

EVANGELISM IN THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

A Course Paper

Submitted to Dr. Lawrence L. Lacour

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## EVANGELISM IN THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

## INTRODUCTION

What a privilege it is to write a paper on the subject of formulating 5  
 strategy for more effective personal witnessing by the members of our Wiscon-  
 sin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It affords the opportunity to share with my 10  
 brethren some of the ideas which I have come across in recent years from  
 various sources, especially in the area of lay witnessing. Some of these  
 ideas developed or were refined as a result of two weeks of study at Fuller 15  
 Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California from 9-20 January 1978. For  
 four hours every weekday morning I participated in a seminar, "Church Renewal  
 and Training the Laity for Ministry," conducted by Dr. Robert B. Munger. In 20  
 advance of the seminar the students were required to read twenty books (3000  
 pages) related to the above subject and to write two-page book reports pin- 25  
 pointing the highlights and key concepts of each book. During the same two  
 week session I also took part in a two hour a day afternoon course, "Evangel- 30  
 ism in the Local Church," led by Dr. Lawrence L. Lacour. Dr. Lacour, a  
 visiting professor at Fuller, served for more than nine years (1957-1966) as  
 Director of Preaching Evangelism, as Director of Evangelistic Missions, and 35  
 as Executive Secretary of Leadership Development for the Methodist General  
 Board of Evangelism. Currently he is the Senior Minister of the First United 40  
 Methodist Church, Colorado Springs, Colorado, one of the largest Methodist  
 churches in the nation. For his course we were required to read 1,500 pages  
 of new material prior to the first class and to hand in one-page assessments 45  
 of these books. The eleven works which I read are included in the biblio-  
 graphy for this paper. In addition to the advance reading and book reports, 50

as well as daily attendance at the 10 two-hour a day class sessions, participants in the course were to write a paper due on 31 May 1978.

5           Since I had already accepted the assignment to prepare a paper for our Wisconsin Synod's Convocation on Evangelism, I received permission from Dr. Lacour to kill two birds with one stone, to write a paper incorporating  
10 principles and procedures discussed and explored during our Fuller course sessions which would also offer suggestions for future Wisconsin Synod strategy  
15 in evangelism, especially as it relates to the local church. The title of this paper is very broad, considering the fact that our synod celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1975. Obviously we cannot give a detailed history of  
20 evangelism efforts in the WELS covering over a century, but I believe that my assignment for the convocation can be best carried out by dividing my sub-  
25 ject into three sections based on time: I. An Overview of the Past, II. An Appraisal of the Present and III. Proposals for Future Strategy. In section I I recognize that I'm running the risk of repeating some of the points that  
30 may well be made here by other essayists, but I found the work of Michael Green, Evangelism in the Early Church, so helpful and stimulating that I  
35 decided to run that risk. If other essayists also share some of his thoroughly-documented discoveries about the key role played by the laity as eager messengers and witnesses of the Gospel in the early history of our Christian  
40 faith, I believe that such repetition, if it occurs, will drive home a point that needs to be stressed at this convocation.

45           Before we get into the main body of this paper we should at least briefly consider the term, evangelism. Surely there are hundreds of definitions for the word. In this paper, however, we are primarily concerned with  
50 personal (person-to-person) evangelism, the personal witnessing to Christ and the Gospel, especially on the part of laypeople, in line with the following  
55 stated objectives and policies of our Synod:

The objectives of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod are:

1. To share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people. . .
4. To assist in counseling and equipping all members of the Synod for ever greater service to the Lord, to each other, and to the world. . . .

5

It is WELS policy:

- 1.1 To promote personal Christian witnessing to the Gospel by each member of the Synod. . . .

10

- 4.3 To promote the evangelism . . . activity of our members.<sup>1</sup>

Our own WELS Commission on Evangelism, following the lead of the above document, has declared: "The purpose of the Commission on Evangelism is to encourage and promote personal Christian witnessing to the Gospel by each member of the Synod." Arthur E. Graf enunciates the same view of evangelism that we want to stress in this paper when he states:

15

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Surely there are many worthwhile activities and purposes in the Christian life. However, the primary reason the world still exists and eternity waits is to give the Church the opportunity to carry out the Lord's great commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). The highest purpose of life is to participate with Christ in that glorious activity of seeking and saving that which is lost. It would seem, then, that ministers of Christ would make evangelism the central activity of their own lives and do all within their power and ingenuity to guide every Christian member into some form of work in evangelism.

25

30

Evangelism is nothing new in the Church. The holy angels started it on the night in which Christ was born (Luke 2:10). The term is just as lofty as its purpose. Evangelism consists in proclaiming the "Evangel," the *evangelion*, the good news that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into the world to redeem lost mankind. In the broad sense, evangelism includes the total preaching and teaching program of the Church. In the narrow sense the term refers to the proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers. We shall use the term primarily in the narrow sense in this book.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A Statement of the Purpose, Objectives and Policies of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod adopted by the 40th Biennial Convention of the WELS meeting at New Ulm, Minnesota in August 1969.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur E. Graf, The Church in the Community: An Effective Evangelism Program for the Christian Congregation (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965) p. 12.

We also intend to use the term evangelism in Graf's narrow sense, narrowing it even further with our stress on the laity's key role in proclamation.

5           In his course Dr. Lacour offered the following definition for evangelism: *Communicate Christ Compassionately*. He also pointed out the three  
10 kinds of talk that people are accustomed to use, namely *hello* talk that is limited to casual conversations about sports events, shopping bargains, or the weather, *head* talk that remains on the purely intellectual level, and  
15 *heart* talk that carries with it Christian love and concern for the person who is addressed. What we would like to see in the WELS would be scores of laypeople in each of our more than 1100 congregations well-prepared to  
20 *communicate Christ compassionately*, well-trained not only to make *hello* talk and *head* talk to their unchurched friends, neighbors, relatives, and co-  
25 workers, but eager especially to engage them in *heart-to-heart* talk about sin and grace, about Law and Gospel, because they care desperately about the spiritual health and eternal fate of the precious souls of their fellowmen  
30 for whom Jesus shed His blood as the spotless Lamb of God and gave His life as our Redeemer on Calvary.

## I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST

## A. The Early Church Period

Although I agree with Michael Green that it is not advisable nor 5  
 "possible to read off from a study of evangelism in antiquity the answers  
 to our contemporary problems in communicating the gospel,"<sup>3</sup> nevertheless I'm 10  
 convinced that there is much for us to learn or to be reminded of regarding  
 God-pleasing evangelism as we see how it was practiced in the two hundred  
 year period from the time of Paul to Origen. When we compare the evangelism 15  
 practiced in the period of the Early Church with our modern-day evangelism,  
 the biggest difference seems to be in the role played by the laity. Lay- 20  
 people undeniably were the principal evangelism practitioners going back to  
 the time when "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the  
 word" (Acts 8:4). Green agrees with Kenneth Scott Latourette's judgment 25  
 that

The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to 30  
 have been those who made it a profession or made it a major part of  
 their occupation, but men and women who carried on their livelihood in  
 some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those they met  
 in this natural fashion.<sup>4</sup>

I've already mentioned my keen appreciation of Michael Green's work. 35  
 At this point I'm tempted to reproduce his entire 6-1/2 page Epilogue be-  
 cause it nails down so firmly the fact that laypeople's participation pro- 40  
 vided the vital link in evangelism in antiquity that seems to be missing,  
 for the most part and with very few exceptions, in our own day. Short of  
 copying his whole Epilogue I would like to highlight the following parts 45  
 of it:

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<sup>3</sup>Michael Green, Evangelism in the Early Church (Grand Rapids:  
 William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970) p. 274

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 203

One of the most striking features in evangelism in the early days was the people who engaged in it. Communicating the faith was not regarded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every church member. We have seen apostles and wandering prophets, nobles and paupers, intellectuals and fishermen all taking part enthusiastically in this the primary task committed by Christ to his Church. The ordinary people of the Church saw it as their job: Christianity was supremely a lay movement, spread by informal missionaries. The clergy of the Church saw it as their responsibility too: bishops and presbyters, together with doctors of the Church like Origen and Clement, and philosophers like Justin and Tatian, saw the propagation of the gospel as their prime concern. They seem not to have allowed the tasks of teaching, caring and administering to make them too busy to bring individuals and groups from unbelief to faith. The spontaneous outreach of the total Christian community gave immense impetus to the movement from the very outset.

What is more, this infectious enthusiasm on the part of such diverse people of differing ages, backgrounds, sex, and cultures was backed up by the quality of their lives. Their love, their joy, their changed habits and progressively transformed characters gave great weight to what they had to say. Their community life, though far from perfect, as Christian writers were constantly complaining, was nevertheless sufficiently different and impressive to attract notice, to invite curiosity, and to inspire discipleship in an age that was as pleasure-conscious, as materialistic and as devoid of serious purpose as our own. Paganism saw in early Christianity a quality of living, and supremely of dying, which could not be found elsewhere.

Unless there is a transformation of contemporary church life so that once again the task of evangelism is something which is seen as incumbent on every baptized Christian, and is backed up by a quality of living which outshines the best that unbelief can muster, we are unlikely to make much headway through techniques of evangelism. Men will not believe that Christians have good news to share until they find that bishops and bakers, university professors and housewives, bus drivers and street corner preachers are all alike keen to pass it on, however different their methods may be. And men will continue to believe that the Church is an introverted society composed of 'respectable' people and bent on its own preservation until they see in Church groupings and individual Christians the caring, the joy, the fellowship, the self-sacrifice and the openness which marked the early Church at its best.

Together with this enthusiasm on the part of the ordinary lay members of the Church as well as its ordained ministers to share the good tidings with those who had never heard them, went a deep sense of the seriousness of the issues involved. These men really believed that men without Christ might suffer eternal and irreparable loss, and this thought drove them to unremitting labours to reach them with the gospel. There was no hint of universalism in the early Church, and when something very like it appeared in the later writings of Origen, he was forthwith reckoned to be heretical and, despite his saintly life and herculean labours for the faith, was never canonized. The thought that their gospel was veiled to unbelievers, who were blinded in mind by the devil, impelled other Christian missionaries besides Paul to "proclaim not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake", in the hope that God, in His

goodness would illuminate their hearts and reveal Jesus Christ to them. These early missionaries were very conscious of their responsibility to seek the Lord's approval in all they did. They were accountable to him, and he had bidden them proclaim the good news to all the world. How could they face him unashamed if they had flouted his last command? . . .

