

OPENING NEW FIELDS - RESPONSE TO APPEALS

OR ON OUR OWN INITIATIVE

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1 The Underlying Principles and Primary Objectives of the
2 Board for World Missions, adopted by the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran
3 Synod in August, 1965, stated the following:

4 I. Underlying Principles

- 5 1. As the official board of the Synod which is charged
6 with the responsibility of administering and advanc-
7 ing world-wide missionary enterprises of that body,
8 the Board for World Missions must understand, repre-
9 sent, and implement the Scriptural injunction of the
10 Lord to His church, as they relate to World Missions.
- 11 2. These Scriptural injunctions are embodied and implied
12 in such words as Jesus' charge to His disciples, "Go
13 ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every
14 creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be
15 saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
16 (Mark 16:15,16), and many similar texts.
- 17 4. We have a divine call to do this at all times and
18 in all places where the Gospel has not been preached.
19 We dare not expect, await or follow only a so-called
20 "Macedonian Call" into specific fields.....
- 21 6. This world-wide commission from the Lord is a matter
22 of precious privilege and primary responsibility for
23 the Church; and it is of life and death importance
24 for the heathen.

25 The above quoted points serve as our charter in our work
26 as the Board for World Missions. Surely we are all in full agree-
27 with them because they are rooted in the Great Commission of our
28 Lord.

29 Under the heading II. Primary Objectives, the following
30 point is to be noted:

- 31 2. The Board is further pledged to explore and point
32 out opportunities and to persuade the Synod to
33 expand the mission program.

34 So, then, the question before us is clearly not one of
35 underlying principles, or primary objectives, but rather the im-
36 plementation of how these principles and objectives may be best
37 achieved. The theme assigned suggests two procedures:

- 38 1) Response to Appeals
39 2) On our Own Initiative

40 It is a matter of historical record that we have opened
41 mission fields on our own initiative. Continuing in His Word
42 (The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin
43 and Other States) relates the following on the beginnings of the
44 Apache Indian

1 Mission: "Mindful of the Lord's command, a committee was appointed
2 by the Synod in 1883 to consider mission work among these "other
3 sheep". Various foreign fields, including Japan, came under con-
4 sideration. However, certain forces gradually drew into focus the
5 natives of our country, and the decision to begin work among them
6 finally crystallized with the establishing of our Joint Synod of
7 Wisconsin and Other States. Pastors Theodore Hartwig and O. H.
8 Koch were selected to reconnoiter, and the first of November, 1892,
9 found them enroute to the great Southwest. Their report was so
10 favorable that it induced the Synod to move swiftly and on October
11 9, 1893, Candidates John Plocher and George Adascheck were on the
12 way to San Carlos."

13 Our first "foreign" mission was clearly one begun on our
14 own initiative.

15 This was also the way our mission in Central Africa came
16 into being. We all know how the sainted Pastor Arthur Wacker and
17 our Executive Secretary Edgar Hoenecke, in the year 1949, under-
18 took an exploratory mission safari of some 7,500 miles through the
19 African veldt in search of a suitable area to establish a mission.
20 As a direct result of this trip with its recommendation of location,
21 the Synod Convention of 1951 resolved to begin work in what was
22 then called Northern Rhodesia.

23 Within more recent memory are our beginnings in South
24 America. The seeds of this were planted with the Missioner Corp
25 concept and our entrance in 1962 into Puerto Rico. This was to
26 serve both as a testing of the Missioner Corp concept, as well as
27 a springboard to Mexico and ultimately South America. In 1964
28 Pastor Theodore Sauer, then a member of the Board for World Missions
29 made a six week survey of this continent. Despite the obvious
30 needs, urgency and open doors, no action could be taken at that
31 time because of lack of funds. However, when a family of our
32 Synod pledged a large sum of money to begin work in South America,
33 again a survey team did exploratory work in South America. After
34 narrowing the choice to Bolivia or Colombia, it was finally decided
35 to begin work in Medellin, Colombia. Here we see a classic example
36 of a mission established on our own initiative. Stimulated by the
37 Lord's command to preach the Gospel in all the World, moved by the
38 needs of those who were without Christ and thus without hope, con-
39 cerned that the very best expenditure of manpower and money be used,
40 marked every step of the way in our South American beginnings.

41 And blessings have followed these and the other missions
42 which we have established on our own initiative. We could literal-
43 ly consume the time allotted to rehearse the blessings of our work
44 in these areas.

