

The Evolution of Spanish Outreach in the WELS

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Introduction:

As our synod moves into the twenty-first century we are confronted with many challenges as we strive to bring the gospel message to all people. One of these challenges is finding the best way to do outreach among other cultures. This paper focuses specifically on the Spanish Outreach that has been done in our synod. We will look at what has been done in the past, what is currently being done, and what we intend to do as our Lord continues to bless his church into the future.

But why Spanish outreach? Is Spanish that much easier to learn that it lends itself more readily to the gifts our pastors have? While this may be true to a certain extent, mastering the Spanish language takes considerable time and effort. A common misconception is that people can learn Spanish by simply immersing themselves in the language for a couple of months. While this experience may allow you to fend for yourself on the streets, it hardly makes one ready to engage in a full-time Spanish ministry.

Or is it that the Hispanic community is that much more receptive to the gospel message? Once again, this may be true in certain instances, but as a general principle the Hispanic culture is deeply rooted in Catholicism. This often makes it much more difficult for these people to join the Lutheran Church, since in many respects they become outsiders among their own people. So why such an emphasis on Spanish

outreach? The answer to this question can be found in a simple demographic study of our country.

A Demographical Study:

Currently in the United States, the Hispanic community makes up 14% of the population. With an estimated 41.3 million people, they are the largest minority group in the country. This number swells even more when you consider the more than 6 million estimated illegal Hispanic immigrants calling the United States home. However, this is only the beginning of the Hispanic influx our country is going to experience.

The Hispanic community living in the United States is very young. In 2002, 34.4% of Hispanics were under the age of 18, compared with 22.8 % of non-Hispanic Caucasians. Furthermore, only 5.1% of Hispanics living in the United States are 65 years or older in contrast to the 14.4 % of the non-Hispanic Caucasians. With this in mind, it is not hard to see that this community will be booming in the years to come.

In the following chart provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, we see how the Hispanic population is projected to grow faster than any other race in the United States.

Population or Percent and Race	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
TOTAL	282,125	308,936	335,805	363,584	391,946	419,854
White alone	228,548	244,995	260,629	275,731	289,690	302,626
Black alone	35,818	40,454	45,365	50,442	55,876	61,361
Asian alone	10,684	14,241	17,988	22,580	27,992	33,430
All other races	7,075	9,246	11,822	14,831	18,388	22,437
.Hispanic (of any race)	35,622	47,756	59,756	73,055	87,585	102,560
White alone, not Hispanic	195,729	201,112	205,936	209,176	210,331	210,283
PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION						
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White alone	81.0	79.3	77.6	75.8	73.9	72.1
Black alone	12.7	13.1	13.5	13.9	14.3	14.6
Asian alone	3.8	4.6	5.4	6.2	7.1	8.0
All other races	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.1	4.7	5.3
.Hispanic (of any race)	12.6	15.5	17.8	20.1	22.3	24.4
White alone, not Hispanic	69.4	65.1	61.3	57.5	53.7	50.1

According to these projections, over the next half-century the Hispanic community will more than double in size. While the percentages of White and Black people in the United States shrinks, the Hispanic community will make up nearly a quarter of our total population, and this speaks nothing of the millions of undocumented Hispanics entering our country. Over the next 45 years it will be impossible to ignore the Hispanic community living in the United States.

Considering these projections, Spanish outreach is something that applies to every pastor and every congregation in our Synod. According to the Pew Center's analysis of the 2000 census, 57% of all Hispanics - roughly 20 million people - live in areas where they do not make up the majority of the population. In other words, Hispanics are currently scattered throughout our country and it is undeniable that most congregations will have the opportunity to reach out to the Hispanic community.

Due to this rapid growth, it is also very important that pastors are able to speak the Spanish language. Spanish is currently the second-most used language in the United States. It is estimated that more than 28 million people in our country (10.7%) speak Spanish. The United States actually has the world's fifth largest Spanish-speaking population. But aren't the Hispanics living in the United States learning English? By spending any amount of time in the Hispanic areas of our major cities, you can see that there is really no need for these people to learn English. Hispanics in the United States can do everything from their grocery shopping to watching TV without ever having to learn English. Therefore, in order to effectively reach out to this community, we must put a heavy emphasis on learning the language.

