

The Circuit Pastor as an Aid to the Synodical Program

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The *Handbook for Circuit Pastors* is the best tool for gaining an understanding of the manner in which circuit pastors may provide vital assistance to the synodical program. This excellent booklet should be read and reread by every circuit pastor. Its pages broadly define the responsibilities of the circuit pastor to communicate the work program of the synod to the pastors and congregations in his circuit and to encourage, in the spirit of the Gospel, a God-pleasing support of this program. A closer look at the handbook reveals that the circuit pastor's duties are not isolated to the tasks pertaining to Synod. Nevertheless, supporting Synod's mission is presently, and always has been, an important and integral part of the circuit pastor's functions.

It may seem to some as though the circuit pastor's work on behalf of the synod is dominated by financial matters, and concerns. It can hardly be denied that the circuit pastor's duties often require frank talk about monetary figures, budgets, dollars, financial needs, and financial potential. Our church body is involved in worker training and worker sending, and that costs money—presently somewhere between \$14 and \$15 million for the annual operating budget. Yet it would be a mistake to see such work in terms of bare finances alone, just as it would be a mistake to see the synodical program as something thought up by bureaucrats in Milwaukee. There are far greater and more spiritual dimensions to our work than that! The spiritual dimensions of even such common and overused terms like “dollars,” “subscriptions,” and “Synod” must be perceived by every circuit pastor if he is to capture the true spirit of his work. The dollar amounts on the pre-budget subscription statements, for example, are much more than mere numbers; they represent in very real terms a response of God's people to the Gospel and a measure of their commitment to His will and work. The synodical program in its truest sense is not just the synod's work; it is the Lord's work, the work of the Church. Included in this work are intense efforts to respond in an orderly manner to the Lord's directives to evangelize the world, to train pastors and teachers, and to supply the wants of the poor and needy. It is a grand and glorious work which requires joint effort since the resources of individual congregations acting independently would not be adequate for it.

If this ongoing synodical program is to receive the serious commitment the Lord desires for it, then it must have high priority attention and high-powered leadership to promote it! The kind of leadership desired will involve much more than the functions of control and supervision. The most highly prized and effective qualities of leadership are the subtle ones—the power of example, the ability to give meaning to the seemingly mundane, the knack for bringing together diverse-elements into a large and clearer picture, or the talent for communicating a grand vision of the possible. As much as anything else, our synod continues to need motivated leaders who will, in a Scriptural context, help to infuse fellow pastors and circuit congregations with a sense of purpose about our common work. There is a dying world out there, and someone should be reminding God's people to care. The Lord's master plan for the evangelization of the world will always be in need of heralds to proclaim it. The same work which pastors do for their respective congregations needs to be done on the circuit and district levels for our larger work as a synod.

The circuit pastors can in large measure help to provide the kind of needed leadership just described. My purpose in this paper will be that of encouraging faithfulness and enhanced effectiveness in regard to those duties. The paper's major divisions are the following: I. The circuit pastor should be aware of his unique position in a structure designed to effectively support our synod's ongoing work; II. Critical factors in the effectiveness of the circuit pastor's aid to the synodical program will be the attitudes and perceptions with which he approaches his tasks; III. Many helpful ideas and tools are available to assist the circuit pastor in his efforts to support the synodical program.

The Circuit Pastor Should Be Aware of His Unique Position in a Structure Designed to Effectively Support Our Synod's Ongoing Work

There are several major reasons why the circuit pastor system can be seen as a very effective, perhaps even the most effective, administrative structure for promoting local support for our synod's work. For one thing, it is the system in place. The circuit pastor's responsibilities to ongoing synodical program are already official and, for the most part, accepted by our ministerium. The line of administration linking the synod in convention to each one of the local congregations through the circuit pastor network is pretty clearly laid out in the "Bylaws of Synod," the "Constitution for the Districts," *The Handbook for Circuit Pastors*, and a number of special synodical resolutions. A flow chart of administration is given on the second page of the appendix.

