

THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION IN THE CHURCH

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I. THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION IN BIBLICAL DAYS

Administration may be defined as the art, the science, of getting something done through others.

Administration existed in the church already in the days when Jethro came to his son-in-law, Moses, urging him to GET ORGANIZED (Exodus 18:5-26). Moses was exhausting himself trying to deal with all the administrative problems of the Israelites. This was not good for Moses nor for the people. Jethro asked: "What is this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?...The thing that thou doest is not good...Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee." Thereupon Jethro recommended that Moses look for capable, honest men with special gifts to be "rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens; and let them judge the people at all seasons." Jethro further counseled that these managers should arbitrate within certain prescribed limits and refer only major matters to Moses.

The results were extremely beneficial both to Moses and to the people. Moses' burden was lightened. He could spend more time representing God to the Israelites. The people were happier because their needs were met promptly and efficiently. The Lord's work was carried out in a smooth, effective way.

That was administration. It involved getting the assignment done, making good things happen, through other people.

Centuries later the twelve apostles were called and ordained by Jesus "that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14). Following His resurrection they did indeed preach with great success, winning converts by the thousands. But with the growth in numbers came problems. Many, cast out of their homes and disowned by relatives, needed food and shelter. Dissension arose among the different ethnic groups with "the Grecians murmuring against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration" (Acts 6:1). The growing numbers of new Christians called for careful planning,

organization, and operating procedures (administration). The disciples called a general meeting in which they outlined a plan for organizing a working force to administer the temporal affairs, releasing the disciples to concentrate on the ministry of the Word. As a result of the reorganization "the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly" (Acts 6:7). Administration, making good things happen through other people, had an important role in the church.

II. THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION IN THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

In 1967, some 115 years after its organization, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, through the now defunct Administration Survey Commission, conducted its first administration seminar with sixty of the Synod's full-time and part-time administrators in attendance. It was a good seminar and much good came of it. We mention only a few examples. From that management group a task force of eight was selected to formulate the Synod's ongoing purpose, objectives and policies. These were adopted by the Synod in 1969. Another direct result of the seminar was the classification of the Synod's work into five divisions and the formation of the Coordinating Council and the Commission on Higher Education. A third result was the current organization of the fiscal office with its single staff concept. Another important, but relatively intangible, fruit of that seminar was the training received by the full-time and part-time administrators, a training which still bears fruit in our Synod today. Finally, the Planning Program Budget System (P.P.B.S.), a program oriented system requiring six-year planning cycles, had its roots in that seminar and has been a blessing to our Synod ever since.

Under God's gracious hand of protection and guidance our Synod experienced very rapid expansion particularly in the last twenty-four years. It grew from a church body with organized congregations in fourteen states, primarily in the midwest, to a nation-wide organization with congregations in forty-seven states and Canada. Its world outreach grew just as rapidly from mission programs in three areas (Africa, Germany and Apacheland) to a world mission program which covers thirteen countries. The worker-training program mushroomed correspondingly. Twenty-four years ago the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduated thirty-four candidates for the ministry, and Dr. Martin Luther College produced thirty-nine teacher graduates. This year the Seminary produced fifty-seven pastoral candidates and Dr. Martin Luther College graduated 121 potential teachers. A tremendous surge in expansion and/or replacement of building facilities also took place on the campuses in the past twenty years, particularly at Northwestern in Watertown, Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and at Michigan Lutheran Seminary. A new campus was purchased at Prairie du Chein.

Still further evidence of God's blessings upon our Synod can be seen in the budgets and the Church Extension Fund charts which follow and which depict the totals every five years plus the two years of the current biennium:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Budgetary Expenditure</u>	<u>CEF Loans Receivable</u>
1941 - 42	\$ 417,107	\$ 279,737
46 - 47	710,936	609,575
51 - 52	1,300,358	1,221,882
56 - 57	1,973,213	3,260,682
61 - 62	2,683,233	4,856,960
66 - 67	3,631,148	9,307,669
71 - 72	5,890,054	16,368,014
76 - 77	8,295,362	32,139,454
77 - 78	9,239,573	36,116,176
78 - 79	10,574,659	39,445,106
79 - 80	11,791,390 (anticipated)	43,338,176 (anticipated)
80 - 81	12,676,148 (anticipated)	46,110,176 (anticipated)

In connection with the CEF it is to be noted that this fund is increasing at the rate of three to 3.5 million per year through gifts, legacies, interest payments, and borrowed money.