So how are we doing? Currently the WELS has no demographical data assembled that can help us evaluate how effective our outreach efforts have been among the Hispanic community. We do not have an ethnic breakdown of our WELS congregations and therefore it is nearly impossible to tell if we are keeping pace with this growing sector of our country.

What we do know is that at the present time there are approximately 53 WELS congregations involved in some form of Hispanic outreach. As the Hispanic population continues to grow in the United States and our synod continues to focus its efforts on North American Outreach, this number should continue to grow as well. It is for all of these reasons that a study of the Hispanic outreach done in our synod is pertinent to this day and age.

What We Did in the Past:

Puerto Rico

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod first began doing Spanish outreach in 1964 on the island of Puerto Rico. At this time, the WELS was looking for a “stepping stone” that could be used to expand Spanish work outside of the United States and into South America. With Spanish as the predominant language on the island and the close ties that exist between the United States and Puerto Rico, this seemed to be a rather logical choice.

During the 1960’s, work began on the island of Puerto Rico in Guayama and Humacao. The first chapel in Gran Stan Bran, which is in the Guayama area, was opened in a 12’ by 15’ converted chicken coop. Although the circumstances may not have been ideal, the Lord continued to bless the missionaries’ efforts in Puerto Rico.

Throughout the late 1960's and 1970's "Friendship Evangelism" was implemented as the primary outreach strategy in Puerto Rico. This type of evangelism consisted of taking the gospel to the people and not simply expecting them to come to you. As relationships and friendships were created, doors were opened to share the Word of God. Once this took place, the missionaries on the island immediately sought to use the talents of those instructed in the Word of God for the work of the church. This was accomplished by training Sunday School teachers, evangelists, and ultimately future pastors.

The initial goal of the Puerto Rican mission was to create an indigenous church on the island. By training lay leaders to understand the Word of God and how it can be used to His glory, this mission ultimately became self-supporting, self-disciplining, and self-governing. This outreach strategy has proved to be very effective but does require a lot of patience. Since missionaries are often dealing with people very young in the faith, immediate results cannot be realistically expected.

From the beginning, the Puerto Rican mission did not have a specific socio-economic group targeted. Rather than closing doors to potential souls interested in growing in their faith, the Puerto Rican mission decided early on to leave every door open for the gospel to take root. Throughout their experiences they had members of every social status actively involved in their congregations.

In 1987 a congregation was opened in the capitol, San Juan, and by 1990 a national church body was organized. With a national church in place, the Puerto Rican mission adopted the goal to be a mature and independent church by 2004. In order to help accomplish this goal, Seminary training for national pastors began in 1993. By 1999

there were several national pastors serving the congregations of Puerto Rico and in 2004 the WELS was able to withdraw all expatriate pastors from the island.

Over time, the Puerto Rican mission has been blessed tremendously. Two national pastors and one evangelist serve the Puerto Rican churches. As the Puerto Rican church entered 2005, they had a membership of 191 souls in four congregations. At the present time there is also one Puerto Rican seminary student and seven Bible Institute students. Although the WELS has no full-time presence on the island of Puerto Rico, it is still actively involved in the training of national pastors with a missionary team that visits the island periodically to help accomplish this goal.

Mexico

Shortly after this initial work in Puerto Rico, the Wisconsin Synod began to expand its Spanish outreach efforts into Mexico. The philosophy used in the Mexican mission was entirely different from that of the Puerto Rican mission. Within five years of its conception, the Mexican mission already had two national pastors. In 1969 these two men were received into fellowship by the WELS and called as missionaries to Mexico City and Guadalajara. With these two pastors in place, and since the Mexican government did not grant residency to any foreign missionaries, a three man missionary team was established in El Paso. This "team" was to serve the Mexican mission and provide a missionary presence in the country. These missionaries visited periodically to instruct seminary students and provide counsel to the congregations and pastors in Mexico.

However, without a full-time missionary presence, several problems arose and eventually the WELS coordinating council voted to close the Mexican mission in 1983.

Later that year at the fall synod convention, the WELS rescinded this decision and began to seek ways to increase missionary presence in Mexico.

As a result of these new efforts, the WELS received its first Mexican congregation into fellowship in 1984. La Santa Cruz in Monterrey was one of the first indigenous mission churches in our synod. In 1986, as the missionaries increased their presence in the country to well over 100 days a year, a second church was built and opened in Puebla, Mexico. The Lord continued to bless the efforts of the Mexican mission and in 1991 an established Mexican church was received into fellowship.