Turning to the methods used in evangelism, we met with no very great surprises. Granted their presuppositions that the ultimate truth about God and man had been revealed in Jesus, and that the basic alienation between God and man had been resolved through Jesus, it is natural enough that they used every means in their power to share this discovery with others. We have seen that house meetings of various sorts and personal conversations between individuals played a very prominent part in the progress of the gospel in ancient times. The hospitality and even the decoration of their homes, their chance conversations indoors or in the open air, visiting, open-air preaching, addresses in church and synagogue, arguments in the marketplace and the philosophical school, personal testimony, letter writing and the explanation of Scripture were all used to further the supreme aim which these early Christians cherished, of making Christ known to others. When men have the will to speak of their Lord, they find no shortage of ways in which to do it. Indeed, it is the motivation of these men and women which impresses us more than their methods. Their moving allegiance to God, their profound sense of discovery, their deep concern for their Christless fellows drove them out into unremitting service in the cause of the gospel.

Evangelism today is often associated with the great public meeting. It is a remarkable fact that the early Church seems to have made very little use of this method of commending the gospel. The reason lay, partly at any rate, in the historical situation in which Christianity was born. Large-scale public associations were banned by imperial edict during the majority of the period under review. Apart from the large meetings in Jerusalem (and that city was always regarded as a special case by Roman governors, sensitive as they were to intense nationalistic feeling) recorded in the early chapters of the Acts, we hear of nothing comparable until the widespread turning to Christianity in North Africa towards the end of the second century, before Tertullian wrote. It was always impolitic, and potentially dangerous, to organize a large public meeting: this was to invite police action. Naturally, therefore, the emphasis lay on home and personal evangelism, and these methods have a permanent importance for any church which is concerned to grow. . . .

In these first two centuries or so of the Church's existence we find many faults, much that dishonours the name they professed. But we also find an evangelistic zeal and effort, exerted by the whole broad spectrum of the Christian community to bring other people to the feet of their ascended Lord and into the fellowship of his willing servants. This is a permanent reminder of the Church's first priority. Evangelism was the very life blood of the early Christians: and so we find that "day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving"<sup>5</sup> It could happen again, if the Church were prepared to pay the price.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Epilogue, pps. 274- 275, 278-279, 280.

## B. The Reformation Era

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss at length the reasons why the role of the laity steadily diminished in the church after the first two or three centuries. Surely the rise of the Papacy along with the elaborate clergy hierarchy which steadily developed in the established Roman Catholic religion put laypeople in their place, a place that was understood by all concerned, clergy and laity alike, to be subordinate and inferior. When the Lord used His faithful servant, Dr. Martin Luther, to set the Reformation fully in motion, one of the blessed byproducts of that movement was the restoration of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Luther repeatedly emphasized that:

We Christians are priests, too; for although Christ in His Person is the one High Priest between God and all of us, He nonetheless also communicates this name to us so that we who believe on Him may also be, and be called, priests, just as we are called Christians after Him.<sup>6</sup>

However, it was one thing for Luther to enunciate the "priesthood of all believers" principle, as he did again and again with his God-given eloquence; it was something else for Luther and his successors to put that principle into widespread, consistent practice. They had to contend with many centuries of encrusted custom and special problems in their own era which made it extremely difficult to do away with professional ministerial paternalism and an inferior image of the laity. Hendrik Kraemer describes the difficulties the Reformers encountered:

This trend of development was strengthened by the fact that the ministers, whose main work was considered to be the right preaching of the Word, appeared more and more as the 'theologians', the 'knowers', and in the existing framework of social stratification and honour they represented the 'spiritual status' (*geistlicher Stand*); and in other words the

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<sup>6</sup>Ewald M. Plass, compiler, What Luther Says, 3 vols. anthology (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), Vol. I, #707, p. 237.

*pneumatikoi*, the *spiritual persons* (I Cor. 3) by profession. Its counter-effect was that the laity gradually got into and, generally speaking, accepted the position of the 'ignorant', the spiritually non-adult. It has led to the situation, which is at present still prominent, that there is in all Churches a clear division between the leading office-bearers and the laity, functioning on the tacitly accepted assumption that, properly speaking, the Church is essentially the concern of the ministry. Already at the time of the Reformation and in the first period of its consolidation, concrete historical facts ensured that the principle of 'the universal priesthood of believers' could not be acted upon. The Reformers originally did not intend to establish a new Church. What interested them in the first place was the purification of the faith. When, however, the stubborn resistance of the leadership of the Church drove them to organize Church life on the basis of their own principles, they were speedily confronted by the problem of the ignorance of the laity and the difficulty of establishing decent order in the congregations. This was the case not only in Germany but in England, where the Reformation was less drastic and systematic.

Besides, the actual organizational Reformation could not be carried out without the help and authority of princes and political magistrates who were in favour of the Reformation. This resulted gradually in the princes and political magistrates occupying a great place in Church matters. The laity, even when not ignorant, saw no other possibility than leaving matters in the hands of the ministers and the state bodies created for administering Church life. As early as 1526 Luther confessed that for his ideal of a true Christian congregation he had not yet available a sufficient number of Christian people and he did not even see many who insisted that it should be undertaken. The organization that developed did not give a status to congregations which provided for active responsibility. They were objects of ministerial and pastoral labours and governmental regulation. Consequently the laity, although in a setting different from that before the Reformation, remained as of old, *objects*, and in no sense became *subjects*.<sup>7</sup>

Surely many of the problems referred to by Kraemer still plague us today and inhibit our actual practice of the "priesthood of all believers" as it's described in the Scriptures.

### C. The Revival Era

For many years for many people the word evangelism has evoked images of the "sawdust trail" and has been synonymous with mass evangelists like Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday and Billy Graham. We in the Wisconsin Synod have never been involved in this form of evangelism. With good reason we have re-

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<sup>7</sup>Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958) pps. 66,67.

jected the rampant unionism, the doctrinal compromise, the least common denominator type of religion and the climactic, emotion-tugging "decision" theology which inevitably go hand in hand with such crusades. In his biography of Moody, Richard K. Curtis describes that evangelist's latitudinarian and doctrinally elastic attitude when the 1893 Chicago World's Fair set up a Parliament of Religions and promoted an idea fostered by modern-day Bahais that the best points of each belief might be coordinated into one all-encompassing eclectic religion. Moody refused to condemn such crass mongrelization of religion, but used it for his own purposes by proclaiming:

I'll preach Christ crucified anywhere I can find lost men, on the street, in the open air, in tents or in saloons, in beer gardens or in missions, in theaters or halls, in churches or in the Parliament of Religions.<sup>8</sup>

Moody cared little about criticism of the crudely garish advertising he sometimes used to draw crowds. Once he rented a huge circus tent from Forepaugh's Circus and put the following ad in the amusement pages of the Chicago newspapers:

Ha! Ha! Ha!  
Three Big Shows!  
Moody in the Morning!  
Forepaugh in the Afternoon and Evening!<sup>9</sup>

It's easy to find fault with Moody, to condemn his brusqueness, his oversimplification, his broad gauge belief which he actually boasted about, his alternately slick and clumsy commercialization of the Christian faith and unabashed worship of bigness, his ill-trained co-workers and superficiality of conversion experience; yet it would be false witness to call in question this remarkable layman's basic sincere love for the Lord Jesus and surely some of his ideas would undoubtedly work wonders if they were tried today. Observing

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<sup>8</sup>Richard K. Curtis, *They Called Him Mister Moody* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1967-published in hardcover by Doubleday in 1962) p. 275.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 276.

that the Civil War would hardly have been won by West Point graduates, he wanted to recruit an army of laymen "skilled in the knowledge and use of the Word of God, and familiar with aggressive methods of work, to act as pastors' assistants, city missionaries, evangelists. . ."<sup>10</sup>

In Boston Moody issued the challenge: "Hasn't the time come for us to visit the homes of the poor and wicked and tell them how the Son of God came into the world to seek the fallen?"<sup>11</sup> As a result the city's 70,000 families were personally contacted by squads of workers from a pool of 2,000. Although that campaign seemed to be very successful, we have reason to suspect that the tactics of Moody's workers were hardly low key, for the New York Times of 5 January 1875 described them as a "cloud of sharpshooters" carrying on "a sort of guerilla warfare," pushing themselves uninvited "without any inquiry as to whether their visits were agreeable, into private families, where they bully and insult those who are caught in their interview."<sup>12</sup>

Although more than a century stands between us and Moody's high pressure Boston crusade, many people, also in our circles, still associate evangelism with the hard sell, theological one-upmanship, and the thoroughly obnoxious, martyr-complex, foot-in-the-door, never-take-no-for-an-answer approach of the diabolically persistent Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. What a tragedy that one of the most beautiful words in the language, which conveys the Gospel, the good news that we sinners have an all-sufficient Savior in the God-man, Jesus Christ, has been sullied, besmirched and all but robbed of its basic meaning by work-righteous false prophets who proclaim not one bit of the true Evangel to the misguided millions who follow them.