In 1961 the CEF was funding three to four new openings per year. Green lights were given one at a time and only when cash was on hand to cover the total project cost. Today, eighteen years later, the Synod through its CEF, is opening 20 to 25 new home missions per year at an average cost of about \$235,000 to \$250,000 per opening.

Several new programs were initiated. The hospital-medical group insurance program, begun in 1965, has about 3,200 policies currently in effect. This group insurance is available to all full-time church workers in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In 1966 the Synod adopted a non-contributory pension program. There are 2,675 participants with 350 currently receiving benefits.

Obviously, the administration needs of the Synod have increased along with the growth described above. The time has passed when the management needs can be met totally through part-time administrators. Pressures from congregations served by such men along with the need for full-time service in certain areas of the Synod's work necessitated the establishment of the thirteen full-time positions for called workers:

- President (since 1959)
- Stewardship Counselor (1967)
- Executive Secretary - Board of Trustees (1961)
- Executive Secretary - General Board for Home Missions (1964)
- Associate Executive Secretary - GBHM (1979)
- Executive Secretary - Commission on Higher Education (1970)
- Executive Secretary - Board for World Missions (1960)
- Executive Secretary - Special Ministries Board (1973)
- Executive Secretary - Board for Parish Education (1949)
- Secretary of Part-time Education (1968)
- Secretary of Schools (1936) (Teacher Meyer)
- Secretary of Publications (1977)
- Managing Editor, Northwestern Lutheran (1974)

Five staff officers also serve on a full-time basis. They include:

Treasurer, Controller, Budget Director - Board of Trustees
Fiscal Executive - Board of Trustees
Real Estate Officer - Board of Trustees
Deferred Giving Counselor - Conference of Preidents
Architectural Director - Architectural Committee

The fiscal office felt the impact of the surge in the Synod's growth more than any other area of activity. Our current fiscal office staff of sixteen (eighteen if one includes the Architectural Office) is considerably larger than the staff of two in 1940, when Treasurer Carl Niedfeldt and his secretary, Mrs. Buch, were the only full-time office employees.

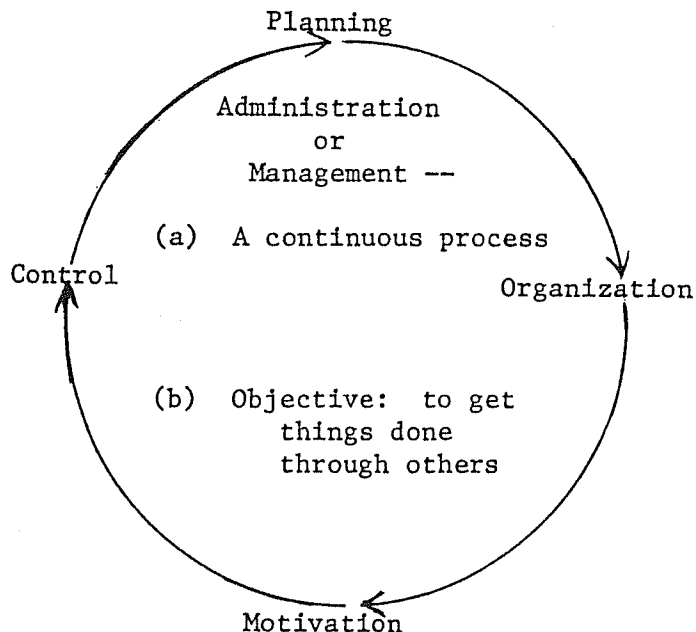
The role which administration plays in the work of our Synod has grown considerably, particularly within the last twenty-five years of our history.

III. A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES ON ADMINISTRATION

Merely increasing the number of managerial people will not in itself increase the quality of administration. It is extremely important that those full-time and part-time people who manage the affairs of the Synod shall be good administrators if they are to fulfill their proper role in the church.

Administration involves a continual process of four basic functions:

(1) Planning, (2) Organization, (3) Motivation, and (4) Control, with two additional factors, decision making and communication, pervasive in each of the four steps.