Up until 1993 no expatriate missionaries were allowed to live permanently in Mexico. One has to wonder if this was not the Lord's way of blessing this mission. Due to the laws of the Mexican government the Mexican mission was forced to be an indigenous church from the beginning. However, in 1993 two foreign missionaries were granted residency in the country and by 1995 a five-year plan with steps toward the mission's self-propagation, self-discipline, self-support, and self-administration was put into effect.

As the Mexican mission entered 2005 it has been blessed with over 460 members, one national vicar, and five national pastors. The Mexican mission also has fifteen Bible Institute Students and four Seminary students. Because of these men and women being trained in the Word of God, the Mexican mission has truly become an indigenous church body.

Colombia

With the early success experienced by the Mexican mission, the Wisconsin Synod decided to expand its Spanish outreach efforts into Colombia. Prior to 1974, a group of

missionaries traveled to Colombia to explore the possibility of opening a mission in this country. At the time, Puerto Rico was still seen as the “launch pad” for expanding Spanish outreach into South America. With the help of a significant special offering, the WELS had narrowed its choices to La Paz, Bolivia, and Medellin, Colombia. Ultimately Medellin, Colombia was chosen because there was very little Protestant work being done there, there was no real Lutheran presence, and it had a large middle class working population for a Latin American city of its size.

Although Medellin was chosen because of this large middle class working population, the Lord directed the efforts of the missionaries in another direction. The barrios where this mission team began doing outreach were neighborhoods that surrounded the city and were of a lower class. This was due to the simple logistics of the country. Most middle class homes in Colombia are protected by a series of gates making it nearly impossible to do door-to-door evangelism and canvassing. Most middle class Colombians also have a maid who opens the door, which makes this type of ministry even more difficult.

The Colombian mission team also found that the lower classes were much more willing to hear the message of hope and salvation through Christ Jesus. Medellin is a city extremely steeped in traditional Roman Catholicism, and due to this factor, Medellin was an extremely tough mission field to work. Therefore the missionaries were forced to go where they could experience more success. This perhaps also explains the lack of any other Lutheran presence in the city.

With a new socio-economic group targeted in 1974, the Colombian mission team began conducting services and radio work in Medellin. By 1975, Holy Trinity Church

was opened in Medellin and a Bible Institute Plan was under way. In 1979, a provisional seminary was opened with the goal of establishing national pastors as soon as possible.

From the beginning, this mission was dedicated to building a self-propagating, self-disciplining, self-governing, and self-supporting church in Colombia. With the graduation of their first national pastor in 1982, the Colombian mission team consolidated the four barrios they had been working into one local congregation located in downtown Medellin. This location was chosen because virtually every bus route led to this area.

In June of 1983, the Colombian mission team expanded their efforts to the nation's capital, Bogotá, Colombia. Two men and their families were moved to Bogotá to evangelize the largest city in Colombia. Later that year and into the late 1980's a more concerted effort to establish a church that was self-propagating was undertaken. The idea was that by means of an easily transferable Bible doctrine course, Colombians could begin to take other nationals through a modified Bible Information Class. To help accomplish this goal, a Christian Information Center was opened in Bogotá in 1989.

As the Colombian mission continued to grow, the first Spanish-speaking school in WELS fellowship was opened in Bogotá in February of 1998. In 1999, due to an ongoing Civil War that had plagued Colombia for over 35 years, the WELS was forced to remove all expatriate missionaries from the country. As the kidnapping threats of foreigners in the country increased, there was simply no other choice but to do what was wise and prudent at the time. From an earthly standpoint this may have taken place sooner than we would have predicted, but as always this was God's timing.

Due to these unfortunate events, the Colombian mission experienced a true ownership of the Colombian church by the national pastors and lay leaders. This also led to a growth spurt among the Colombian congregations.

The WELS, however did not abandon this mission completely. Contact was maintained for years through a “friendly counselor” who did continuing education for the congregations, lay leaders, and national pastors in Colombia. Due to the ongoing violence this “friendly counselor” was not always able to physically visit Colombia, but contact was maintained via the Internet.