While there are, to my knowledge, no passages of God's Word which specifically require the formation of a secondary level of pastoral leadership such as we have, we can say that the circuit pastor system is in keeping with the spirit of Scriptural injunctions calling for good order, joint effort, mutual support, and shared responsibilities. Luther, in his preface to his "Articles of Visitation," stated, "Both the Old and New Testaments give sufficient evidence of what a divinely wholesome thing it would be if pastors and Christian congregations might be visited by understanding and competent persons." The Scripture tells us to "build each other up" (1 Thes. 5:11 NIV), "to warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (1 Thes. 5:14 NIV), "to consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24, NIV). It is most natural that this beneficial work, as encouraged by God on the local level, should also be done on a larger scale. Titus and others (cf. II Cor. 8 and 9) functioned in a manner akin to our present-day circuit pastors when providing assistance for the collection of money for the poor saints and widows in Jerusalem.

Nor can we forget that the wisdom of delegating responsibility so apparent in the administrative actions of weary Moses (cf. Ex. 16:19-26) and the work plan of the overburdened apostles (cf. Acts 6:1-7) is inherent in the circuit pastor structure as well. In our present set-up circuit pastors are meant to provide not just token, but substantial help to our district presidents whose work loads are staggering. In our synod we don't want our district presidents to become full-time executives, but we keep expecting them to do full-time executive work just the same. Circuit pastors even more than others are crucial for providing the assistance needed if the heavy burdens of our district leaders are to be eased. These work burdens include the responsibility to encourage and support the synodical program.

The circuit pastor system is also surprisingly in step with the latest management trends. In management today administration which concentrates only on control is on its way out; informal communication, front-line initiative, experimentation, and innovation is in. All of this is certainly in keeping with the flexibility and local level initiative which is not only possible but encouraged within our circuit pastor system. Each circuit is intended to be an action unit, forging consensus about Synod's work and stimulating specific involvement in it.

Finally, the circuit pastor system reflects the natural leadership in our synod. Like the district presidents, the circuit pastors are elected by their peers because they are held in respect for their judgment, leadership qualities, doctrinal faithfulness, and dedication. So, from almost every viewpoint - officially, Scripturally, administratively, and by virtue of God-given gifts - circuit pastors are in a unique position to aid the synodical program.

II. Critical Factors in the Effectiveness of the Circuit Pastor's Aid to the Synodical Program Will be the Attitudes and Perceptions With Which He Approaches His Tasks

The effectiveness of the circuit pastor in every facet of his work, including the vital work of supporting Synod's mission, will depend a great deal on the perspectives and attitudes that he brings to his work. Certainly none of us is capable of making the synod's work of bringing the Gospel to all nations more important and wonderful than it already is. Yet we can hinder the importance and beauty of this work in the eyes of others if we do not communicate a message that says we are committed to it ourselves. There is no substitute for asking God to help us give our own hearts, our time, our prayers and strength to Jesus Christ and His saving mission.

How could we expect to go and encourage brethren and the churches they serve to grow in the grace of giving if we ourselves have not seriously reviewed our habits, our attitudes, and our relationship with the risen and ascended Lord and our personal faithfulness in this regard? Advice is cheap, but example speaks a language all its own. It brings sincerity to our speech and a certain clarity to our cause.

Another important key to a wholesome attitude about support for the synodical program on behalf of Synod comes from an awareness of the unique challenges and opportunities facing our synod at this time. Listed first among the stated objectives of our church body is its aim “to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people.” Never, to the knowledge of anyone living, have there been more people with whom to share. Our present world population of approximately 5 billion is expected to continue to increase dramatically and, by some estimations, it will double within the next 50 years. Most of this ocean of humanity will be eternally unless they have the Good News and receive it by faith. Fortunately, at this point in its history, our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is in a favorable position to respond to the spiritual hunger of the world’s millions both within the United States and in foreign lands. As a church body we are not presently embroiled in a doctrinal controversy of the sort which consumed so much of our attention prior to our departure from the Synodical Conference in 1961. We have, by God’s grace, an excellent worker training system capable of supplying an adequate number of called workers for the needs of the immediate future. We have a synodical administration which is, for the most part, efficient and has its goals well defined. The thing that continues to restrain our Gospel-sharing work is a lack of funds. Money is, as has been well stated, the most missing ingredient; the lack of it is one of our greatest obstacles in fulfilling our Lord’s directives.