#### D. Wisconsin Synod Evangelism

Since its founding in 1850 the church body now officially known as

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 300. <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 264. <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has been deeply involved in evangelism. However, we are not being presumptuous or judgmental, nor do we want to be self-righteous or self-serving, when we maintain that for the most part WELS evangelism in our early history was evangelism in the broad sense (cf. Graf quotation on p. 3), including the total preaching and teaching program of the church (cf. Acts 15:35). I have no illusions about my qualifications as an expert on WELS history and I would be pleased if someone at this convention would correct me if I've reached erroneous conclusions, but it seems to me that personal evangelism, visitation evangelism, and evangelism efforts by WELS laity have been the exception rather than the rule in WELS evangelism efforts in the past 125+ years. Surely our mission efforts in Apacheland, our work in Africa, first in the framework of the Synodical Conference and on our own since the 1950's, and the God-pleasing explosion of interest in world missions in our Synod in the past two decades should not be disparaged, but it still seems to me that most of the rank and file members of our church body remain uninvolved, unchallenged, and (we in the clergy must bear the responsibility for their being almost totally) untrained in evangelism in the narrow sense of personal proclamation of the Gospel to the non-Christian. For the most part WELS evangelism has occurred when pastors preached from their pulpits and visited their sick and shut-in members, when teachers and pastors taught in their classrooms and when missionaries followed much the same time-honored practices in foreign lands. With few exceptions, WELS laypeople, unless I totally misread our history and clergy-dominant tradition or unless other WELS laypeople are radically different from the ones whom I serve in Woodlawn Congregation, are involved in evangelism only peripherally and vicariously, supplying financial and prayer support for the full-time pros, the pastors, teachers and missionaries. Though everyone present can probably think of a WELS layperson who is an excellent eloquent lay evangelist, I

contend that such a brother or sister is the exception and that 95%(?) of our laypeople feel intimidated, tongue-tied and totally unprepared to witness to Christ when golden opportunities present themselves in their daily pursuits. Without intending to slander our forefathers, to whom I feel, very fittingly, interior, we are products of our history, a history in which the Herr Pastor called the shots in our congregations and laypeople slipped into a comfortable supportive role, building, maintaining and repairing the physical facilities but leaving the talking and evangelizing to the preacher who spent all those years in Watertown, Wauwatosa, Thiensville, or Mequon learning how to master that intricate activity. Yes, we are products, heirs and repeaters of our history in which churches up until the 1930's were listed not by their own name, e.g. St. Paul's or St. John's, but were listed in our official statistical records as Pastor X's congregation in Suchandsuchatown, South Dakota.

Finally in the 50's this personal evangelism void and lack of lay witnessing, at least on any large scale, became more apparent to our Synod and convention actions were taken to make better use of what Hendrik Kraemer in his A Theology of the Laity (a book with a promising title, but poor, liberal-slanted theology) described as the "dead capital" or "frozen credits" of the church, the laity. In response to a memorial submitted by the Milwaukee City Pastoral Conference of the Synod's Southeastern Wisconsin District the 1957 Synod Convention created an Evangelism Committee which was charged with the responsibility of tapping the "vast reservoir of laity for personal mission work". The Whereas of the adopted recommendation called upon this committee to "stimulate greater lay participation in personal mission work" and referred to "our present pastor shortage" which "only emphasizes the urgent need of employing our laity to better advantage". One score and one years after

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those words were written, we once again have a substantial pastor shortage and the urgent need of employing our laity to better advantage still exists.

5 At this point I feel constrained to make an unusual addition to this paper, unusual because it is much longer than the average citation from another author. I am including in my paper a devotion, written for the opening meeting of our Commission on Evangelism's Plenary Session at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota on 1 August 1977 by Pastor Emeritus  
 15 Wilmer Valleskey, Chairman of the Michigan District's Commission on Evangelism and author of the "Talk about the Savior" lay evangelism training manual. Wisconsin Synod Lutherans are not accustomed to cultivating cults of  
 20 personality. Our leaders generally are down to earth men who expect to be the targets of good-natured ribbing designed to keep them from taking themselves too seriously or getting the big head after their elevation to high  
 25 office. Nevertheless, in recent years, and especially at the time of his retirement Pastor Edgar Hoenecke, has been frequently called "Mr. World Missions"  
 30 of our WELS because of his long and fruitful association with that division of our work. Since we've established a precedent of sorts in Pastor Hoenecke's  
 35 case, I believe that Pastor Valleskey justly deserves to be known as the "Mr. Evangelism" of WELS because of his energetic pioneering efforts to further the cause of personal lay witnessing in our circles. Accordingly, with his per-  
 40 mission, I am including his fine devotion in my work because I believe it deserves wider circulation and because it contains a fine summary of the recent past history of our Synod's evangelism efforts going back to that first  
 45 Evangelism Committee's establishment in 1957.

50 Opening Devotion. W.E.L.S. Commission on Evangelism. Plenary Session held at New Ulm, Mn. on Aug. 1, 1977. By W. Valleskey.

1 Cor. 4:2----- It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

FAITHFUL. To whom? To our Lord. God requires that we be found

faithful, that we carefully and faithfully carry out our responsibilities. We have to give account to Him now, today. And, on Judgment Day each of us assuredly wants to be found faithful. We hope to hear our divine, forgiving, merciful and gracious Judge say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

5

FAITHFUL. Faithful to what?

FAITHFUL TO THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL. "He hath called you by our gospel." This is a personal, individual faithfulness. Each of us must answer to God for our own faith and trust in Jesus Christ whom He sent to redeem us. Is ours the faith of an Abraham or does Jesus say to us, "O ye of little faith"?

10

FAITHFUL TO OUR CALL INTO THE MINISTRY. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ." As ministers of Christ we have the call to "Preach My Word faithfully." How we strive to do just that! Yet, who of us would dare to say he has never preached His Word falsely? Negligence in preparation, carelessness in choice of words, improper inflection of voice, all can contribute to conveying the Word unfaithfully. Thank God, there is also forgiveness for pastors!

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FAITHFULNESS TO OUR CALL FROM THE FLOCK "over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." How easy and convenient it is to become ecclesiastical administrators over the flock rather than faithful shepherds serving the needs of each sheep in the flock. How easy to become so busy with all the "work" that has to be done that we have insufficient time for "the one thing needful." The Word, law and gospel, these are "tools" our God called us to use in the flock. As much as we pretend that we prefer to occupy ourselves only with these "tools" in our ministry, who of us does not like to feel he is the boss over the flock? Who of us does not like to feel he must "see to it" that things get done the way they should be done, meaning, of course, the way I want them done? How prone we are to judge a brother who has problems in his parish with the judgment: "He doesn't know how to run things," whereas the brother may be as faithful as we ever could be in dispensing the Means of Grace.

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FAITHFULNESS TO THE CHURCH-AT-LARGE. We have been appointed in accordance with the constitution of the church to serve in what I shall call a very specialized calling - and, we have accepted this call, hopefully with full approval and support of the flock we serve. It is to this specialized call that I would direct your thoughts at this time.

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#### FAITHFULNESS TO OUR CALL AS EVANGELISM COMMISSION MEMBERS

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Before we can talk about faithfulness to our specialized call we must know and understand what this call is. History of the past twenty years helps give the answer. Why did our synod create an evangelism commission? I quote from the Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, held at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Mn., August 7-14, 1957, pages 72 and 73:

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QUOTE - See Appendage # 1

In 1961 the Synod reconstituted its evangelism committee as presently structured. The Synod reiterated clear directives. We quote from the 1961 Proceedings, page 237:

QUOTE - See Appendage # 2

The synodical constitution sets forth the Evangelism Commission's duties, Sec. 6:03 (c) and Sec. 6:04 (c), page 21:

QUOTE - See Appendage # 3

QUOTE - See Appendage # 4

The Constitution for districts, Art XVI (page 43), instructs district commissions in practically the same words as Sec. 6:04 (c) above.

In 1975, eighteen years after establishing its Commission on Evangelism, the Synod adopted the following resolution (Proceedings, page 75):

QUOTE - See Appendage # 5

The difference between the Mission Board's and the Evangelism Commission's responsibilities should be obvious. Mission Boards have the duty to spread the gospel by establishing and supervising mission congregations with synodically trained manpower. Evangelism commissions have the responsibility to spread the gospel by training and using the laity in mission and other congregations.

The heart and core of our assignment and responsibility, the point consistently emphasized and re-emphasized by synod and district constitutions as well as by all resolutions of the Synod from 1957 down to the present may be summarized in two brief statements:

OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO TEACH AND HELP THE LAITY  
TO BECOME GOOD WITNESSES FOR CHRIST. TO THIS END  
WE ARE TO DEVISE METHODS AND PLAN PROGRAMS CONSIS-  
TENT WITH OUR DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE FOR THE LAITY.

The NEED to help and train the laity is apparent. In 1976, according to the statistical Year Book, only one percent of our 298,614 communicants brought one soul to Christ via adult confirmation. How many of the 2,972 adult confirmations were actually gathered by our lay people, of course, is impossible to say. In all probability the majority were brought in by our pastors. But, disregarding this fact and assuming that the laity brought in all the adult confirmations, the hard and cold fact is that only 2,972 communicants brought in one new communicant while 295,642 brought in none. You and I, appointed to the position of leadership, face an exciting challenge! How can we get 295,000 believers in Christ to talk about the Savior to the unchurched?

The NEED to engage our laity is urgent. There are over 108 million unchurched people in our country, a proportionate number living in our respective communities. 295,000 lay people in our congregations can certainly reach more of these millions with the gospel than 885 pastors!

The NEED to engage our laity is becoming more and more urgent. The rate of graduating pastors per 1000 population is declining. More and

more (unbelievers) are going to eternal death every year, every day. Only the gospel of Christ can halt the landslide into hell. Our laity can communicate this gospel. Our specialized calling is to help the laity to witness. Other church bodies and groups, with their false doctrines, are reaching out. We seem to be plagued with the philosophy, "Ich bleibe 5 beim Alten" - Don't rock the boat. You and I are called particularly to help our laity become speakers of the gospel to the unchurched.