Currently, the mission in Colombia has achieved its initial goal of having a national church run by Colombians for Colombians. With a national membership of 160, two congregations, and five national pastors, it is clear how God has used the hard work of the Colombian mission team as well as the historical events that have taken place to establish his church in Colombia. The future of the Colombian mission is also in good hand with over thirty Bible Institute Students and five men enrolled in the Seminary program.

Cuba

With established missions in Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic, the WELS continued to expand its mission efforts in Latin America. In 1993, following an exploratory trip by a group of missionaries to the island of Cuba, the WELS began assisting the Lutheran Church of Cuba. It was during this trip that the Lutheran Church of Cuba asked the Wisconsin Synod if they would be willing to help them return to a Biblical Lutheran Church.

To help assist this national church body, the WELS began teaching Bible Information Classes on the island of Cuba in 1993. Since the Lutheran Church of Cuba was already established, the WELS missionary team felt that the best way to help this group was simply to model the work for them. The primary goal of this mission team was to teach the Cuban leaders to do all the ministering on their own. In order to expedite this process, a Bible Institute was also started on the island.

Initially, the WELS mission team did all the teaching; however, now much of the work is left to the Cubans. The WELS missionaries teach a class once and then the nationals take it over. This has resulted in a Bible Institute run solely by Cubans.

Due to the fact that the Lutheran Church of Cuba was established prior to the arrival of the WELS mission team, achieving a self-disciplining, self-governing, and self-supporting church has never been an issue. The Wisconsin Synod pays no salaries on the island of Cuba and merely assists with travel money for those going to Havana to continue their studies. The WELS does, however, provide most of the materials used for the training of these national pastors and their work in the local congregations.

Cuba is a communist country, so targeting a specific socio-economic group was also never an issue due to the fact that there is only one class. Currently the Lutheran Church of Cuba has been blessed with seven house churches and roughly 175 members.

What We are Currently Doing:

Multi-Language Publications

As the WELS continues to strive for indigenous churches in our mission fields, one of the basic needs is culturally appropriate publications. It was with this in mind that the WELS began Multi-Language Publications in 1984. El Paso, Texas was chosen for

the location of this undertaking due to the proximity it has with the Mexican mission field and the opportunity to do Spanish outreach within the city.

Multi-Language Publications has a 42-page catalog of materials printed in 42 different languages, the largest of which is Spanish. One of the publications of special note is the bi-monthly Lutheran Messenger. Currently, Multi-Language Publications is sending over 1500 copies of this publication to roughly 135 addresses throughout the Americas. Multi-Language Publications has also produced a 41-volume People's Bible set in Spanish, several Bible Stories in Pictures, and many other materials. A more comprehensive listing of these publications can be found on their online bookstore at www.mlpwels.com.

The goal of Multi-Language Publications is to ultimately have an indigenous publishing process. With this in mind, the Spanish Lutheran Messenger is constantly seeking Hispanics of our fellowship to write many of the articles contained in this publication. Moreover, the Spanish publications program is striving to involve national workers and lay people in the publishing process. The hope is that this will ultimately result in a program operated by Hispanics. In order to help accomplish this goal, Multi-Language Publications is currently using the services of native Spanish-speaking translators, holding translation seminars and workshops, and actively recruiting native-speaking writers for the Lutheran Messenger.

It is not anticipated in the foreseeable future that the national churches of Latin America will be able to afford their own publishing houses; therefore, for cultural reasons it is very important and highly desirable to have a qualified native-speaker of our fellowship aid in this process. Although this person has not yet been found, missionaries

in both the United States and Latin America have been asked to recommend candidates for this job.

It is believed that people of every social status use these materials, and therefore it is critical for Multi-Language Publications to find materials that hit a broader spectrum. The work done by Multi-Language Publications is so important for the Spanish outreach efforts in Latin America and the United States as they enable Hispanics to be actively involved in both personal spiritual growth and outreach among others.

Home Missions

As our synod continues to focus on North American Outreach, a growing mission field is developing right here in the United States. With over 50 churches involved in some sort of Hispanic outreach, Home Missions has become a very interesting and active segment of our synod. Home Missions is different from World Missions because the philosophies of ministry vary so much from field to field. In World Missions, the general philosophy is to try and establish an indigenous church through Bible Information Courses and eventually a Seminary program. In Home Missions; however, several different philosophies and strategies are being used to accomplish the same goal.