Two factors are pervasive in each of the four steps of the administrative process:

1. Decision making
2. Communication

In the example mentioned earlier in this paper, Jethro and Moses established the objective of providing a better government for the people with less responsibility for Moses. Jethro offered a plan - divide the work among other leaders. Jointly they agreed on an organization suitable to carry out the plan. They selected able, God-fearing men of truth, men who hated covetousness, and built them into an organization. Although Scripture does not tell us in so many words, we may assume that Moses motivated those leaders and then also built in a system of control because good results continued to come forth for Moses and for the nation.

The first step in good administration is proper PLANNING. Without going into great detail, we would point out that proper planning involves (a) establishing clearly defined objectives of the Synod, the congregation, etc.; (b) looking ahead to see where and how many changes may be discovered which will lead the Synod, the congregation, to the desired objectives in the best possible way; (c) setting goals, desired accomplishments, which you intend to achieve within certain specified time periods; (d) determining strategy, how you intend to carry out your plans and meet any opposition; (e) determining the policy and procedures by which you will operate; (f) establishing program and time schedules; (g) budgeting. All of this is included in proper planning.

There are those who confuse real planning for the future with trouble shooting. In this connection I am quoting from a keynote address given by Pastor James Schaefer at a management development seminar held in September of 1977.

"Most of us are fair tacticians. You don't survive long in the parish without cultivating the tactical art, that is, the day to day decisions on the road to wherever you are going. Many, if not most, tactical decisions are problem-solving decisions, and that's fun!. It's fun to solve problems. It gives you a sense of really having done something - today. But when strategy blooms, three, four, five years out, the tendency is to ask the strategist: Yes, but what have you done for us lately? The problem-solver can be recognized because he is always toting a fire extinguisher. He is always scurrying to a fire. Ostensibly to put it out. He doesn't, but that really doesn't matter. He has given the impression that he has. And that's just as important. No need to ask the problem-solver what he has been doing lately. His clothing is damp. There is a strong odor of smoke about him. His hair and eyebrows are always slightly singed. What I'm trying to say is: The pertinent question is not how to do things right, but how to find the right things to do and to concentrate our resources and efforts on them.

It is, however, at this precise point -- strategy formation -- that we become wary. There are a number of reasons for this. One that comes immediately to mind is sluggishness. It is far more taxing to develop strategy than to play the day-to-day game. Further, we tell ourselves that we don't want to lock ourselves into any strategy. Better to keep options open than to make a commitment to the future with singleness of purpose and concentration of resources. What we want, we say, is flexibility.

At a different level, there is a more sobering reason. We hesitate with our strategies and our plans because we fear that we may frustrate the Holy Spirit. We don't want to dictate to the Holy Spirit. When the time comes (we say) the Holy Spirit will give us our strategy and plans. It does sound good! But where the idea came from I do not know.

Let's say it with unequivocal clarity. We formulate strategy for ourselves. We make plans for ourselves. We make projections for ourselves. No one strategizes, or plans, or projects for the Holy Spirit. He is and always will be the wind that "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh." (John 3:8). And when our strategy and our plans and our projections are not the strategy and plans and projections of the Holy Spirit, He will let us know. In that respect I have never known the Holy Spirit to fail us. We can set goals for ourselves, but not for the Holy Spirit.

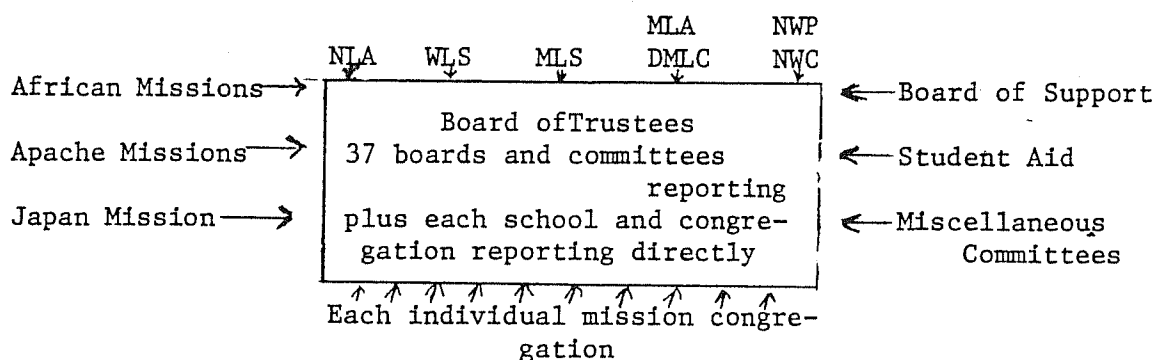
St. Paul was full of plans. At his baptism he was designated as Jesus' "chosen vessel" to bear "His name before the Gentiles and kings." (Acts 9:15). But it was fourteen years later -- 14 years -- that the Holy Ghost said to the prophets and teachers of Antioch, "Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Barnabas and Paul set out immediately after fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands. There was no need for Paul to lay his plans. For fourteen years he had been planning for this moment. No need for him to sit down, pull out a map, and plan the route -- Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Antioch, and all the rest.