45 However, in the family of our World Mission program are
46 also areas in which we are deeply involved as a response to a
47 direct appeal. It was a direct appeal in 1960 from Peter Chang and
48 the Chinese Ev. Lutheran Church which eventuated in our counselling
49 and financial assistance program with that body in 1964. That
50 Bible which bore the name and address of the wife of one of our
51 Wisconsin Synod pastors which came into the hands of T. Paul Mitra,

1 and his subsequent appeal to our Synod, led to our direct involve-
2 ment with the Lutheran India Rural Gospel Mission. That letter
3 from Martinus Adam which was routed and rerouted to various parts
4 of the world until it ultimately found the desk of our Synod's
5 president, opened for us the door of Indonesia. That request for
6 colloquy from Dr. Oren Luna, president of the Mexican Lutheran
7 Church, opened for us the door to Mexico which we had presumed
8 closed because of the Mexican law which forbids foreign mission-
9 aries. And our newest child in the family of world missions, the
10 West Cameroons, accepted by our Synod at the August Convention,
11 is surely the result of the response to a direct appeal from the
12 Rev. Bruno Rjume and the 4,000 West Cameroon Christians.

13 And who would gainsay that these were calls sent us by
14 our Lord Himself, or that blessings have not accrued. Anyone who
15 has attended services in Sukabumi, Indonesia, as I have, could not
16 help but be filled with joy to see this small group praise the God
17 of our Salvation. Our entrance into Hong Kong led us to our begin-
18 nings in Taiwan.

19 To be sure, entering areas in response to appeals poses
20 problems not necessarily present when we open fields on our own
21 initiative. The problem of supervising some of these fields, of
22 indoctrination of the native clergy, of programming the work under
23 our philosophy of missions has admittedly been more difficult than
24 in areas where we have entered upon our own initiative.

25 However, Satan is alive and well and seeks to hinder and
26 impair our work whether begun on our own initiative or in reaction
27 to appeals. Almost everyone of our fields can relate a sad story
28 of setbacks, of personnel problems and of defections.

29 This brief historical overview of our various World Mis-
30 sion fields leads us to a simple conclusion. We ought not lock
31 ourselves into any one or two rigid ways in the opening of new
32 mission fields; we must remain flexible and follow where the Lord
33 leads.

34 This is in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. As one
35 reviews the Book of Acts and the Epistles, one is struck by the
36 flexibility with which the early church and its leaders met mission
37 opportunities. They were not rigidly locked in, but adapted to
38 each situation. Form, organization and methods evolved from oppor-
39 tunity. Nor did this lead to chaos and disorder. Where the under-
40 lying objective of the real mission of the church is clearly under-
41 stood, where the Great Commission of the Lord is joyfully responded
42 to, there field and form will generally head in the right direction

43 Nor is such flexibility incompatible with our World
44 Board's Underlying Principles and Primary Objectives. In point 8
45 of our Underlying Principles we read: "In her approach to this
46 world-wide mission, the Church must, therefore, be guided by
47 faith in, love for, and obedience to the command and promise of
48 Christ, as also for the souls whom He loved and for whom He died,
49 souls whose eternal happiness He has laid upon our hearts. The
50 Church must never be motivated by human reason or merely human

1 circumstance, even "sanctified common sense", if these be used to
2 dissuade her from her God-given missionary responsibility."

3 However, this principle does not vitiate or do away with
4 the necessity of proper planning and evaluation of where we can
5 best use our money and our manpower.

6 The early church planned and so must we. The great mis-
7 sionary Paul planned. In his epistles he notes his plans to visit
8 certain churches and even go to new places such as Rome and Spain.
9 On several occasions his planning was changed by God's revelation
10 that he was not to go to a certain place.

11 We as a Synod and as a World Board are comparative new-
12 comers in the field of world missions. In times past we may not
13 have always interviewed appellants for our help as carefully as we
14 might have, or evaluated their fields as carefully as we could or
15 should have. If this was the case in the past, it was largely the
16 result of inexperience. Nor do we enjoy some of the luxuries of
17 the Home Mission Board, which by the very nature of its work can
18 establish and follow regular procedures in its establishment of a
19 new mission congregation.

20 But I would submit that by trial and error, as well as by
21 experience, we have evolved a procedure in evaluating new mission
22 fields, whether it be on our own initiative or in response to ap-
23 peals, which are in conformity with Scriptural principle, our
24 Board's objectives, and in the best interest of the Synod. The
25 on-the-spot surveys made in South America, the careful planning of
26 the program, the budget projections and the like, would surely
27 bear this out. Is not the same to be noted in our evaluation of
28 the appeal from the West Cameroons. Anyone who would review the
29 voluminous correspondence, the penetrating and searching questions,
30 the in-depth visitation, would surely arrive at the conclusion that
31 the World Board, through its Executive Secretary, proceeded with
32 deliberate care and concern.