One of the more popular strategies used in our Hispanic Home Mission fields is the offering of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Through teaching English as a Second Language, missionaries hope to establish relationships with those who attend these classes. It is also believed that attending these ESL classes helps the students develop a familiarity with the church, which ultimately makes the transition to Sunday worship much easier.

ESL is a perceived need among the Hispanic community in the United States. For most Hispanics living in this country, knowing English is something that will benefit them tremendously as they try to assimilate into our culture. Most Hispanics have also moved here to earn a better life for them and their families; by learning English this is also accomplished more easily. This proves ESL will always be an enticing offer for Hispanics living in the United States who do not yet know English.

Many churches have also benefited greatly by offering ESL. As men and women are asked to volunteer their time and help teach ESL, it allows members of the congregation to become actively involved in the mission work of the church. For all of these reasons, ESL will continue to be a very popular way of doing Spanish outreach in the United States.

Some of our Home Missions have taken this idea a step further and built entire schools for the purpose of doing outreach. The theory behind this strategy is that by creating a school and maintaining constant contact with the children, the church will ultimately have an opportunity to evangelize the parents. This can be very effective since the window of opportunity for this to take place is so large. In no other setting would a missionary potentially have 8 years to talk to a set of parents about their Lord and Savior.

Although often overlooked, we can not forget about the ministry that takes place in these schools. Often times, since the focus of these schools is outreach, we forget about the wonderful ministry taking place amongst the children enrolled. Even if the church received no families into membership because of its school, they could still give thanks for the many years its students were exposed to the Word of God.

Another bonus of using education as outreach is that the parents will inevitably become familiar with the church. As the children are involved in Christmas concerts, basketball games, and school plays the parents will eventually become comfortable with the church and many of its members. This once again makes the transition to Sunday worship much easier for all those involved.

In some cases these schools have been used to help support the work of the church. By charging tuition some schools have been able to make a profit, which is then used to help support the church attached to it. This can be very helpful for younger missions that may not have a membership capable of supporting themselves.

It is very important; however, that this be a perceived need in the community a mission is trying to reach. Operating a school can be very expensive, and without enough students enrolled this venture can potentially cripple a church. To avoid a deficit it is very important that a thorough study be done of the surrounding community to assure that this is a viable option. Some states currently have "school choice" that allows parents to enroll their kids in private school at no cost to them. This has greatly impacted many of the urban congregations in the WELS, and is also something that should be researched prior to beginning such an outreach method.

Other Home Mission fields feel that simply becoming a neighborhood church is the best way to do outreach among the Hispanics living in the community. In order to achieve this status, many of these churches offer programs that will be of use to the community. Often times food pantries, counseling centers, drug and alcohol abuse programs, and pregnancy classes are seen as the best way to reach out the community the church finds itself in.

For this type of outreach to be effective, it is critical that the missionary understands his neighborhood and has a good sense of what the communities' needs are. Some say that the best way for this to happen is to have the missionary actually live in the neighborhood he is striving to reach. This may not always be the most comfortable situation for the missionary and his family, but the benefits of such an arrangement are undeniable.

As mentioned earlier, all of our Home Missions have the same goal as our World Missions, an indigenous church body that is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-disciplining. To aid in this process, all of our Home Missions are striving to build up Hispanics into leaders of the church. This is done by delegating responsibility to Hispanics, instructing in the Word of God, and then ultimately handing over these responsibilities and duties when these men are ready.

Many of our Home Missions vary greatly in the socio-economic groups they are targeting or serving. While some of our missionaries find themselves serving the lower classes, there are others who have purposely sought out the opposite extreme as a target group. It is important to remember that although a missionary may target a specific socio-economic group, that does not mean he will not minister to all people.

One may tend to wonder how a mission made up of predominantly lower class people is ever going to be able to support itself. Many of these people find themselves living subsistence lifestyles and the idea of them supporting a called worker simply does not seem entirely feasible. Another problem that may arise in many of the lower class mission fields is that this socio-economic group also tends to be much more transitory. These people are slow to put down roots and often quick to leave for a better job

opportunity. That being said, the lower classes are also much easier to work in many respects. As a general principle, those of a lower economic status have more needs, making it much easier for the church to reach out to them. Therefore, it is up to each missionary to determine where he can most effectively reach people with the Word of God.

