought by Christians under 25 were contemporary in sound" (Grady &

Sesso p. 81). The younger pastors in our Synod have to take the bull by the horns and experiment, be bold and do their best to get the message out.

We must face these challenges of communicating the gospel in a dying world. Quality will also be one of our goals. "Effectively used radio is an effective means of 'preaching' the gospel. Poorly used radio is a poor means of 'preaching' the gospel" (Lutheran Witness p. 75). But on the other hand, we don't want to merely copy everything the secular world is doing but rather, we need to develop our own style and creativity.

"What has happened to the Christian imagination? Why is it so sickly and second-rate? Have we become genetically inferior to the rest of society? If secular society offers only Freudian dreams and drug-induced visions, are we really offering anything better to the world of the spirit or the senses? In short, we acquiesce, by one rationalization or another, to the captivity of the Christian imagination, betraying our willingness to leave it locked away and despairing of deliverance" (Owens p. 9). It may take some experimentation and some risk, but who can succeed with a new idea right away. We need to get our technically skilled people working together with us on this venture.

We need to make use of all the available avenues for communication: public service announcements, public affairs programs, news releases, talk shows on important social issues, editorials, contemporary music, 60-second thought provoking spots, five-minute quicky messages, call-in programs, and book reviews. As Barber puts it so well, "We must use whatever avenue to get His message demonstrated, declared, delineated and responded to" (p.13). In his 1981

article Tom Bisset establishes four challenges for Radio Ministry today. 1. Responsible use of technology, 2. Attract the disinterested unbeliever, 3. Speak the whole counsel of God, 4. present the gospel with clarity and relevance.

We must go forward with the gospel and always keep Christ central in our work--he must increase while all other human personalities and gifts must take a backseat. Considering all of the trash that is being promoted today we need to stand up and be counted, dare to be different, and challenge secular stations to use the media truly in a fashion that is in the best interest of the public. May we always in so doing resist the temptation to build our kingdom, but constantly to do His work by pointing others to heaven.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

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