While there might never be sufficient funding to do all the kingdom work we might want to do, the fact remains that the funding potential for Synod’s work is probably greater than our present level of performance would indicate. It has been estimated, for example, that if any 200-communicant-member church were divided in half to make up 100 giving units consisting of husband/wife and singles, and each giving unit were multiplied by the low median income of \$16,000, the gross annual income of the entire congregation would be \$1.6 million. If everyone in the church tithed, the church could fund a \$160,000 budget. If 20% of that budget went to Synod, the division would be as follows: \$128,000 for local purposes, \$32,000 for synodical work. Using those same figures for the entire 314,792 communicant members of our synod would reveal a funding potential of \$50 million as opposed to the \$15 million we presently use to operate. Of course, there are many ifs in such conjecture and many variables in the levels of faith and income amongst the membership of our synod; but remember, many churches when motivated have performed at such levels, and the median income has been set ridiculously low so that such examples are not unreasonable at all. The wonderful outpouring that came to pass in the Reaching Out Offering is an example of the hidden funding potential a lot of people didn’t think was there.

God has given many blessings to our church body, and the greatest of them lie in the spiritual realm; but God has also blessed our Wisconsin Synod membership with financial wealth so that it might be used for His glory and for the furtherance of His Kingdom. Yet, sadly, many of our members don’t even see their financial blessings, much less God’s plan for their use. In the midst of the greatest era of prosperity the world has ever known there is constant hand-wringing and discontent and fearfulness about not having enough. A debilitating idea afflicts American thinking. We call this affliction “poortalk.” As people’s spending outstrips their income, they begin to feel and proclaim that they are comparatively poor and underpaid, defeated by prices and taxes, and incapable of affording their families’ needs. Workers complain they cannot make ends meet on their inadequate salaries. People living in lavish homes bemoan the cost of trivial items.

Researchers have developed two principles which help to explain “poortalk.” The first is that people’s expectations are almost always relative to their prior experience. Remember that the “baby boom” generation has now come into its own, and its prior experience has been one of outstanding affluence. Very few of those under 40 have ever really known what we might call “hard times.” For many of them yesterday’s luxuries have become today’s necessities. Even though real income is still outstanding compared to other cultures and times, most are still comparing today’s financial picture to the more rapidly rising economy of the ‘50’s and ‘60’s so

they tend to feel poorer. The second reason for “poortalk” is that people’s expectations are often based on what they observe others like themselves receiving. One man put it well when he said, “Poverty is a state of mind that occurs to me when I see my neighbor’s new car.” When climbing the social ladder, people tend to look up, not down. Their attention is on where they are going, not where they have come from. Unfortunately, the ladder is infinite, so unless one renounces the climb, he will always see himself as comparatively poorer than others. “Poortalk” of the sort just described is unbecoming for God’s people. It concentrates attention on their lack rather than on their blessing, on themselves rather than on the more legitimate needs of others. Some people really are poor. They deserve compassion and help, but such is not the case for most of us. So if we want to be more in keeping with the thankful and contented spirit the Lord wants for us, let’s cut the “poortalk.”

The real issue is not a lack in financial potential; it is a lack in the area of sanctified personal priorities. On a persona congregational level all of us need to better understand that God has plans and purposes for our lives. “We are (God’s) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). The crux of the problem is that, being yet possessors of a sinful nature, God’s plan for us is often in conflict with our plan for ourselves. We have many fine Christians throughout our synod. They are decent, hardworking, likable people, and certainly people who possess God’s grace and eternal life; but a great many of them need to understand far more clearly than they presently do that they are supposed to be living for God and not for themselves. “(Christ) died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again” (II Cor. 5:15). In order to do this the Old Man with its tendency toward selfishness needs to be rebuked with the law, and the New Man encouraged with the Gospel and given direction. Unless we who are God’s appointed leaders help our fellow Christians to see that life is a battleground and not a playground, that God has blessed them spiritually and materially so that they might fulfill their purpose of being a blessing to others; unless they are shown as clearly as possible their place in God’s master plan for the evangelization of the world, it will not be they who have failed so much as we. It is apparent that serious and persistent attention should be given to addressing the problems of materialism and selfishness, and that determined and ongoing efforts should be given to teaching the Biblical concepts of discipleship, stewardship, and evangelism or mission-mindedness if we are not to miss the unique challenge and opportunity of our affluent time. To God’s way of thinking few things deserve more condemnation, censure, and judgment than the wasting of blessings or the failure to use them for the purposes for which they were intended. If we don’t help our members to see God’s purposes for their lives, their talents, and yes, their money, we are doing a disservice to them, to ourselves, and to the Church’s work.