As the population of the United States continues to change, undoubtedly the number of Hispanic outreach opportunities will increase. As men seeking to serve our Lord and our neighbor it will be important for us to have a good understanding of the area we are trying to reach out to in order to determine the most effective way of serving them. This will happen only with a committed study of the community and those that live in it. May God continue to bless his Home Mission fields and all those serving in them.

What We Will Do in the Future:

Latin American Traveling Theological Educators (LATTE)

The Latin American Traveling Theological Educators (LATTE) was organized in 2002 and went into effect July 1, 2003. This team of men works with all the WELS mission fields in Latin American. These fields include Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Brazil. This is called a “traveling” team because the missionaries visit each field on a rotating basis, instructing the men who desire to become pastors. Since it can be difficult for many of these men and the congregations they are serving to handle the cost associated with attending the Seminary for three years in the United States, this mission team has solved this problem by bringing the Seminary to

them. This allows these men to keep their secular jobs, support their families, and remain active in their congregations all while receiving a Seminary education.

With six missionary professors making up the team, each member of the team is able to specialize in certain parts of the curriculum. This has proven to be the most efficient way of presenting the materials and very beneficial to both the students and members of the team. Since the Holy Spirit can use the gifts national pastors possess in the same way that he can use those of the missionaries, LATTE strives to put ministry into their hands as soon as possible.

The LATTE team follows the supposition that the best way to educate future pastors is to simply follow the methods used at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. By implementing this strategy, they use many of the same courses, curriculums, and requisites for the students. Using the traditional Seminary education gives the LATTE team full confidence that these Latin American missions will remain self-propagating, self-disciplining, and self-governing. What this does not address; however, is whether or not these missions will one day become self-supporting.

The Administrative Council is considering giving students full scholarships so they can study full-time, and therefore finish sooner. However, the amount of the scholarships given, combined with the housing allowance provided, might be very difficult for many of these national churches and congregations to continue once these men finish their studies. This could be a great obstacle in the churches becoming self-supporting.

There are some who say that a church that is not self-supporting will never become self-propagating, self-governing, or self-disciplining either. The reason behind

this belief is that as long as the WELS is supplying the money, WELS will always be controlling what the national churches do. These national church bodies will always know that if they do not do things the way the WELS would like them to, they could potentially lose funding. This could hinder these church bodies tremendously in making decisions that will have long-term effects on their ministries.

The LATTE team has students from both the lower and middle classes and currently does not have any students among the upper classes. Due to the fact that the LATTE team simply trains the candidates that are supplied from each mission field, there is really no specific target group.

It remains to be seen if using a traditional Seminary education will be the most effective way of training these future pastors, but it is certain that LATTE is in the process of training many national pastors that will ultimately take over these mission fields. Currently, the LATTE team is instructing approximately 40 men in six Latin American countries.

Hispanic Latino Outreach Training (HLOT)

As the Hispanic mission fields of our synod continue to grow in North America, the WELS has been faced with the challenge of finding the best way to educate Hispanic men for the ministry. In 2003, a perceived need for Hispanic leadership training in Spanish was expressed by many of our Home missionaries, forcing the WELS to re-evaluate the way this training was taking place.

Up until 2003, a multi-ethnic Seminary program was in place that required students to study under professors at Martin Luther College, and then finish at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Although this did enable these men to do some distance learning

while studying under the professors at MLC, they would ultimately have to quit their jobs, leave their congregations, and move their families to Mequon.

Another potential problem with this program was the language barriers that could arise. Many of the Hispanic men involved in the multi-ethnic Seminary program might not speak English at a high enough level to take college and Seminary level courses in this language. This required the men in training to find professors at MLC who either knew Spanish well enough to teach these men or were patient enough to take them through the courses in English. Even if the latter could be accomplished, it was not always seen as beneficial to train men in English who would ultimately be serving in Spanish.

In light of these obstacles, Hispanic Latino Outreach Training (HLOT) was created to offer an alternative Seminary training program for Hispanic men wishing to serve in the full-time ministry. HLOT is a program under the umbrella of the Pastor Studies Institute at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This new program allows men to take all of their courses in Spanish, at home, while continuing to serve their congregations. In other words, HLOT has now officially moved Seminary training for Hispanic men wishing to serve in the United States off of the Mequon campus. This has greatly facilitated and improved the ability for Hispanic men to become full-time pastors in their congregations.