After preaching in Phrygia and Galatia, he planned to preach the word in Asia. "They were forbidden by the Holy Ghost," reports Luke (Acts. 16:6). That did not stop Paul from planning. He next set his sights on Bithynia. His plans again were frustrated. "The Spirit suffered them not," Luke again reports (16:7). St. Paul was still full of plans. That the Spirit was constantly interfering with his plans did not stop him from planning at all. When he wrote to the Romans, he was still developing his strategy. "I do not want you to be unaware, brothers," he wrote, "that I planned many times to come to you." But, he adds, "I have been prevented from doing so until now." (1:13).

By this time, however, Rome was a side trip for St. Paul. He had leap-frogged Rome and had designed a mission strategy which included a ministry in Spain. At the end of the letter he told the Romans about his new strategy. "Whensoever I take my journey into Spain," he wrote, "I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward (to Spain) by you". (15:24). (End of quote from J.Schaefer, Keynote Address).

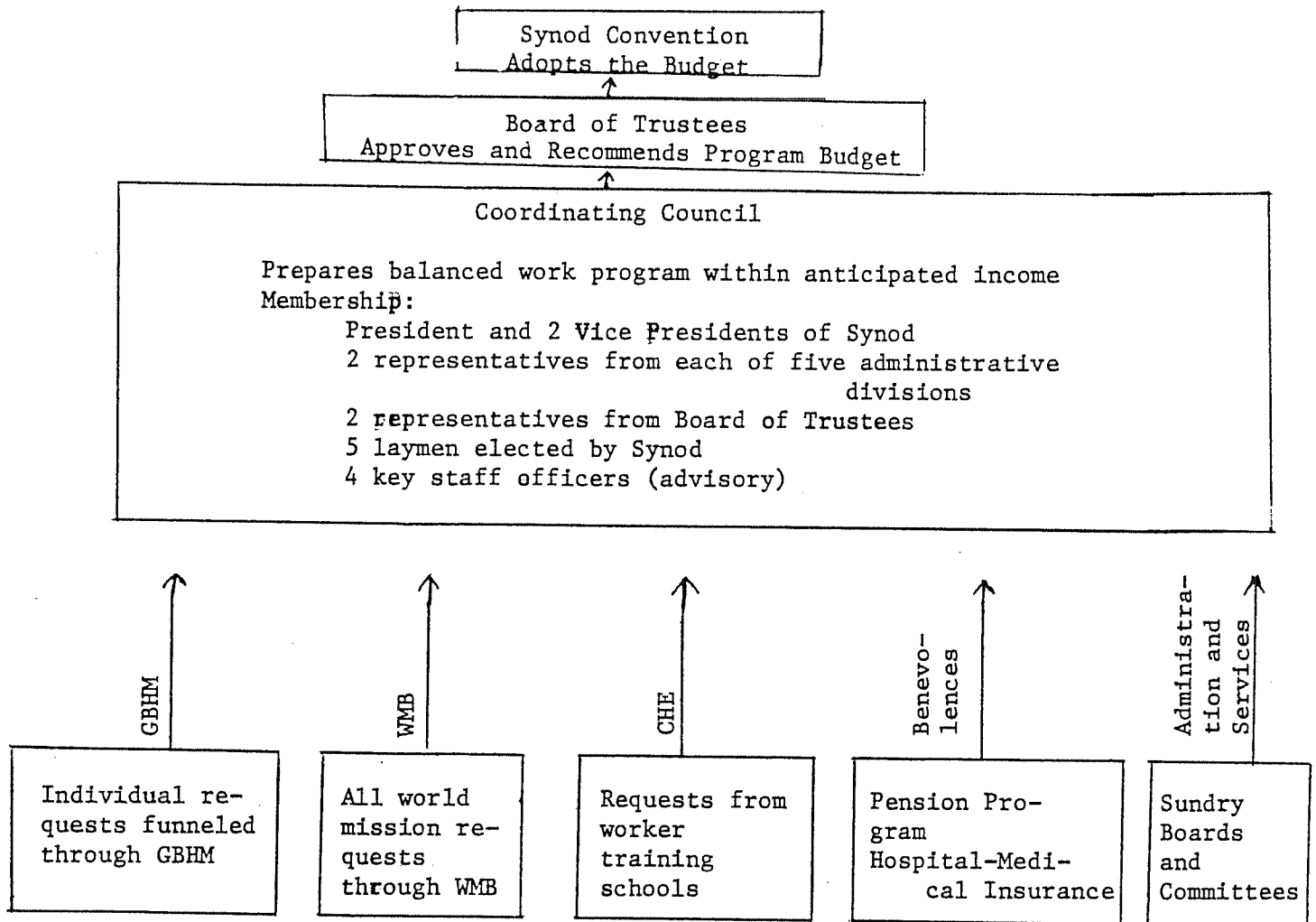
The Commission on Higher Education, charged with the responsibility of training church workers, was recently involved in long range planning with which it is confronted the various Districts and then also the Synod as it sought to determine (1) how many pastors and teachers the Synod will need in the years to come, (2) how and where these workers shall be trained, (3) what changes (if any) must be made in worker training facilities in order to produce the required number of workers for the future, and (4) what impact any changes in facilities will have in debt amortization and operational costs on future budgets and on other areas of the Synod's work. Proper planning is a very necessary step in any process of administration.

The second step in the administrative process is ORGANIZATION, organization to meet clearly defined objectives. Prior to the 1967 Administration Seminar and the institution of the Coordinating Council the Synod had an extremely disjointed organizational set up in which all boards, committees and individuals made their requests directly to the Board of Trustees as shown in the following illustration:



Under this type of organization the Synod would traditionally adopt a budget in which anticipated expenditures usually exceeded and anticipated income and the Board of Trustees was required to make necessary priority decisions for which it was not qualified.

With the introduction of the Coordinating Council and the establishment of five administrative divisions the Board of Trustees still funds the work program and approves the budget for recommendation to the Synod. However, the planning for a balanced work program and the priority screening is now done, not by the Board of Trustees, but by the Coordinating Council with qualified representation from the entire Synod. The current organizational chart looks something like this:



Under the above organizational approach the various boards and committees plan their work program for the future, attach a budgetary request to each item, and submit their requests to the head of their respective division for presentation to the Coordinating Council where the total requests are reviewed in the light of their relevance to the Synod's objectives and the anticipated income. The Council then plans a balanced work program and recommends it to the Board of Trustees where it is screened for fiscal soundness and recommended to the Synod Convention. Items which are not scheduled in the recommended program budget for lack of funding are presented to the Synod under a separate listing with a cost tag assigned to each. So much for the organizational set-up in our administrative program.

The third step in the Administration process is MOTIVATION. The most wonderful organization, standing still, not moving, can't accomplish a thing. It is like a \$20,000 corn picker in a field of Iowa corn. Someone must get it moving or it will not pick a single ear. Administration, effective administration, in the church also needs motivation. That motivation, of course, comes from the Gospel. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor.5:14). Again, when the Hebrew leaders demanded of Peter and John "not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18), the disciples replied: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Those men were motivated. Something got them in motion. They had been with Jesus. They witnessed His great power in performing miracles. They heard Him tell them that He was the Son of God, the promised Messiah. They were witnesses of His tremendous love for them when they saw Him suffering and dying. Their motivation reached its peak when they saw Him risen from the dead and when the Holy Spirit came to them on the day of Pentecost and filled their hearts with an understanding and a faith which overflowed with actions.