To repeat, the main objective of our specialized call is to help our people to be good witnesses for Christ - not just to tell them in a sermon and send them away with a guilty conscience because they actually and truly do not know how to witness. We are called to train them like Jesus trained His disciples when He said, "I will make you to become fishers of men." His disciples were not the fishers of men Jesus wanted and expected them to be when He called them - He would train them to become witnesses. It is not enough for us to say, "When a person becomes a Christian he automatically is called to be a witness for Jesus. This, of course, is true. But, the next step must follow. Like Jesus we must teach them how." 10 15 20

It is true, some Christians need very little training to witness, but they are the exception. Let us not make the exception the rule by saying all Christians know sin and grace and therefore are capable of talking about it. They do not know the how any more than did the Twelve. 25

Our Lord not only trained His own disciples, He also trained the Seventy. Furthermore, He gave all under-shepherds instructions to do as He did. He had His Spirit record these words in Ephesians 4:11 - "He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as pastors and teachers, for (pros) the equipping of the saints for (eis) the work of service to (eis) the building up of the body of Christ." or as Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon puts it. "to prepare the saints for practical service, that the body of Christ might be built up." 30

Christians need equipping today just as they did in Jesus' day. We equip them faithfully, first with the Word, but then also with practical know-how. We must be faithful shepherds, and also, faithful coaches. 35

Our specialized calling requires that we help the brethren in the ministry to become good (better) coaches by preparing aids which they can use in equipping the saints entrusted to their spiritual care. It is unfortunate that we must spend so much time and effort today in motivating our brethren to equip the saints to become good witnesses. It seems to me that the motivation should be done more thoroughly at our academies, colleges and seminary, and that our brethren who gave us a job to do should be clamoring for helps, whereas we encounter apathy and even resistance to the work of evangelism. When we encounter resistance to the work from some of the brethren, let's never succumb to the temptation of placating them by replacing the primary objective of our specialized calling with secondary goals. If wisdom at times demands that we retreat one step in order to proceed two forward, let's do so. We must bear in mind that we have been appointed to positions of leadership. We must think, plan and carefully prepare our strategy to be faithful to our specialized calling. 40 45 50

You and I ought to understand the underlying reason for the apathy and resistance lest we become discouraged and be tempted to divert our efforts from our main goal.

To evangelize (always used as a verb in Scriptures) means to speak the gospel. The Lord has ordained that conversion takes place by the Holy Spirit through the gospel - not through pastors, not through teachers, not through lay people. All Christians - pastors, teachers, lay people - have the high privilege and calling to be carriers of the gospel. Through evangelizing (gospel-izing) - be it by pastors, teachers or laymen, believers or unbelievers - God wrestles souls out of satan's power and gives these souls the sure hope of everlasting life in heaven. Through the gospel lost souls change loyalties - they switch from satan's kingdom to the Kingdom of God. Herein lies our greatest problem and difficulty - the real reason for resistance to the work of evangelism. Satan will not and does not take an attack on his kingdom lying down. He musters up all the cunning and strength of his "principalities and powers," of his "rulers of the darkness of this world," of his "spiritual wickedness in high places."

Satan tempts pastors with the temptation to say: "I preach law and gospel, sin and grace, from the pulpit, in class rooms, at sick beds and I make calls on the unchurched as best I can. That is all that is expected of me." Satan tempts pastors to ignore their responsibility as faithful shepherds to be good coaches for their people. The work of a flesh-laden pastor trying to train and coach his team of spiritually handicapped members and make of them a top notch team of professional witnesses for Christ is one of the most difficult in the world, and, because of its satan-inspired frustrations calls forth the best in a shepherd. He must still be a coach even when because of disappointments, he feels he would rather do it all himself! Qualis rex, talis grex. If satan can get the pastor to evidence a negative or indifferent attitude toward evangelizing, he has won a major victory because flesh-laden lay people will be glad "to get out of" witnessing. The devil knows the converse to be true too: if a pastor is enthusiastic about evangelism his joy and zeal will spill over on many of his people. Little wonder the old evil foe attacks pastors above others.

Satan tempts teachers to adopt the attitude: "Evangelism is for adults and not children. What can children do?" Satan tries to get them to ignore the high privilege of instilling through the Word in the lambs of Jesus the desire to witness for their Savior. Satan does not want the child to develop a lifetime attitude of love for witnessing.

Satan tempts lay people to say: "Evangelizing is for the pastor, not for me. I just can't do it. I don't know how. The pastor is trained for this work. I'm not." Satan would like to see every lay Christian become and remain an immobile cocoon wrapped up in the web of the gospel rather than a morning glory which bursts forth every morning to share its beauty in its own surroundings.

Every witness for Christ becomes a potential danger and threat to satan's kingdom! Let us never forget that the chief reason why the work of

evangelism is so difficult, often downright frustrating, is because the devil has unleashed all the powers of hell against it. He will continue to fight evangelizing with all the fury of blazing fire in a high wind. And, they who are out in the forefront of carrying the banner of the crucified and risen Christ can expect the most consistent, violent and vicious onslaught of the king of hell.

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The temptation for us, who are appointed to the Synod's Commission on Evangelism, to let secondary goals replace the primary purpose for our existence, as set forth in the Synod's constitution under which flag we march in our specialized calling, is very real.

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We have developed aids to the work of evangelism. We have produced tracts which can be given to the unchurched. We have produced guidelines for elders in their calls on fellow Christians. We have printed religious survey guides and other helps. If any of these become an end unto themselves, the primary goal of our activity as commission members, we have been diverted from the real reason for our existence as a commission. Our chief concern must remain to devise ways and means to help our laity to become the best possible witnesses for Christ, particularly to train and help them to talk about Jesus to those who do not yet know Him as their Savior.

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**FAITHFUL!** How do we become more faithful? Through the Word. Let us study the Word, the whole Word, but particularly the Word that speaks to us about our specialized calling. Let us personally delve anew and in depth into "Study to Be Witnesses unto Me." Only when we are personally convinced that God wants our members to "be witnesses unto Him," only when we are convinced that God wants us to train our members to evangelize, only then will we act. Would to God that we, the men in positions of leadership, would be on fire for Christ and that our fire would ignite our brethren and that this holy conflagration would reach down to every believer in every congregation of the Synod!

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**PRAYER.** O Lord, our God, grant that we may be found faithful, faithful to the call of the gospel, faithful to the call into the ministry, faithful to the call from the flock we serve and also faithful to our specialized calling to serve the church-at-large as members of our Synod's Commission on Evangelism. In the holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray this. Amen.

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**MEMORIAL — Subject: An Evangelism Committee**

The Milwaukee City Pastoral Conference of the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States wishes to submit the following Memorial to Synod.

1. WHEREAS, the Great Commission of the Church is to "make disciples of all nations," and
2. WHEREAS, evangelism programs developed by other church bodies have proved an important aid in carrying out this Great Commission, and
3. WHEREAS, evangelism programs initiated by local congregations in our Synod have been most promising, and
4. WHEREAS, population growth and distribution offer unparalleled opportunities for a planned evangelism program, and
5. WHEREAS, such a program would surely stimulate greater lay participation in mission work, and
6. WHEREAS, our laity represents a vast, unused reservoir for personal evangelism work, and
7. WHEREAS, our present pastor shortage only emphasizes the urgent need of employing our laity, and
8. WHEREAS, better programs and more attractive material could be presented if the Joint Synod undertook this work; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we request the 1957 Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States to create an Evangelism Committee whose specific duties would be to develop such a program consistent with our doctrine and practice; and to authorize and empower this Committee to conduct and supervise evangelism workshops, conferences, and any other similar activity by which interest and method might be more fully developed.

NORMAN SCHLAVENSKY, Secretary

This memorial was referred to the General Board for Home Missions for study and recommendation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BOARD FOR HOME MISSIONS  
CONCERNING AN EVANGELISM COMMITTEE**

The General Board for Home Missions recommends:

1. WHEREAS, the Great Commission and privilege of the Church is to "make disciples of all nations," and
2. WHEREAS, our laity represents a vast reservoir for personal mission work, and
3. WHEREAS, our present pastor shortage only emphasizes the urgent need of employing our laity to better advantage, and
4. WHEREAS, such a program would surely stimulate greater lay participation in personal mission work, and
5. WHEREAS, population growth and distribution of the same offer unparalleled opportunities for a planned evangelism program, and
6. WHEREAS, evangelism programs initiated by local congregations in our Synod have been most promising, and
7. WHEREAS, better programs and more attractive material could be offered, if the Joint Synod undertook this work; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we request the 1957 Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States to create an Evangelism Committee whose specific duties would be to plan such programs consistent with our doctrine and practice; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the President of Joint Synod with the advice of the Conference of Presidents appoint the committee in the following manner: two who may be pastors or professors, one teacher, and one layman for a term of two years, and one who may be a pastor or a professor, one teacher, and one layman for a term of four years, thereafter subject to appointment for four-year terms.

Action by the Convention: The report was adopted.

Appendage # 3

**Section 6.03 Commission on Evangelism**

(a) There shall be a Commission on Evangelism composed of an executive committee and the chairmen of the district commissions on evangelism. The executive committee, composed of a chairman, vice-chairman and a secretary, shall be appointed by the president of the Synod for a term of six years. The term of one member shall expire every two years.

(b) The duties of the executive committee shall be determined by the commission.

(c) The commission shall plan, prepare, and publish evangelism materials consistent with the doctrine and practice of the Synod. It shall also assist the congregations of the Synod in establishing and maintaining active evangelism programs.

(d) The commission shall submit a written report to the regular Synod and district conventions.

Appendage # 4

**Section 6.04 District Commissions on Evangelism**

(a) There shall be district commissions on evangelism composed of a maximum of six pastors and laymen appointed by the district president. Appointments shall be made for a term of six years.

(b) The district commissions on evangelism shall cooperate with the Synod's Commission on Evangelism and shall submit reports to it as the Synod's commission may require.

(c) The district commissions on evangelism shall cooperate with the Synod's commission in planning, preparing, and publishing evangelism materials consistent with the doctrine and practice of the Synod. They shall also aid the congregations of the districts in establishing and maintaining active evangelism programs.

STEWARDSHIP

REPORT OF FLOOR COMMITTEE NO. 18  
(Committee on Evangelism, Board for Information and Stewardship,  
and Audio-Visual Aids)

Re: Report of the Commission on Evangelism, Reports and Memorials,  
pages 131-132

Resolution No. 1

Subject: Evangelism. Scriptural evangelism is "witnessing to the hope that is in us." To help us improve our ability and zeal to "witness to the hope that is in us" is the scope of work of our Commission on Evangelism.