Since it oversees the program through its PSI program, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary certifies all those graduating from the HLOT program as legitimate candidates for full-time ministry. These men are then recommended to the Conference of Presidents for assignments in any congregation. Of course, special consideration is always given to

these men and they will be assigned where their gifts are best suited, but it is important to note that they are held in the same regard as every other traditional graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

There is no set time on how long this training will take. Each student is given their own Individual Study Plan (ISP) that allows them to take their courses at a speed most conducive to their educational background, family obligations, and work schedules. The use of an ISP allows the Seminary faculty to review and assess the progress of each student, and gives the student a clear understanding of what is expected of him and where he is at in the program. This helps keep communication clear between the two parties.

Since HLOT allows the student to complete their pre-seminary and seminary training while serving their congregations, all students are expected to be involved in various levels of congregational ministry. These men are asked to take an active role in the preaching, teaching, evangelism, and administrative aspects of the church. HLOT students are also expected to remain faithful in the completion of their tasks and assignments and maintain regular communication with their supervising pastors and professors. All of these requirements give HLOT students a vast amount of practical experience before they are officially called to serve.

Hispanic Latino Outreach Training is another sign of the continued willingness of our synod to adapt to the changes of our country and church. Programs such as this one will ensure that the Hispanic mission fields of the WELS are supplied with qualified national pastors. This type of progressive thinking will surely pay large dividends for the work of our Lord far into the future.

Conclusion:

Hispanic outreach is really nothing new to the Wisconsin Synod. For over 40 years the WELS has been reaching out to our Hispanic brothers and sisters with the comforting message of Christ crucified. This effort began mainly with the opening of several world missions in Latin America and the Caribbean and has since spread throughout the United States.

What has changed are the demographics of our country and the philosophies and strategies used to best reach this growing population. Over the years, the Wisconsin Synod has actively tried to react to the perceived needs these changes have created. By striving to create culturally appropriate materials in Spanish and constantly reviewing the way we are training national pastors, the WELS has shown every effort to try and reach the growing Hispanic community in our midst.

Undoubtedly, there will be more changes still to come, but motivated by the love of Christ we will succeed. It is easy to look back and second-guess methods that may have been used in the past, but often times the only way to make progress is by learning from our mistakes. With God's grace the Wisconsin Synod will continue to evolve in its approach to Hispanic outreach and seek to find the best way to serve these people. May God continue to bless our efforts and His church!

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Addendum

Those Replying to a Survey

Pastor Phil Strackbein
Missionary serving the LATTE

Pastor Carl Leyrer
Divine Savior Lutheran Church
Miami, FL

Pastor Mark Goeglein
Theological Educator
HLOT

Pastor David Bivens
Missionary in Gravataí, Brazil

Pastor E Allen Sorum
Professor at WLS and PSI Director

Pastor Paul Biedenbender
Christ Lutheran Exploratory Mission
Denver, CO

Pastor Paul Hartmann
Coordinator of Multi-Language
Publications

Pastor Ron Baerbock
Director of Spanish-publishing for
Multi-Language Publications

Pastor Matthew Krenke
St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Tim Otto
Santo Tomas
Phoenix, AZ

Pastor Larry Retberg
Missionary serving the LATTE

Pastor James Connell
Cristo Nuestro Redentor
El Paso, TX

Pastor Charles Flunker
Missionary in Dourados, Brazil

Pastor Tim Satorius
Grace Lutheran Church
Falls Church, VA

Pastor Kenneth Cherney
Missionary in St John Antigua,
West Indies

Survey

What mission field did you or are you serving in?

How long has this mission field existed?

Do you know why this field was chosen for a mission?

How long have you or did you serve in this field?

To the last of your knowledge how big is the congregation in this field?

What is or was your philosophy for ministry and outreach in this field?

Is this the philosophy of ministry that was in place when your ministry began there and is it still in place today?

What programs were or have been put in place to help accomplish these goals?

Are these strategies still in place today in this field?

What strategies were or are being used to make this mission self-disciplining, self-governing, and self-supporting?

What socio-economic group did you or are you ministering to?

Why was this group targeted?

Do you feel that your methodology was a good match for this target group?

If you had the opportunity to go back in time would you do anything differently?

Any other comments: