

A History of the Milwaukee Campus Ministry

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Facilities

The Milwaukee Campus ministry had its official beginnings in September of 1965. At that time, ^{the}mission board of the South Eastern Wisconsin District called Pastor Richard Zieseimer to serve the students at what was soon to be called the Wisconsin Lutheran Student Center.

Pastor Zieseimer accepted the call as full-time campus pastor, and so the search was on for a worship facility. The Synod first purchased a house located at 2118 E. Linwood Ave. According to The Still Voice, the student center's early newsletter, "The rooms were spacious and the furniture nil. However, AAL purchased some tables and chairs, and a few personal and church donations rounded out our seating capacity."

Attendance during that first year grew rapidly. Soon a core group of about twenty-five students formed, with church and Bible class attendance surpassing the mid-thirties. With such enthusiastic participation, the house on Linwood proved to be too small; so a new house was purchased just a few blocks away.

The new facility at 3031 N. Frederick Ave. had the advantage of a larger room for worship. Unfortunately, however, it was located a few blocks from the university campus, on a side street which concealed it from student traffic. Despite its inconspicuous presence, student involvement continued to grow.

Pastor Zieseimer realized that the location was less than ideal; so when a house directly across from the UWM student union became available, he requested that we make another move. In the summer of 1968, Campus Ministry once again packed up its belongings and moved to its present location, 2215 E. Kenwood Blvd.

The location of this property is ideal for campus work. The student center is highly visible from the university, and is located on the major student traffic route. While this was true, another problem existed. The worship area was too small. After worshiping for four years in a crowded room, a decision was made to remodel. A wall was removed between the pastor's study and the kitchen. This remodeling gave the students an area 21' x 11'9", still a modest size but at this point workable. Eventually another wall was removed making the present worship area 21' x 27'.

The most recent improvement at the Campus House is the renovation of a room in the basement. In the early months of 1986, the student council recognized the need for an additional meeting room. Students chose an unused room in the basement and remodeling began. Insulating, paneling and boxing-in of pipes has been completed. The remaining projects are to put up ceiling tiles and lay the carpet. This added room will allow various committies to meet, while leaving the main lounge area open for other student use.

Staffing

Originally the Milwaukee Campus Ministry was staffed by

a full-time pastor. Pastor Richard Zieseemer began the work at our Campus house in September, 1965. In 1979 the SEW DMB resolved to end the full-time position and enlist two parish pastors to serve the students part-time.

Pastor Zieseemer then retired, and in June of 1980 Pastor James Witt, of St. Philip's, agreed to serve as part-time campus pastor. Pastor Witt was assisted by Vicar Mark Wagner for two years.

During the late summer and early fall of 1982, Pastor Witt trained full-time vicar Mark Cordes and part-time vicar Peter Kiecker to take over most of the work. This would allow Pastor Witt to serve in more of an advisory capacity. In September of 1982, Pastor Witt received, and accepted, a call to serve Divine Savior Lutheran Church in Pullman, Washington.

Pastor Witt was replaced as supervising pastor by Pastor John Braun. Pastor Braun served during the 82/83 school year, and was then replaced by Pastor Bob Schumann. Pastor Schumann was assigned to work full-time with the campus ministry for one year. Since funding was and is a problem, the ministry reverted to part-time status after that one year.

For the 84/85 school year three vicars were chosen to work under Pastor Helmut Flegel: Vicars Ken Frey, Kevin Hastings and Mark Schoeneck. They were followed by Vicars Jeff Schone and John Bitter, who served the students' spiritual needs during the summer of 1985. The present vicars are Ken Engdahl, John Kelly and Bruce Janisch,

At this time the SEW DMB is not able to expend the funds needed to support a full-time campus pastor. This is unfortunate, since the continuity of programming is lost from year to year. Plans for the coming summer and school year are to once again use the part-time vicars, under a new supervising pastor, Pastor George Ferch.

Programs and Student Involvement

During the early years Pastor Zieseimer held regular Sunday services at 10 AM, as well as evening Bible study on the second and fourth Sundays. Midweek devotions were also held every Wednesday at 11:30 AM. Some of the discussions mirror the topics of today, and then some represent a definite time period. For instance, in November of 1967 the discussion was led by a "Hippie Panel." And in January of 1971, Pastor R. Ehlke presented a slide lecture on Viet Nam. The timeless topics of sexuality, male/female roles and the book of Revelation pop up throughout the ministry's history.

Bible studies are still held on Wednesdays, but the time has moved from 11:30AM to 7PM. The Sunday worship service has also moved to an evening time slot. Service is at 6:30, with Bible study held every Sunday at 7:30 PM.

Attendance at services and Bible study has fluctuated throughout the years, but surprisingly enough it now averages what it did in 1967. At that time the Milwaukee Lutheran Collegians had a "paid membership" of 35, with average attendance

in the mid-twenties. As the years went by student participation slipped; so that in 1980 only a dozen students were active. (It was at this time that a decision was made to move from a full-time to part-time ministry.)

By God's grace, and the hard work of Pastor, Vicar and students, the next years saw a steady increase in student participation. The October 4, 1981 minutes of the Campus Ministry Council record, "average attendance is about 22-25 for Sunday devotion and about 20 for Bible study." That is about double the previous year's figures.

For the last four years attendance has remained at about 25. Occasionally attendance jumps to the mid-thirties, for example when a seminary professor speaks. And then again, at exam time, attendance will taper off for a week or two.

This figure of 25 has not by any means exhausted the number of WELS students in the area. This year the Campus House received over 200 names from the Synod's soul conservation list. In addition to these 200 local students, the Campus House received 250 names of students who checked off "Wisconsin Synod Lutheran" on their university registration form.

Why aren't these students active at the campus house? Partly because UWM is a commuter school. Of the 25,000 or so registered students, only 2000 live in the dorms. This means that most of the students live in the area, and can attend their home church. A second reason for poor attendance would be a lack of interest on the part of some students. And finally, a lack of full-time man-power to aggressively

pursue our young adults.

An evangelism team, made up of students and one vicar, does try to contact each WELS student in the area. And major outreach efforts are made in the fall and Lenten season. These efforts do produce fruit. This year we have had many visitors, with two unchurched students eventually joining WELS churches. While the Lord has blessed these efforts, much more could be done on a consistent basis, if a full-time pastor were available.

From our work at the University of Milwaukee a second campus ministry has sprung. In February of 1982, Pastor Witt began conducting Tuesday evening Bible classes at Carroll College. The Bible classes were well attended, interest continued to grow, and now Carroll has its own part-time campus pastor.

Other outreach efforts of the campus ministry abound. From its beginnings in 1965, the students have helped many congregations carry out evangelism programs. In 1966, students began assisting various congregations in the annual Inner City VBS. Two years later the Milwaukee students, in conjunction with the National Lutheran Collegians, decided to support a program which sent volunteers to help our missionaries in Peru. The September, 1970 issue of The Still Voice records the following:

Project G.O. (Gospel Oversees) was begun in 1968. Arrangements were made by Lutheran Collegians with the mission boards of the WELS, whereby Lutheran Collegians could recruit, train and support volunteer helpers. The volunteers are placed under the supervision of synodical missionaries in foreign fields.

Interest in mission work showed itself again in 1970, when the Milwaukee students sent out 200 Christmas cards to servicemen and missionaries. And finally, in 1971, we saw the addition of the Travel Canvass Witness (TCW) program, which like the inner city VBS is still in effect today.

Over the years, however, the outreach efforts of the students have shifted. Local congregations have rightfully grown more and more concerned about maintaining their own evangelism programs. And the college students have in turn focused their efforts on reaching out to fellow students. Now, instead of regularly helping local churches with evangelism, the students' conduct two major outreach efforts each year. These programs concentrate on reaching students living on or near campus. In addition, an evangelism committee meets every two weeks to regularly follow-up on visitors.

The change in emphasis means the local congregations may no longer be as close to, or aware of, the campus ministry. But, I believe the change is a healthy one for both parties. Both are now concentrating on reaching out to those around them, while still working together on VBS and TCW.