The work of the Conference of Presidents and particularly the Stewardship Counselor's office has been invaluable in this area providing sound, scripturally based motivational material and guides. However, headquarters cannot do the job alone. The stewardship boards, the circuit pastors, and above all, the local pastors are very vital links in the motivational step. The Gospel, in a book on the shelf gathering dust, will not motivate a single soul. That Gospel is a living tool of the Holy Spirit. But it must be used. Jesus motivated when He said: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." (Matth. 28:20).

In our congregations we should plan and organize, and then also motivate. Frequently we carefully plan for the construction of church facilities. We spend money for an architect. We tend to every detail for efficiency, for worship, for school, and for fellowship areas. We work, plan, and sacrifice for months to erect building facilities. Then when the day of dedication comes we are delighted and with a feeling of accomplishment we look at the building and think: "Ah, the work finally is finished!" But is it? Are we in business only to build buildings or do we have a much higher objective? In other words, someone must do something so that those facilities will be filled with people, and that those people may be brought to Jesus, and that those people may be instrumental in bringing others to Jesus also. Motivation! Again, we may carefully organize our congregation, the church council, building committee, ladies' aid, youth society, etc. But the organization, no matter how carefully it is done, must be motivated. And that motivation should come from one source, from God the Holy Spirit through the preaching and teaching of God's Word and through the administration of the sacraments. Many churches and congregations may find that their organizational efforts never seem to get off the ground. Perhaps it may be because they are not properly motivated. Perhaps it is because the Word of God and the devotions at the beginning of the meeting or the attention to Scripture during the meeting receives only a very casual attention and the opening devotions degenerate merely into a formality, a 'thing-to-do' before we get at the "real" business. In this connection I am reminded of a story of twin ^{other} brothers. The one grew up to be a successful refrigerator salesman and the ^{other} a minister who just seemed to be having no success in his church work. When the minister wondered why the Lord wasn't blessing his labors with success and why his twin brother was successful beyond measure, the brother replied: "Look, even though my refrigerators have many flaws, I sell them as if they were the Gospel truth. You have the Gospel truth and sell it as if it is full of flaws and weaknesses." The point we wish to make is that we HAVE the Gospel truth in our churches. God has given it to us in His grace.

The Holy Ghost works, motivates, moves people to do something, through that Word. The more we use that Word in our congregations, the more motivated we will be.

In this connection it should also be noted that it is extremely significant that we establish clearly defined objectives for ourselves as a Synod and as congregations. When we clearly know what we seek to accomplish in our organization, then the Word of God can motivate us to go after those objectives. A few years ago we noted that the large congregation which we were serving as pastor had no clearly defined objectives or policies. The purpose of the organization of the congregation as spelled out in its constitution was "that all things may be done decently and in order". That was the purpose of the organization. It gave no real direction. Imagine trying to motivate people with the Gospel that Christ died for all men so that "all things might be done decently and in order." Subsequently, the church council developed a clearly defined set of objectives which clearly set forth the long range purpose of the congregation. Those objectives were read every month for about six months and occasionally thereafter. We reminded ourselves again and again that our real business was to work at those things which helped us accomplish those specific objectives. It was amazing to see how the time and energy we spent on the various items before us shifted. Certain things which formerly took hours were handled in a few minutes. Other things which formerly received little or no attention "for lack of time" suddenly were given much greater consideration.

The fourth and final step in the administrative process is CONTROL. Control is the measurement and correction of the performance of individuals and groups to make sure that the organization objectives and the plans designed to attain these objectives are accomplished.

In our CEF program, for example, we normally have between 90 to 95 projects in the hopper at one phase or another, all the way from land search authority, to property purchase, to planning authority for a church or a parsonage, to construction of a church or parsonage. Furthermore, since it normally takes approximately eighteen months from the time a mission is given planning authority for its chapel (less for a parsonage) until the actual construction is complete and final funding is required, it is not only necessary that the General Board for Home Missions and the Board of Trustees jointly plan very carefully, but it is also extremely important that a number of controls also be established and administered lest we suddenly find that two or three projects, each with a \$200,000 allocation, suddenly come in at \$350,000 ^{for lack of control} and throw the entire program out of kilter. Control, with clearly defined check points, is vital in any process of administration.

Finally, there are two extremely important factors which are pervasive in all four steps in the process of administration. The first of these is decision making. A good administrator should learn how to make correct decisions, decisions which are based on known facts, carefully weigh all the options, and best contribute to the desired objective. The second factor is communication. We cannot over-emphasize the significance of this item in any administrative function. The most frequent problem in any administration bloop can often be traced to a breakdown in communication. In every communication there is a sender and a receiver. If the desired communication is to get through, then the message must be clear and it must be sent through the best possible channel (conference; letter; memo; tape recording; newspaper, radio; television, etc.). The best of plans, the finest decisions, if not properly communicated, are lost.

Up to this point we have described the role of administration as it has grown and as it might be practiced on the synodical level. Now what about the role of administration on the level of the congregation:

IV. THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

Actually, the basic principles of the administrative process do not change. They apply on virtually every level. If a congregation is going to have good administration, then it should first of all clearly define its ongoing purpose, its objectives, and its goals. The book The Shepherd Under Christ has an excellent section on pages 307-308. Among other things it says: "The purpose of a Christian congregation is to put God's gifts to use in preaching the Gospel so that those who hear may be strengthened and preserved in their Christian faith until life eternal and that the message of salvation may be shared ever more widely with the congregation's community and with the entire world"... "A congregation will do well to set down a statement of purpose, possibly in its constitution, and to review this periodically so that it never loses sight of the reason for which God lets it continue in the world." The specific, clearly defined objectives should also be spelled out and perhaps read at every church council meeting for the first six months or so. What a derailment from its real purpose for existing often results when the church council spends two hours or more trying to determine the most efficient way of repairing a leak in the school roof and then has no time at all to discuss more effective ways to bring the Gospel of Christ to the community and to the world. What a poor type of administration or management when everyone in the congregation at the end of the year concludes that the church had a very successful year "because it ended the year in the black", and no one even thinks of asking such questions as: "Have we done a better job in bringing the Gospel to our community? Have we done everything possible to promote the cause of Christ in our mission thrust? Have we grown in our church and communion attendance?"

Now what about the role of the pastor in the administration of the congregation? It would appear that the example of the disciples in Acts 6 offers some pretty sound advice. When the daily administration activities in providing for the widows and the poor interfered with their primary calling, then they selected seven assistants so that the real work of preaching the Word could proceed without interruption. The Christian pastor of today has the primary call to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments. Again, The Shepherd Under Christ offers excellent advice when it says: "There is no biblical mandate stating that the pastor must provide administrative leadership in a congregation. In practice, however, it generally turns out that way. For one thing, it is not always possible to make the clear-cut distinction which is indicated when it is said that the pastor should concern himself with spiritual matters and that others can take care of the church's business and externals. Then, too, the pastor often is the only full-time person involved in the congregation's work and carries the broadest responsibilities. His term of office has no specific limitations. All of this leads to the practical result that he will inevitably need to concern himself with congregational administration. When he fails to do this, an

administrative vacuum will almost surely result." Indeed, in the early life of a mission congregation the pastor may have to assume most of the administration of the congregation. The very life and existence of the new mission may depend quite directly upon the willingness of the pastor to assume the administrative responsibilities. However, as soon as possible he should seek to divest himself of many time-consuming administrative responsibilities and train his members to assume them so that he may give himself as much as possible to his primary calling, teaching and preaching the Word. However, no matter how much the pastor may seek to delegate these responsibilities to others, he cannot escape the fact that he is still an administrator, that it is still his business to make good things happen through other people. He is in a position of leadership to plan, to organize, to motivate, and even to control, but not to dominate. Furthermore, he is very vital in the decision making process and in communication so necessary to make the entire administrative process work. Although the pastor's primary assignment from the Lord and from His congregation charges him with diligent and faithful study of the Scriptures for the business of saving souls for heaven, nevertheless, by reason of his position in the congregation he is also an administrator, and he should do his best to be a good administrator.

The role of the church council member is no less significant. It would appear prudent for the congregation to select its most capable people to be its representatives in this most important work in the world, the work of the Lord. Those council members, or any other officers in the church, should also seek to provide the very best kind of administration within the scope of their assignment always in keeping with the overall objectives of the church.

Yes, administration has an extremely important role in the church. It involves planning, organization, motivation, and control. It involves establishing clear objectives and policies. It involves decision making and communication. All of this, so that we may reach the greatest possible number of people in our community and in the world with the saving Gospel of Christ.

Elton H. Huebner
September 1979