WHEREAS, The Great Commission and privilege of the Church is to "make disciples of all nations," and

WHEREAS, Our zeal for the truth of the Gospel should be matched by our zeal to spread this truth, and

WHEREAS, The growth and redistribution of population offer unparalleled opportunities for gaining souls for the Savior, and

WHEREAS, The members of our congregations represent a reservoir of witnesses whose abilities have remained largely untapped, and

WHEREAS, The Lord's statement, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8) applies to all Christians, and

WHEREAS, The work of our pastors can be supplemented by enlisting the help of our membership, and

WHEREAS, It is your committee's considered opinion and firm conviction that many of our laity could be enlisted for active witnessing, if shown how; therefore, be it

Resolved, a) That the Evangelism Commission be commended for the production of "Gaining and Reclaiming Souls," and be it further

Resolved, b) That the Commission be directed to produce more materials, and to suggest evangelism programs in keeping with our theology and practice, and that such materials be made available as soon as possible to our pastors and members, and be it further

Resolved, c) That the Commission offer its services to the faculties at our Synodical schools in presenting studies on evangelism, and be it further

Resolved, d) That the necessary monies for materials and administration be made available to the Commission in the synodical budget.

Reference: BoRAM - pp. 71-72  
Subject: Report of the Commission on Evangelism  
Resolution No. 13

WHEREAS by God's grace the Commission on Evangelism has in the last two years acquainted about 100 seminary students and 300 pastors with Talk About The Savior Manual; and

WHEREAS training in Talk About The Savior has stimulated the beginning of many new lay evangelism efforts throughout the Synod; and

WHEREAS the number of members who sow the precious seed of the Gospel has been increased; and

WHEREAS we know that this seed will not return void; therefore be it

Resolved, a) That we commend the Commission on Evangelism for their efforts; and be it further

Resolved, b) That we encourage them to expand their efforts in accordance with their assignments; and be it finally

Resolved, c) That we pray God to bless the efforts of the members of our Synod in sharing His Word. *Adopted*

## II. AN APPRAISAL OF THE PRESENT

### A. Criticism and Problems

In his Editor's Preface of David Watson's I Believe in Evangelism, Michael Green could have been describing at least some areas of our WELS when he wrote:

Evangelism is still in many quarters of the church considered a dirty word. It has the sniff of proselytising about it, of big meetings and famous but perhaps simplistic and slick preachers. It is suggestive of illicit psychological pressure, and if it has a particularly notable impact, of mass hysteria. And yet . . . does not evangelism mean the spreading of good news? . . . Evangelism is basically a matter of truth . . . If it is (good news and truth), then it is not only permissible for a Christian to spread such good news; it is incumbent upon him.<sup>13</sup>

It is no secret that some of our fellow members in the WELS have some serious reservations and grave misgivings about the way evangelism is to be understood and practiced in our church body. The objections that come to the attention of our Commission on Evangelism, directly or indirectly, are varied. A speaker at a teachers' convention expressed the wish that a wooden stake be driven through the feeble heart of TAS, our Commission's simple Law-Gospel training tool for lay witnesses. However, this essayist also leveled heavy salvos against other organized programs and what he sees as a burgeoning bureaucracy at 3512 W. North Ave., our Synod headquarters in Milwaukee. Some would say that such unkind outbursts would best be ignored, but I believe that we must appeal to fair-minded brethren that our commission's work and opportunities for service in the fields white for harvest be weighed and judged apart from fears about our Synod becoming too centralized and top heavy with bureaucrats. We're not saying that no dangers

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<sup>13</sup>The words of Michael Green in Editor's Preface, of David Watson, I Believe in Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976)

exist in that direction. In fact, we've learned from experience that what George Sweazey says about sent-down programs is very pertinent in the WELS. Sweazey observes:

The ways of getting the tried methods into use must keep changing. These better approaches are almost never rationally designed. When a denominational committee devises a scheme that is sent out to the churches, there may be every reason to expect it to succeed. But, if it is the product of astute planning, with no sources in experience, it will probably fail. Progress in evangelism comes through what is tried out by individuals and congregations. Church executives and authors give their best help, not by recommending what ought to work, but by reporting what is working.<sup>14</sup>

In a similar vein Alvin Lindgren contends that it is par for the course for programs sent down from denominational boards at headquarters to be questioned as to their validity and effectiveness. Therefore he advises that

A board might well stand at the door with helpful resources and knock gently, rather than kicking the door down and demanding, "Do this now!"<sup>15</sup>

The Commission on Evangelism along with the other boards, commissions, and committees of WELS would be well-advised to take the above words of Sweazey and Lindgren to heart. Many of the complaints in our circles about bureaucracy and over-centralization would be stilled if we remember that we are service agencies organized by the Synod to give help to our people, our pastors and teachers. We dare not be dictators, demanding that every congregation adopt the program we have developed.

Much more serious than the aforementioned problem is the criticism that has been directed against WELS evangelism in the field of doctrine. In Fall 1977 a deeply concerned pastor wrote and distributed throughout one of our districts a paper with the challenging, provocative title:

<sup>14</sup>George E. Sweazey, Effective Evangelism (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1953 original copyright, revised edition 1976) p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Alvin J. Lindgren, Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration (Nashville & New York, Abingdon Press, 1965) p. 260.

Why TAS (Talk about the Savior) - type Evangelism Is Contrary to the

Gospel. Although this brother was unable to make his case stick in his

district's pastoral conference, we should be grateful for his concern for

pure doctrine and we should welcome criticism that is constructive and

accompanied by Christian charity. For serious dangers do exist where doc-

trine is concerned in evangelism. It is extremely difficult to find evan-

gelism-related books and periodicals that pass the Scriptural test of Luth-

eran orthodoxy. We who serve on the Commission on Evangelism run the very

real risk of inadvertently adopting Reformed or decision-type theology and

terminology due to our frequent exposure to that kind of evangelism liter-

ature. And that's about the only kind being published. If congregational

evangelism committees proliferate throughout our synod as we hope they do,

there will be some problems without question and pastors will be challenged

to keep their lay witnesses doctrinally sound. Again and again in evangelism

books we encounter unscriptural ideas like the one expressed by David Watson:

. . . even the word "conversion" speaks primarily of man's action: we must turn to Christ and help others to turn to Christ. . . . In every New Testament reference, "to convert" or "to turn" is something that we must do; it is man's responsibility.<sup>16</sup>

Our people watch Billy Graham crusades on T.V. and they need to be

reminded that his decision for Christ theology like David Watson's idea of

conversion is far removed from the Lutheran justification by faith doctrine

revealed in the Scriptures. It may not be easy to prepare lay witnesses

to recognize these doctrinal differences, but it is imperative and will be

profitable for those laypeople as they grow in the knowledge of God's truth.

We need to help our people see that most modern-day Protestant beliefs, even

in so-called conservative or evangelical circles, on matters like conversion

<sup>16</sup> Watson, I Believe in Evangelism, p. 175.

and faith have more in common with Roman Catholicism than with our orthodox Lutheran faith. This fact was brought home very forcefully to me in a book by a Jesuit, Father Charles W. Dullea, who assessed the life and ministry of Billy Graham. This Roman scholar, a superior of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, describes faith in typical Roman terms as "obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God,"<sup>17</sup> and as "a personal engagement, an encounter, a continuing act of loyalty and self-commitment offered by man to God. . ."<sup>18</sup> As he offers that unscriptural definition of faith, so far removed from Luther's "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord nor come to Him. . ." found in the Reformer's explanation of the Apostles' Creed's Third Article, Dullea concludes that ". . . on the question of faith, which for Graham is an essential element of conversion, we (Roman Catholic teachers and Graham) also are in substantial and general agreement. . . . In fact, Graham's idea of faith is in the mainstream of contemporary Catholic thought and agrees with what has been authoritatively proposed by the Church's magisterium."<sup>19</sup>

It's possible, of course, that Graham would not agree with Dullea's assessment of his doctrine of faith, but we Lutherans surely do see the similarity of belief and it drives home to us the dangers of inadvertently imbibing of various errors when one delves into modern-day evangelism literature, most of which is written by people who could hardly be classified as orthodox Lutheran.

#### B. The Priesthood of All Believers

Any appraisal of the present state of affairs in evangelism surely

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<sup>17</sup>Charles W. Dullea, S.J., A Catholic Looks at Billy Graham (New York: Paulist Press, 1973) p. 137

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. <sup>19</sup>Ibid., pps. 136, 137.

must take note of the rising consciousness of the importance of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, of the fact that much more could be done to put this solid Scriptural doctrine into practice, and that our laypeople, as priests of God, offer exciting potential and tremendous possibilities to expand our Christian witness to places and people not readily accessible to our pastors. In the 30 April 1978 issue of the Northwestern Lutheran, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary student Jonathan Rupprecht, reporting on the 19th annual Mission Seminar at the Seminary which focused on the topic: "With Many Hands, With Many Voices - The Universal Priesthood in Missions," described the interest in this subject and offered some reasons for it: "Maybe it has some connection with the increasing trend toward individualism in our contemporary society; maybe it's due to the newer, more accurate translations of Ephesians 4:11,12; undoubtedly it is due to the work of the Holy Spirit: the heightened awareness of the role of the laity in the church, the renewed stress on the priesthood of all believers that has become evident in the church today, including our own Synod."

Skeptics may see this stress on the universal priesthood as a passing fad, as much ado about nothing, similar to the ballyhoo that went before the Key '73 bust. History will tell what long-term effects this current emphasis will have, but at the present, like many past movements in the church, it is attracting not only avid support, but also resistance and opposition. In the 6 March 1978 issue of his Christian News weekly, editor Herman Otten, in reaction to a 6 March 1978 Newsweek article describing prayer groups, house churches, and other religious communities where laypeople worship and minister to each other without benefit of clergy, was prompted to pen an editorial entitled: "Stop the Rising Tide of Anti-Clericalism." Otten contends that the pendulum has swung too far and that the vital rightful role of called pastors is being jeopardized by uppity laypeople who feel they can get closer to God outside the organized church

and without any help from professional clergy.