33 In January, 1974, a buzz session was held by the Board
34 for World Missions on the topic of Opening Mission Fields in
35 Response To Foreign Appeals. In February, 1974, our Executive
36 Secretary drew up the following set of criteria which are to be
37 followed in the evaluation of appeals for support:

38 a) - A careful investigation in depth of the doctrinal
39 position and theological level of an appealing
40 group or individual is to be carried out by corres-
41 pondence and in consultation with the Synod's Commis-
42 sion for Interchurch Relations.

43 b) - A preliminary interview (or more) is to be carried
44 on by a duly appointed commission on the field.
45 This interview (or more) will explore the matter in
46 depth and report back to the Board and Commission.

47 c) - Sufficient time for such thorough investigation
48 and testing of the appellant (s) will be allowed
49 to make ~~as~~ reasonably certain as possible that the

- 1 confessional assertions are sincere and the motives
2 for appealing are spiritual and true.
- 3 d) - Care will also be taken to check, if at all
4 possible, any previous associations of the appel-
5 lant(s), reasons for leaving the former association,
6 and any conflict of interests that might result from
7 too hurried action which might invade the jurisdic-
8 tional domain of another church body.
- 9 e) - Arrangements will be made to test both the com-
10 petence and integrity of the appellant(s) in
11 handling administrative and financial matters.
- 12 f) - Consultations will be held with other synodical
13 officers, boards and commissions to appraise
14 both the spiritual maturity and academic competence
15 of the appellant(s) and to collaborate in setting
16 up a program for further theological training, if
17 this is deemed necessary. In this matter care should
18 be exercised in selecting the site of such training
19 so as not to overtax the capability of the trainee(s)
20 nor to expose them to living standards which will not
21 be achievable in their native land after the training
22 course has been completed.
- 23 g) - Great care will be used in avoiding any overt
24 or implied assurances of support and future in-
25 volvement of the Synod or the Board for World Missions
26 in a missionary activity which has not been duly auth-
27 orized by the Synod in convention. In fact, it will
28 be the duty of those dealing in the case to leave no
29 room for misunderstanding or false assumption in the
30 mind(s) of the appellants regarding the future.
- 31 h) - To this end it must be made very clear that any
32 temporary support or guidance program is just
33 that and no more until the Synod has spoken.
- 34 i) - If it appears likely that the response to the
35 appeal will result in some program for permanent
36 subsidy or guidance and training, or even missionary
37 activity involving expatriate personnel, it will be
38 the duty of the Board for World Missions to learn
39 what steps must be taken to effect entrance as a
40 mission agency into the country in question or to
41 exercise legitimate supervision and financial support
42 of missionary activity in the country without expatriate
43 resident counselors or missionaries.
- 44 j) - After all these preliminary steps have been taken,
45 the World Board shall draw up a formal memorial
46 for presentation to the Synod in convention, asking
47 for authorization to begin work in the field in ques-
48 tion, clearly setting forth in the memorial all the
49 salient facts in the case and submitting a budget for
50 manpower and funds in detail.

1 We feel certain that where these criteria are carefully and faith-
2 fully followed, there the Board for World Mission will be able to
3 exercise a real evaluation judgment in its affirmative or negative
4 response to opening new fields.

5 In conclusion, let us never become locked in to a one-
6 way, slavish procedure in the opening of new world mission fields.
7 Let us ever keep our objective in view to go into all the world
8 and preach the Gospel to every creature. Let us continue to do
9 our own careful planning, but let us never close our ears to
10 "Calls" which may well be God-sent to us, whether from Sweden,
11 Hong Kong or Timbuktu.

12 As stated by Harold Lindsell in "Missionary Principle
13 and Practice" and quoted by the Executive Secretary for Home Mis-
14 sions in a paper prepared for the Western Wisconsin District Mis-
15 sionaries Conference in 1971, "Missions are at the crossroads.
16 They have always been at the crossroads, and this is a cause for
17 rejoicing." World Missions is ever at the crossroads, as is
18 evident from the many opportunities being opened to us by God.
19 Thank God for that, for the "crossroads" are where things are
20 happening and where decisions must be made. Let us examine these
21 happenings carefully and prayerfully and then decide where and how
22 we can best attain our objective of "administering and advancing
23 world-wide missionary enterprises of the Wisconsin Evangelical
24 Lutheran Synod".

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