Just as individuals need to be helped in their fight against self-centeredness, so also do congregations. Churches, of course, don’t even have to come by this tendency intentionally. It’s the most natural thing in the world for nearby and immediate concerns to loom much larger than long-range and distant ones, no matter how important they may be. Somehow the need to pay off the debt to the utility companies because it confronts us weekly can cause us to forget the other debt which, like the Apostle Paul, we owe to the Greek and barbarian. In this matter the voice of God’s work must speak decisively. Christ’s last directive to His disciples and to us is: “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:9). The words “both” and “and” in this directive means that personal, domestic, and world-wide mission work is to be carried on simultaneously and not consecutively, killing immediately the self-centered thought that mission efforts and spending should be confined locally until favorable circumstances permit. What would happen if every church in the world decided to take care of every need and desire before contributing a cent to training and sending workers to the lost billions? The church would be turned in on itself - exactly the opposite of what Christ had in mind for it.

The matter of balancing a church’s local and synodical giving deserves much more attention than it often receives. The larger giving picture in a number of recent years has frequently revealed total offerings—up, Synod’s proportionate share -down. In 1976 the Conference of Presidents adopted a statement on *Kingdom Balance* which is also enclosed in the appendix of this paper. One doesn’t hear it mentioned much these days, but perhaps it should be. It is too easy to get carried away with local or favorite projects and forget in the

process about fulfilling financial obligations to the synod which the church “counts on” if it is to carry out its work.

Many of our pastors consider offerings for Synod’s work, because they are so reflective of a selfless concern for others, to be sacred and inviolable, while others don’t seem to care how they are used. One pastor stated recently in a paper for district, “A congregation would never use money for local projects which had been offered by its members for synodical purposes.” I asked him if he were stating an ideal or a truth. His answer—an ideal. The known truth is that treasurers and church councils, often with the pastor’s knowledge and approval, give in to the temptation to dip into designated synodical offerings to pay ongoing bills. When outreach money gets this kind of treatment, a powerful “us first” message is communicated to everyone aware of it. Someone might well be asking, “Is this God-pleasing? Is it even legal?” Another of our elderly pastors, when hearing of this practice, said, “It’s conceivable under such circumstances that someone could sue the church for misuse of funds, and, although it wouldn’t be in keeping with the spirit of I Corinthians 6, the case might stick.”

All of these observations have been offered to emphasize Just how important the circuit pastor’s influence is to the synod. It is obvious that achieving unity of purpose in a large, complex, geographically diverse organization such as WELS is no small matter. It cannot be assumed that people are even aware of what our synod is doing, much less that they are interested in it or committed to it. Through the Word and persistent education, awareness must be raised, interest stimulated, commitment encouraged. It isn’t done enough. We all love to sing, “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” but we don’t always move like a “mighty army.” Mutually agreed upon financial goals often receive half-hearted support. Elected leaders are asked to lead aggressively, and then are not followed. There are many voices of disagreement, criticism, and divisiveness. Who will speak for unity, common causes, our larger work? Circuit pastors can, if motivated by a love for Christ and for others, rise to the challenges and opportunities of their leadership positions.