Frankly, I don't see any rising tide of anti-clericalism in our church. In the face of widespread lay apathy and inertia I believe the pendulum still stands way over in the position where most people in our Synod see ministry as the province and responsibility of ordained fulltime pastors and that most do not yet recognize what joys and privileges are available to lay witnesses who have been trained to minister to lost souls with their testimony to the truth of the Gospel.

I don't believe the laypeople in WELS are that much different from the laity who participated in a survey conducted by the Lutheran Church in America research and planning office. The 13 March 1978 issue of Christian News reported the results of this survey of 4,331 laypeople of whom 2,379 returned questionnaires relating primarily to the subject of evangelism. Although we are confident that our WELS laity would be more in line with the Scriptures on matters such as unionism and theological liberalism than the laity of the LCA, I doubt, though I admittedly have no way to prove my opinion except on the basis of my experience in a local congregation and several years of service on the Commission on Evangelism, that the reactions and replies of our WELS laypeople would differ in any significant degree from the following answers reported in that Christian News article:

Asked if they would accept their pastor's request that they visit three non-church persons or families in their neighborhood to talk about their congregation, 18.6 per cent said they would "accept eagerly," 33.2 per cent would "accept with some reservation," 18.3 per cent said they would accept though they would "prefer not being asked," 16.5 per cent said they were "not sure" how they would respond and 12.2 per cent said they would "try to find a way to" or "would definitely" say no.

Those who would not accept with reservations were asked their reasons. About half each said they are not "comfortable talking with strangers" and/or are "uncomfortable talking about the church with persons I don't know." The next most popular reasons were "fear that such a visit would lead to discussions of faith or the Bible and I don't feel comfortable or capable of discussing these issues" (43 per cent) and "I wouldn't like being visited myself by people sent by a pastor" (42 per cent).

Reasons cited by 25-30 per cent of the sample were "such visits are really the pastor's job" (29 per cent); "I don't think this is the way to approach people about the church" (27 per cent); "I am not active in the congregation and as a result not well informed about it" (26 per cent), and "I would not have the time" (25 per cent).

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Asked a similar question about visiting to "tell about your faith and about the meaning of the gospel in your life," 11.1 per cent said they would accept such a pastoral request "eagerly." About a quarter said they would accept "with some reservation" and 15.9 per cent said they would accept "although I would prefer not being asked." Unsure of their response were 16.5 per cent, while 27.4 per cent said they would "try to find a way to" or "would definitely" say no.

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The 44 per cent who said they would not make such a call or who were not sure how they would respond were asked why.

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Cited by 68 per cent was the feeling that they could not "communicate very well what the gospel means to me" or the feeling that "I was imposing my beliefs on others."

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"I don't feel I could explain my faith to others" and "I would be shy about talking to others about my faith" were each cited by 63 per cent; 56 per cent "don't think this is the way to approach people with the gospel" and 49 per cent "don't feel I understand Lutheran teachings well enough." A quarter said "talking about religion and faith is really the pastor's job."

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The above survey results and replies are not reflective, in my opinion, of a group of Christian people who are as conscious as they should be of their responsibility and high privilege as priests of God. When it is obvious that many thousands of Lutherans, also in our WELS, sincerely believe that "talking about religion and faith is really the pastor's job" or must sheepishly admit that "I don't feel I could explain my faith to others" and "I would be shy about talking to others about my faith," we pastors surely must prayerfully review the kind of job we're doing as equippers of the saints for works of service and ask ourselves if there isn't much more that we can do to help our people see their rightful role as priests and to prepare them to carry out the kind of courageous, uncompromising Christian witnessing which the Lord expects from every believer according to Acts 1:8.

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In this connection I call to your attention some statistics that were published in the April 1978 WELS President's Newsletter. Most of the figures made available by Synod Statistician, Pastor David Worgull, were encouraging, reflecting continued God-given growth and God-pleasing expansion for our church body. Comparing the statistics for 1976 and 1977:

	1977	1976		1977	1976
Congregations	1,105	1,089	Day Schools	330	312
Parish Pastors	912	885	Day School Enroll.	29,710	29,010
Baptized Members	402,573	400,201	Teachers: Men	527	507
Confirmed Members	302,687	298,614	Teachers: Women	842	793
Children Baptized	8,300	7,811	S.S. Pupils	* 43,444	45,286
Adults Baptized	* 551	615	V.B.S.	* 36,635	37,064
Children Confirmed	* 7,424	7,565	Bible Class	22,366	21,127
Adults Confirmed	* 2,946	3,072	Synod Budget p.c.Av.	\$27.96	\$25.91
Affirmation of Faith*	4,265	4,617	Contributions, all purposes	\$185.91	\$171.85

we note that in 12 of the 18 categories there were modest increases, but in the remaining 6 marked with an asterisk, there were slight decreases. When I checked the accuracy of the statistics with our WELS Stewardship Counselor, Pastor James Schaefer, and asked him if he saw any message in those numbers, he wisely observed that figures for just two years do not reveal all that much and that not too much should be read into such slight decreases. Nevertheless, I can't shake the idea that a truly priesthood of all believers-conscious church body with more than 400,000 members ought to be adding many more than 3,000 adult confirmands in a given year, and should not be falling behind, even ever so slightly, in that key category of church life.

John Stott has written that

. . . the traditional image of the local church is of an overworked pastor, assisted perhaps by a small nucleus of dedicated workers, while the majority of members make little or no contribution to the church's life and work. It conjures up the picture rather of a bus (one driver, many drowsy passengers) than of a body (all members active, each contributing a particular activity to the health and effectiveness of the whole).

It seems to me that the traditional (bus metaphor) image of the church is the rule rather than the exception in our WELS and that the body picture of the church with all members fully conscious of and putting into practice

the Scriptural principle of the priesthood of all believers needs to be emphasized. If that is done and the average WELS layperson comes to recognize his priestly responsibilities and privileges, specifically in the area of personal evangelism, I'm confident that the above statistics for adult baptisms and confirmations will show steady, even dramatic improvement.

As with so many matters in the church there is a need for balance and moderation when we consider the universal priesthood doctrine. In his Popular Commentary of the Bible Paul Kretzmann included the following helpful comments on this subject:

. . . Under normal conditions, the public administration of the means of grace, preaching before the assembled congregation, instructing the catechumens and other inquirers after the truth, performing the work of taking heed to the entire congregation, administering the Sacraments, publicly and privately, is the work of the minister, or pastor, whom the congregation calls. On the other hand, this office does not abolish the general priesthood of the members of the congregation; for it is they that put men into office as preachers and teachers, it is they who watch over the pure proclamation of the Word of God, it is they who in time of need discharge the duties of the office freely and gladly. If these facts are kept in mind there will be neither presumption on the part of the church-members nor pride on the part of the pastors.

Christians must ever be conscious of their rights and privileges as spiritual priests, but also of the obligations which rest upon them as holders of this wonderful priesthood. Their sacrifices will be brought with a cheerful heart, their prayers will be made with all fervor and confidence, they will discharge the duties of their office at home, in their ordinary intercourse with men, publicly, when there is need and they do not become busybodies in other men's matters. They will watch over the doctrine which is taught by their pastors, they will apply the doctrine for comfort, for admonition, for rebuke, and, in extreme cases, for excommunication. They will make it their business to extend the kingdom of God, not only in the midst of their own congregation, but also elsewhere, wherever the Lord opens doors to the preaching of the Gospel. And they will, finally, show that they appreciate the honor which the Lord has conferred upon them by walking as it becomes the Gospel of Christ, conscious at all times that the priests of the most high God will naturally be the first to cause His name to be hallowed here on earth and His praise to be extolled both now and forevermore.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Paul E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible, Four Volumes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923) Vol. II, New Testament, p. 542.

## C. The Life-Lip Controversy

There are some who say that we should not lay so much stress on verbal witnessing, that it is sufficient for Christians to lead an exemplary Christian life as their mode of testimony, as a kind of non-verbal statement to society. Those who support this type of what we might call life-style evangelism make much of our Lord's words in Matt. 5:16 - "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven." I confess I have some problems with this verse, at least the way I've heard and seen it used to minimize the need for verbal witnessing.

Perhaps a brief hypothetical example will pinpoint my misgivings about the way that passage has been used. If my non-Christian, unchurched neighbor sees me leading a Christian life as the Lord Jesus enables me (John 15:5), if he observes me being kind, tenderhearted, helpful, and loving toward him, my family, friends and other neighbors will he glorify the Triune God and come to the conclusion that Jesus is the one responsible for my wonderful behavior, just on the basis of my outward life, even if I fail to say to him something such as Paul stated: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"? (Phil 4:13)

What if there's a Mormon or a member of the pseudo good work-producing Masonic lodge living on the other side of my non-Christian neighbor? Will my works done out of love for Christ impress that non-Christian so much more than the Mormon's or the Mason's deeds, if I am silent about the Savior as the real source and supplier of my goodness? Surely Paul made it clear that "faith cometh by hearing. . . the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Jesus' words in Matt. 5:16 certainly should not be bent so out of shape that we almost make Paul say that faith cometh simply by seeing a Christian's good works.

In the previous section on the priesthood of all believers we observed that there is a need for moderation and balance in considering that subject. So also in the life-lip controversy. It's not an either/or matter. 5 The Savior calls upon us Christians not only to believe and to live the faith, but also to share it verbally through our speech. Surely there will always 10 be a small minority of Christians who may be dumb or pathologically shy and therefore are truly incapable of declaring and telling the gospel due to their psychological or physiological abnormalities. At the present time, however, 15 and the aforementioned LCA survey, which documented the extreme reluctance of laypeople to witness because of alleged inability, bears this out, it seems 20 that an all too solid majority of laypeople fail to see themselves as verbal witnesses. This is most regrettable and this totally false impression, which is so damaging to any church's outreach efforts, must be corrected. The late 25 Paul Little made the following astute and balanced observations to help us resolve this life-lip controversy:

30 Jesus has called us the salt of the earth, for through our lives (as He lives in us) He causes man to thirst for Him, the living water of life. If, however, we fail to acknowledge the source of our life in Jesus Christ, we confuse them (unbelievers) and rob God of His rightful glory. The non-Christian may merely conclude that Jane or Jim is a wonderful 35 person and wish that he were, too. Until we bear witness to Christ, he won't have an inkling as to the source of the life he admires and wants.