Publications

While there have been many tracts, pamphlets and promotional brochures produced by the Milwaukee Campus Ministry, only three are of significance. The first is a newsletter

called "The Still Voice." The first issue of this publication came out in November of 1967. The title of the newsletter was taken from 1 Kings 19:12 where the Lord was heard in "a still small voice."

Format, number of pages and number of issues per volume varied from year to year. At times the size was comparable to five or six church bulletins stapled together. At other times it was simply two or three 8½ x 11 sheets of paper, with printing on just one side. Some volumes contained two or three issues, while others contained five or six. This newsletter continued to serve the students through 1980.

In January, 1981 The Still Voice was replaced by the Lifeline. The Lifeline's purpose is to communicate God's saving message to the students, as well as to keep them informed of current Student Center events. The Lifeline is printed on one 11" x 17" sheet of paper. The sheet is folded in half so that the reader enjoys four 8½ x 11 size pages. Each volume contains ten issues; June/July and August/September double up, since the majority of students are not at school in summer.

Articles for both The Still Voice and Lifeline were/are written by Pastors, Vicars and students - primarily students. The editing, layout and distribution is all done by students. The mailing list has seen a steady increase since issue one. In 1967 the newsletter was sent to 638 people, in 1981 over 700, and the current monthly circulation stands at 1060.

The third publication is relatively young. In 1982,

council members recognized a need to keep campus ministry alumni informed; so the Campus Ministry Communicator (CMC) was born. The publication has four issues per year. The size is the same as the Lifeline. Articles on staffing changes, property needs, student participation and spiritual well-being all find their way into the CMC. As stated, the publication is still young, but in the opinion of this writer it will die an early death.

Government

In the first year of the Milwaukee Campus Ministry, students, guided by Pastor Zieseimer, created eight offices: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Discussion, Membership, Publicity and Social. The students basically governed themselves: initiating, carrying out and abandoning programs as they saw fit.

The first year and a half the Milwaukee Campus Ministry was pretty much an island unto itself. That is, it was not intimately connected with any other campus group. That changed in April of 1967. At that time the Milwaukee students became a chapter of the national group of Lutheran Collegians. Milwaukee's relationship with the national group has always been a warm one. Students participated in all major national events, and Milwaukee was honored to host the third and tenth annual Lutheran Collegians conventions.

This arrangement worked for many years. However, in

1979 the Synod decided that it should have more input and control in the student ministry. Soon after this decision the group known as Lutheran Collegians was officially disbanded. Some hurt feelings and resentment naturally followed, but in Milwaukee resentment did not linger very long.

The only other organizational change came in January of 1981. The student offices created in 1965 no longer adequately served the ministries' needs. Seeing the need for change, Pastor Witt, along with students, formed the present Campus Ministry Council. The new council has the following ten positions:

1. President (WELS layman)
2. Vice President/Secretary (WELS layman)
3. Treasurer (DMB representative)
4. Outreach Coordinator (student)
5. Program Coordinator (student)
6. Public Relations Coordinator (student)
7. Property Coordinator (student)
8. Worship Coordinator (student)
9. Campus Pastor
10. Vicar (s)

The coordinators of the five student committees are elected in April of every year and can be male or female. The two WELS laymen are appointed by the DMB, and the Campus Pastor and Vicar(s) are called by the DMB.

The students seem happy with this organization, since they have five votes in any major decision. And synodical representatives seem equally happy, since they too have input and voting power on major decisions.

From the practical point of view this council works out very well. The student coordinators bring fresh ideas,

while the DMB representatives add stability and a degree of program continuity.

Conclusion

By God's grace the Milwaukee Campus Ministry has served students for twenty school years. Those twenty years have seen many changes. If you asked the students, they might say the changes came about all too slowly. Nevertheless, the changes did take place. And changes will continue to come about. "Improvements" in scheduling, programming and facilities will continue to remove barriers perceived by students. This is good, and future leaders must see and respond to the needs of students. But for all the changes that will take place, one thing must remain the same. One thing must never change: students gathered around Word and sacraments. In that one area, may the history of the Milwaukee Campus Ministry repeat itself year after year.