III. Many Helpful Ideas and Tools are Available to Assist the Circuit Pastor in His Efforts to Support the Synodical Program

Over the years a number of concepts and ideas have been formulated which have proven helpful. I offer them here as suggestions. Included among them are:

1. Stress ongoing motivation. Increasing awareness and support for the synodical program is-not necessarily something that can be done easily, but for that reason neither should it be done only occasionally. Local pastors should be encouraged by the circuit pastors to give Synod high profile year round in sermons, meetings, personal conversations, newsletters, organizational gatherings, through promotional materials, through mission fairs and additional mission festivals, etc. We cannot drag the synod’s concerns out on Mission Festival Sunday only, or solely on annual budget meeting Sunday, and expect our members to be informed and properly motivated for support.
2. Be knowledgeable about Synod’s work. Circuit pastors are supposed to be conduits of information. Be aware of special synodical needs and problems by faithfully reading *BoRams*, *Proceedings*, periodicals, mailings, etc., so that you might faithfully pass this information on to others.
3. Be knowledgeable about the pastors and congregations in your circuit. A fiveyear subscription performance record, while it may not tell the entire story, could help. The enclosed survey sheet for circuit pastors could be a useful tool for understanding and analyzing the congregation’s commitment and capabilities. Sincere interest in pastors and congregations is usually well received, and knowledge of special problems and strengths cannot but enhance effectiveness.

4. Visit with the pastors of your circuit. The pastor is the shepherd and key motivator in his congregation. When his support for the synodical program is whole-hearted, the congregation's tends to be as well. The book, *Shepherd Under Christ*, states, "The pastor should expect to serve and help his brothers in a synod as he expects their helpful service. Only when pastors are willing to encourage, strengthen, admonish, correct, and reprove one another with the Word of God will a synod remain truly united and spiritually strong. Without becoming officious, each pastor is to be his synodical brother's keeper, but in a spirit of humble helpfulness void of pride and self-righteousness. At the same time he should be willing to accept brotherly admonition, either when it is given informally or by someone who has an official responsibility" (P. 358). Those pastors and church leaders revealing a high level of commitment should receive a well chosen word of commendation and further evangelical encouragement. Yet, when it becomes apparent that misconceptions or slothful and indifferent attitudes prevail, is it not our Christian duty to confront them? In these instances either the pastors or church leaders or both should be made aware of the evidences of the existence of such attitudes. While this may be a painful and awkward process, hopefully it may lead as well to repentance and renewal. If pastoral visits are few and far between and Limited to the subject of financial support alone, the disliked image of "money -an" might well be projected. No one has it more within his power to change such an image than the circuit pastor himself. If he is faithful as pastor's pastor, then the matter of funding far Synod might be seen more appropriately and naturally in the context of his total concern for the pastor and church's progress.
5. Hold congregational circuit meetings. Constitutionally we are required to do this. An excellent form for such a meeting together with other materials pertaining to it were prepared for a circuit pastors' workshop a number of years ago by my father, Pastor Winfred Koelpin. I have included them in the appendix for the benefit of our more recently elected circuit pastors in hopes they will help. Congregational circuit meetings are needful for providing opportunity for personal communication about Synod's work. Good publicity is crucial if poor turnouts are to be avoided. Timing is key if potential results are to be maximized. Purpose must center around cross-centered motivation leading to God. pleasing goals and subscriptions which
 - vote to advance the Lord's work,
 - show that concern for the lost has grown since last year,
 - show that the responsibility towards Synod is as vital as local work,
 - show that the members trust in God's promises and expect His Holy Spirit to do great things.
6. Foster a spirit of togetherness. We are not informing fellow pastors and congregations about their work, but our joint work. Many opportunities for informal communicational spirit of "what can we do" about these matters often proves to be every bit as beneficial to our purposes as official advice. Along this line circuit pastor "business luncheons," concerned phone calls to fellow circuit pastors, and social gatherings can help. A spirit of togetherness should also involve laymen in our work on behalf of Synod. It is their work too. They relate well to other laymen, the very people we want to reach. Togetherness includes our feelings about Synod. When disagreements about methods and procedures occur, they should be expressed to the proper people in a spirit of love, humility, and patience with a propensity to put the best construction on everything. A "we/they" mind set—Group 1 being a hierarchy of called and elected officials who often don't know what they are doing and whose errors in judgment are inexcusable; and Group 2 consisting of local pastors who know best what is to be done, but invariably can't get around to doing it—will encourage division and sap our strength.
7. Promote stewardship training. Frequently there are complaints that Synod pleas for help are attempts to pluck the fruit of faith without properly watering the tree. On the other hand, it is assumed that watering should be going on all the time. The recent Administration Survey Commission proposal, if adopted by

Synod in 1985, would make stewardship training the more exclusive and more clearly defined responsibility of the circuit pastors and have the effect of making the subscription “pluckers” more involved in the watering process. No matter who does it, stewardship training which is a long-term Christ-centered approach to developing responsible and consistent service attitudes, is worthy of a great deal of attention. Our work is not just to raise funds, but to raise people together with their funds, raise their awareness, their levels of love and dedication to Christ and His work.

Most of you, like myself, are already busy pastors. I know as well as you that there are no easy answers when it comes to finding a happy balance to the amount of time and energy that can be given to the great many tasks for which we are responsible. Yet, when establishing priorities, circuit pastor duties should be right near the top for they lie at the very heart of the purposes for which our church exists. The Lord does not expect from us more than we can give, but He does look for our best. The Savior has taught us that greatness in His kingdom is not found in position, but rather in the humble service that goes with a position. He taught that message; He lived it. He sealed it with His lifeblood. Keeping that in mind, “let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season, we shall reap if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9).”

Preliminary Recommendation Proposal of the Administrative Survey Commission Concerning Circuit Pastors

Since the Conference of Presidents is by constitutional mandate responsible for supervising the funding of the Synod’s budget and, as such, is also concerned about the dissemination of information about synodical work, the commission believes that the districts and the Synod would best be served by making the circuit pastors, who serve as the arm of the district presidents, responsible for stewardship education and dissemination of information on synodical work. We therefore recommend that:

- a. all functions now assigned to the district stewardship boards be made the responsibility of the circuit pastors and that district stewardship boards be eliminated;
- b. each district praesidium, appoint biennially one of its circuit pastors to serve as a liaison with the Synod’s stewardship counselor and Board for Information and Stewardship;
- c. the circuit pastors utilize laymen to assist them in the information and stewardship aspect of their work.

SYNOD

CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS

“The duties of the Conference of Presidents shall be to supervise the funding of the synod’s budget.” “The Conference of Presidents shall bring to the attention of Synod such matters, as in its opinion, need attention and action of the synod.” (Synod Constitution, Bylaws 3.05 c.d.)

DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

“The president shall supervise the work of the district circuit pastors.” (Article VI. 1.d. District Constitution)
“The district shall exercise supervision over its members in matters of doctrine and practice through circuit pastors. In intracongregational matters the district president shall have purely advisory authority and shall offer council and assistance ... in matters as may involve the interests of the synod.” (Article VIII, Sec. 1 & 2, District Constitution)

CIRCUIT PASTORS

“A circuit pastor shall discuss the manner in which the goals and programs of the synod are being carried out.” (Article XXII, Sec. 1, District Constitution) “The Circuit pastor is a key to the church’s mission by encouraging support of the synod work program. The Conference of Presidents has been assigned the

responsibility of supervising and funding the synod's budget. The circuit pastor will represent the district president in carrying out this task in the circuit. He is the spokesman for the synod, communicating information and stimulating action." "The circuit pastor will work in close cooperation with the synod and district stewardship boards in carrying out this task." *Handbook for Circuit Pastors* pp. 17,18.

CONGREGATION

"Regular meetings of the circuit shall be held...The delegates shall hear reports on and discuss the work of the synod." (Article IX, Sec. 3, District Constitution) "Each congregation shall support the work of the synod and contribute regularly to its various funds." (Article X, Sec. 2, District Constitution)

Circuit Pastor's Prayer

O Lord, we thank You for the insight You have given us into the unlimited opportunities for serving You by serving our fellow men.

We confess that we are not worthy to be called Your children, let alone having the honor and privilege of being Your co-workers in bringing the Word of Salvation to the world.

Our hearts burn when we see all the millions of people, blood-bought souls, who are going to eternal separation from You and from all that can rightly be called life, because no one cares enough to go to them and tell them of the ever-lasting happiness which can be theirs in Christ.