40 Sometimes the question is asked, "Which is more important in witnessing, the life I live or the words I say?" This question throws the consistency of our lives and our verbal witness into a false antithesis. It's like asking which wing of an airplane is more important, the right or the left! Obviously both are essential and you don't have anything without both. Life and lip are inseparable in an effective witness to 45 Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, witnessing to Christ is both a way of life and a word of mouth. Unless physical or mental impediments make it impossible, Christian 50 witnessing must go beyond the way of life to a verbal explanation of it and

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<sup>22</sup>Paul E. Little, How To Give Away Your Faith (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962) p. 35.

a simple proclamation of the Gospel, in harmony with St. John's statement: "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you" (I John 1:3).

#### D. Characteristics of Growing Churches

To close out our appraisal of the present situation regarding evangelism in our Synod it would be helpful, I believe, for each participant in this convocation to compare our WELS and his own local congregation with the common characteristics of growing churches which Billy Graham's Decision magazine discovered as a result of a survey conducted over a period of several years on seventeen local churches in North America, Australia and England. David Watson lists and comments briefly on these ten points that seemed to be of special significance for healthy growth:

PRAYER. All the churches studied placed so much emphasis on prayer that it could be said that nothing of importance took place in the church life without prayer. . . .

WITNESSING. A good proportion of the congregation was actively engaged in sharing a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ with others. This was done by individual activity, through small groups, visitation and penetration teams, or in the body life of the church.

CONVERSIONS. People were actually being saved in these churches, weekly and even daily (Acts 2:47). . . . Teams of laymen and young people were leading others to Christ, not just in the neighbourhood but as far away as Hawaii, Korea and Japan.

JOY. The people liked to walk through the church doors; it was a good place to be. But it was more than a clubby atmosphere; people were talking about the Lord, telling about answers to prayer, praising God

SCRIPTURE. The entire educational programme of the church was built around the Bible. Not only did the pastors preach from Scripture, the people were learning to use it through discipleship training. The absolute authority of Scripture was accepted in every one of the churches.

PREACHING. Messages delivered from the pulpit were well prepared, Bible-based, with good outlines and effective use of illustrations. The preacher did his homework.

OUTREACH. Each church was investing heavily in national and international mission activities. Some were involved in inner-city work, some

in special ministries to the deaf, the retarded, senior citizens, vacationers on the beaches. All were budgeting up to and even beyond 50 per cent for missionary causes.

5 FAMILY LIFE. Each of the congregations cultivated a warm church family atmosphere. Even though the membership was growing by leaps and bounds, the pastoral team managed to convey the impression of ministering to a small, intimate family.

10 LEADERSHIP. The "prima donna" complex was absent from the church's leadership. A gracious reciprocal spirit permeated staff relationships and filtered through to the congregation.

15 LOVE. The most important quality common to all the churches was the spirit of love that embraced everyone who walked through the church doors, regardless of background, status, skin-colour or life-style. There were no walls or false faces; people seemed eager to bear each other's burdens. The pastors' love for the people was expressed, accepted and returned.<sup>23</sup>

20 We in the Wisconsin Synod will be uncomfortable with some of the language and terminology used in the above ten characteristics of growing churches and I even omitted a favorable reference to "healing services" which  
25 would surely raise eyebrows, if not hackles, in our circles. However, I believe these points about growing churches can serve as a helpful checklist and as a source for some constructive soul-searching. By God's grace our  
30 Synod is strong in its commitment to the inspired, inerrant Scriptures and our Seminary expects student pastors to prepare well-outlined and illustrated,  
35 Bible-based sermons. However, we should be asking ourselves how well WELS and each of our respective congregations is doing in categories like outreach,  
40 witnessing, love, joy, leadership, prayer and family life. As for me and my congregation I'm convinced there's plenty of room for improvement, under  
45 God, and I don't believe Woodlawn is that atypical compared with other WELS congregations.

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<sup>23</sup>Watson, I Believe in Evangelism pps. 153, 154.

### III. PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE STRATEGY

On the reading list for his "Evangelism in the Local Church" course Dr. Lacour included Dr. Karl Menninger's Whatever Became of Sin? I found this renowned psychiatrist's work very interesting and thought-provoking. He's a very readable writer with a real gift for simplifying complex psychiatric issues, skillfully bringing them down to the level of non-professional readers like yours truly. However, while Menninger does a commendable job, as you would expect from an experienced M.D., of diagnosing the disease (in this case, sin), his prescription for a cure is found wanting. It's nothing but warmed-over self-salvation or self-confident work-righteousness as he sums up his solution: "If we believe in sin -- as I do -- we believe in our personal responsibility for trying to correct it, and thereby saving ourselves and our world."<sup>24</sup>

The fields are truly white for Christian witnessing. Never has there been a greater need for personal evangelizing by every priest of God. For wherever we turn we find people trusting in themselves for salvation. Not only renowned, learned psychiatrists like Menninger speak of salvation as a do-it-yourself project but in this respect Americans are very much alike whether they work in a West Allis factory, on a farm in the Dakotas, or wherever. Most people are incapable of supplying the correct answer, which seems so self-evident to us grace-and God-given faith in Christ-conscious Wisconsin Synod Lutheran Christians, to the second key question used by D. James Kennedy in his Evangelism Explosion and adapted for use in our

<sup>24</sup>Karl Menninger, M.C., Whatever Became of Sin? (New York: Hawthorn books, 1973) p. 220.

TAS program: "If you were to die today and God asked you why He should let you into heaven, what would you say?" Hence there is an urgent need for us to develop some sound strategy that will increase Wisconsin Synod witnessing and personal evangelism contacts with unchurched non-Christians, particularly by our laypeople, who come in daily contact with such lost souls.

On the subject of motivation for Christian witnessing Michael Green mentioned "The scandal of Christ's particularity." We in WELS assuredly would agree with Green that

It (the above-mentioned scandal of Christ's particularity) is one of the most objectionable elements in the gospel to modern man. No doubt it was to men of the first century. (it) has always been the supreme obstacle to Christian commitment. But these early Christians believed implicitly that Jesus was the only hope for the world, the only way to God for the human race. Now if you believe that outside of Christ there is no hope, it is impossible to possess an atom of human love and kindness without being gripped with a great desire to bring men to this one way of salvation.<sup>25</sup>

On the basis of passages like John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 we Wisconsin Synod Lutherans recognize that Jesus Christ is the only hope for the world, the only way to God for us and the rest of the human race. Therefore we should be gripped with the fervent desire to tell our fellowmen about the world's one and only Savior. In that spirit I offer the following proposals for future WELS evangelism strategy. They come as a result of my reading in this field of study since my appointment to the WELS Commission on Evangelism six years ago, brainstorming with my brothers on the commission, especially Pastors David Witte and Paul Kolander, my two weeks of study at Fuller Seminary, and through the development of a keener evangelism-consciousness due to the position in which I have been asked to serve. So here goes!

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<sup>25</sup>Green, Evangelism in the Early Church p. 249

A. Seminary Training

Our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at Mequon, Wisconsin is a very fine institution for theological education with a dedicated, extremely well-qualified faculty. Six years of summer school sessions and annual attendance at the pastors' institutes offered by the seminary make me feel well-qualified to make an assessment of the kind of training that's being offered there to our candidates for the public ministry. That training is excellent. When I attended Fuller Seminary in January I was somewhat concerned about whether I would be in over my theological depth in the seminar and course that I had decided to take. That such was not the case I attribute to the solid training I've received at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. So much for the kudos which the school well deserves!

I believe that this very good Seminary can do an even better job, especially in evangelism. Although some of you may have read an article I wrote for the maiden issue (April 1977) of TELL, The Evangelism Life Line, put out under the auspices of our WELS Commission on Evangelism and edited by Pastor Ronald Roth, I'd like to repeat the following points I made in that article about areas relating to evangelism and management training (so useful for recruiting, organizing and equipping lay witnesses) where I believe the Seminary could improve its performance:

... In Everyone a Minister Oscar E. Feucht on p. 53 and p. 54 states: "The denominational seminary has (a) . . . strategic role. It can almost exclusively reflect the one-man ministry pastorate or it can teach the stance of the minister as strategist for an inreach into the congregation and for an outreach by all the people of the parish to the whole community. What image is the seminarian getting? Will the graduates develop a new generation of American Christians who carry forward a people's ministry as illustrated in the Book of Acts? . . . Seminaries have a strategic task. The priesthood of believers can be lost by a single generation of pastors who think they alone are the priests of the parish."

Similar stress on the importance of the role of seminaries in church growth has been expressed by D. James Kennedy, the Presbyterian minister

whose Evangelism Explosion (Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois c 1970) stirred up interest in personal lay evangelism in many circles, including our own WELS. In the February 4, 1977 Christianity Today Kennedy gives some practical advice on how much more could be done by seminaries in helping pastors realize that it is their responsibility not to do themselves all the various demands of ministry but to equip the saints to help with this work. Kennedy declared: "In talking with thousands of ministers over the years I have discovered that many of them feel that one of the areas in which they felt least competent after graduating from seminary is personal evangelism. The reasons for this are not difficult to find. We have discovered that personal evangelism is more 'caught than taught.' The missing link today in the teaching of personal evangelism is on-the-job training. The disciples learned from watching and listening to Christ. He called them that they should be 'with him.' Evangelism, like flying, is extremely difficult to teach in a classroom. The basic problem that most people have is fear, and only the actual experience of doing it - of evangelizing, or flying- will overcome that fear.

I have recommended to a number of theological educators a method of teaching personal evangelism that has been adopted by a dozen or so seminaries and Christian colleges. It is a program whereby a theological seminary works in harmony with one or more local churches in evangelism. Students are required to participate first as trainees and later as trainer in the evangelistic programs of the local church. This has benefits for both the church and the seminary.