Our hearts glow with joy when we see the many who have been brought to the knowledge and acceptance of the truth and who are serving as witnesses of Your love to us all in Christ our Savior. We pray You to strengthen them, to multiply their number, and to crown their labor of love with success.

And now, Heavenly Father, You have given us and our congregations the opportunity not only to serve You by telling others directly about the Good News and by witnessing to its power in our lives, but also by using our money to train, send, and support full-time workers as our substitutes to preach the Gospel where we ourselves cannot go.

We have committed our congregation in the Wisconsin Synod to a program calling for nine million dollars.

If we have been too timid, Lord, and have failed to present our church with a big enough challenge for their love, forgive our lack of faith. We have feared that so many of our members will not measure up, though they have the same source of strength that we have.

We have some members who are poor. Help them to give cheerfully and courageously, knowing that to them who seek first Your kingdom and its righteousness all other necessities will be added, according to Your promise.

We have many members who do not know the needs of the world as we have been privileged to see them. Open their eyes, their hearts, and their purses.

We have other members who are worldly-minded. We love them, too, but we are worried about them. They love their amusements more than they do their church and Bible class. They are not putting You first in their budgets because You are not first in their hearts. Forgive them Lord. Teach them to lay up treasure in heaven, for where their treasure is, there will their hearts be also.

Help us to present Your cause clearly and forcefully to others, knowing that we have more need to give generously and cheerfully than You have to receive our gifts. Grant the persuasive power of Your Holy Spirit, that we all, as Your dear children, may be wholly dedicated to You and Your service, now and eternally, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An Outline for the Circuit Pastor in Consultation with Congregations in His Circuit

I. In General:

- A. Meet preferably with the Voters' Assembly or the Church Council, rather than with the pastor alone. Meetings are arranged only after previous consent and consultation with the local pastor.
- B. Remember that as an outsider you can generate interest which a routine discussion by the home pastor may not.
- C. Carefully avoid any implications which might undermine the pastor's role as leader of the congregation. You are, after all, a guest there!
- D. Likewise, shun any appearance of being an inquisitor, who has ideas of compelling the congregation to do its duty.
- E. Give encouragement much more liberally than criticism, where full performance has been lacking in the past.

II. Suggested Procedure:

- A. Explain why you are present (In the congregation's interest and not merely that of Synod.)
- B. Enlarge on the purpose of congregational subscriptions. (Pre-Budget Subscription System)
 - 1. Freer rein to congregations to serve God.
 - 2. Encourages setting aside firstfruits to God for His glory.
 - 3. Balances out abilities of various congregations, rather than setting one per communicant figure for all.
- C. Present guidelines for setting subscriptions.
 - 1. Discuss opportunities God has opened to Synod - the larger church to which we all belong.
 - 2. These are the basis of Synod's needs and goals.
 - 3. Discuss congregations' ability to give. This is ordinarily the most important purpose of your visit.
 - a. Past performance in Synodical giving.
 - b. Type of membership (income bracket, etc.)
 - c. Exceptional circumstances in the congregation which must play a definite role in its decision:
 - aa. Debt on buildings which draws heavily on congregational resources.
 - bb. Christian Day School and local High School to support.
 - cc. Diminishing membership.
 - dd. Recent vacancy.
 - ee. Inter-Synodical disturbances strongly felt
 - d. If requested, or otherwise deemed advisable, tell what congregations in similar situations have done.
- D. Let the congregation make its decision regarding the amount of subscription. To be God-pleasing it should be completely voluntary.

III. THE FOLLOW UP:

- A. Review the performance of each congregation in your circuit quarterly.
- B. Contact the pastors of those congregations which are falling behind in their subscription.
 - 1. Consider circumstances, vacancy, slack in church attendance, etc.
 - 2. Advise accordingly, pointing out obligation to the work of Synod.
 - 3. Suggest ways of helping to meet subscription.
- C. Consult with those pastors who are experiencing difficulties, and using Christian diplomacy, seek consultation meetings with those pastors who respond in a negative way to meetings with a Circuit Visitor.
- D. Commend those congregations which are making and even surpassing their subscription. This is important. It can be done via letter.