I also believe that an effective course in the principles of management would be helpful for ministers, since proper management is essential to a growing church."

For the past several years our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at Mequon has cooperated fully with the WELS Commission on Evangelism to acquaint our seminary students with some of the methods and programs like TAS that provide evangelism training for our laypeople. Kennedy's emphasis on "on-the-job" training is much in place and it should not be short-changed, whether the people being trained are laypeople, seminary students, or even veteran pastors. Likewise I agree with Kennedy about the need for an effective course in the principles of management in the seminary curriculum. While we dare not go overboard in seminary training on the "practical" side of the pastor's calling at the expense of thorough study of the Scriptures in the Greek and Hebrew, a basic management course during the 3 week summer session at WLS would, I'm confident, be welcomed by many pastors who need to follow sound management principles if they are to minister effectively, especially in large, growing congregations.<sup>26</sup>

In December 1977 I received a letter from a dear brother in Christ who is serving in one of our WELS world mission fields. I don't think I'm

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<sup>26</sup>Reuel J. Schulz, "Church Growth-Worthwhile for WELS?" TELL, published thrice a year by the Commission on Evangelism - Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, April 1977, Vol. 1 No. 1, pps. 4,5.

betraying his confidence as I share with you a brief passing comment from his letter: "I have the terrible feeling that our World Mission efforts will suffer because we haven't done more in personal evangelism; and I think it will continue to suffer until we do develop a much more vigorous evangelism training program at all levels, but particularly at the Seminary." I hope that we will have some time at this convocation to consider our Seminary's role in evangelism and to pass along to the appropriate people (Board of Control, Faculty, Commission on Higher Education) some helpful suggestions and respectful recommendations.

#### B. Budgets and Staff

##### 1. On the Local Church Level

How much does the average WELS congregation allot in its budget for outreach and personal evangelism efforts? How many hours per week or per month are devoted by church staff personnel (pastors, vicars, or other paid workers) to reaching the unchurched with the Gospel? Not having conducted a scientific survey on the preceding questions, I'm not prepared to provide precise, perfectly accurate answers. I can only share my perception that here is a major part of our problem in evangelism, that it's looked upon as a peripheral part of a congregation's work and consequently receives a small amount of money, time, and manpower only after the restrooms have been painted, the parking lot has been paved and the janitor has been paid. In the WELS, it seems to me, we aren't at all accustomed to putting evangelism outreach front and center on our list of priorities, so that it shares top billing with the care and feeding of the flock already in the fold. We should spend more in money and staff time and effort seeking out those "other sheep" Jesus mentioned in John 10: 16 "which are not of this fold" and about whom He made his loving intentions crystal clear for all of us potential Christian witnesses to take to heart: "them also I must bring, and

they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Wallace E. Fisher, a liberal Lutheran Church in America minister who once mounted a high-pressure political campaign in an unsuccessful effort to capture the LCA presidency, as might be expected, takes a very pragmatic, calculating position toward the budget-staff question and evangelism. He maintains (and in spite of his dubious credentials I agree with him, on this point at least) that

Wherever a congregation pays salaries to competent full-time staff members evangelism is underway, because these professionals seek out individuals and families in the community, present the cause of Christ to them, and persuade some to join his church. More significantly, these paid professionals search out and train ten or twenty (in a few churches, several hundred) laymen who acknowledge, accept, and act on Jesus' directive to witness person-to-person in the world. A congregation's economic investment in competent leadership pays dividends in a multiple witness, clerical and lay.<sup>27</sup>

Two prominent leaders of the burgeoning Church Growth movement likewise make no bones about the need for adequate budgeting and staff to expand outreach. Donald McGavran and Winfield C. Arn share the following lessons they've learned:

After studying hundreds of churches, it is clear that few are actually structured for growth. In fact, many (churches) are structured for non-growth. They give low priority to evangelism. A simple way to discover where a church places its priority is to draw a bar-graph showing how that church spends its money. The budget is usually a good indicator as to what a church thinks is really important. A graph will usually reveal that a static church spends large amounts for salaries, maintenance, mortgages, and materials but a small amount for outreach and evangelism, especially for local evangelistic ministry. Such bar-graphs usually illustrate how little a church invests in its own growth.

Another indicator of priority for evangelism is the church staff. Who is the second staff person chosen after the pastor? A youth director? A religious education director? A music director? Each of these positions is important; but, for the church placing priority on effective evangelism, the next person on the staff should work in evangelism/church growth. When a staff person is giving 365 days a year to evangelism, the possibilities for growth increase measurably.

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<sup>27</sup>Wallace E. Fisher, Because We Have Good News (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) p. 109.

Such a staff person, if he is effective in evangelism and in enabling others, will soon have enlarged the present congregation to the place where his salary is completely underwritten by the income received from new members. This is usually not the case when the second person on the staff is a youth director or a Christian education director.

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The pastor must begin thinking about the priority of evangelism and encourage people to see for themselves what it will mean. The congregation will often discover meanings the pastor had not considered. The priority of evangelism has its basis in God's will. We must ask, "What priorities does the head of the church desire?" This is an important question to be asked by every pastor, church, and denomination.<sup>28</sup>

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A recent article in the Minister's Workshop section of Christianity Today also addressed this budget-staff issue. Pastor Charles Mylander obviously puts considerable stress on tithing, a position we do not share, but his main point is well taken that

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Every church, no matter how small, needs a multiple staff. No church can expect sustained growth if only one pastor does all the work. Jesus practiced a multiple-staff approach with the apostles. Paul used it with his team of missionaries. Yet later a one pastor, one church syndrome set in. Fortunately, that unbiblical pattern is beginning to change.

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Any discussion of adding staff members brings up the question of finances. With an all-too-tight budget, how can a church even consider adding another staff member? Since some churches are doing it, others can too. Churches with a healthy growth pattern take an enlightened step of faith. Their experience shows that a capable staff member will result in more families that tithe. In two years the additional income will underwrite his salary and an expanded program. So, church leaders trust the Lord and challenge their people to provide the finances for the initial salary.<sup>29</sup>

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## 2. On the Synod Level

For several years our Commission on Evangelism has been calling upon Synod conventions to grant us authority to call a full-time Coordinator of Evangelism. It was not the purpose of this convocation to peddle propaganda favoring this somewhat controversial position. However, I believe the subject deserves at least some consideration and possibly some discussion here

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<sup>28</sup>Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, Ten Steps to Church Growth (San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977) pps. 56,57.

<sup>29</sup>Charles Mylander, "Your Church Needs A Multiple Staff" Christianity Today March 24, 1978, p. 38.

so I'm taking it upon myself to pose a few questions and to make some observations in connection with the budget-staff issue on the Synod level.

Q. Is WELS budgeting enough for evangelism? A. It could be argued that every

5 cent received by our Synod in offerings is used for some sort of evangelism

However in this fiscal year a total of \$20,760 is actually budgeted for our

10 Commission, \$7,590 for the Executive Committee's responsibilities, such as

administration, travel, and printing of materials, and \$13,170 for the ten

15 district commissions. It can't be denied that there is a rising evangelism

consciousness in the Synod and this also is reflected in the outlay of funds,

such as the 1971 Synod Convention at Watertown, Wisconsin focusing on the

20 evangelism theme, "We Believe. . . And Therefore Speak." This convocation,

funded to the tune of \$10,000, provides further evidence of continuing inter-

est in evangelism.

25 Q. How much difference would a full-time Coordinator of Evangelism make?

A. Without getting into the man's job description which has been laid out at

30 some length in the 1975 and 1977 Synod Proceedings, I would point to the for-

ward strides that have been made in Home Missions, World Missions, Stewardship,

Special Ministries, and other departments when full-time men were called to

35 carry on their work.

Before I leave this subject I'd like to make a closing observation

40 which I hope will not be misunderstood. I do not mean to pit one portion of

our Synod work against another or to have it appear that the Commission on

45 Evangelism, or at least its co-chairman, is in competition or in bitter ri-

valry with other boards and commissions. However, it is puzzling to me, to

say the least, to see other full-time positions being approved in recent years

50 for the Board for Parish Education, for Home Missions, and for Deferred Giving

counseling. I have no quarrel with any of these offices. I believe they were

needed and have, God blessing us, been very beneficial. However, especially the post of Deferred Giving Counselor did not seem to raise any serious concern or vigorous debate, as my memory serves me, because delegates were assured that the man in that office would pay his own way, in a sense, with the bequests that his efforts would help to generate.

By now you probably see the point I'm attempting to make. In line with the final paragraph of that Christianity Today article cited above, I submit that a full-time Coordinator of Evangelism would likewise pay his own way, though perhaps in a less direct and demonstrable way than the Deferred Giving Counselor, for whom these observations intend no disrespect or derogation whatsoever. For God-pleasing offerings and contributions are generated by the Gospel and the love of Christ, the proclamation and telling of which would be vigorously promoted and facilitated on the part of the laity by a full-time Coordinator of Evangelism. I'm convinced the money that would be needed for that position would flow back in abundance with interest into our Synod coffers in accord with the Lord's promise in Prov. 3:9,10.

### C. Parish Worker Program

In the previous section we mentioned the need and desirability of adding full-time staff members to congregations to extend evangelistic outreach. Such statements may strike some people as unrealistic and downright foolish as we face a critical shortage of pastors which already is hampering some aspects of our work and looms even larger in the future. However, do these evangelists have to be ordained pastors? In my own congregation I know of a half a dozen or more laymen who could be very capable full-time evangelists and could spearhead an organized program of Gospel outreach in our community with the assistance of spare-time lay witnesses. With a pastor close at hand for training, equipping, guidance, consultation and close

supervision, at least initially, such lay evangelists could blanket a congregation's area of responsibility to seek out the unchurched and through canvassing and witnessing could cultivate and recruit prospects for Sunday school, V.B.S., Christian day school, and especially the pastor's Bible information course. In some of our world mission fields full-time evangelists are being used in a kind of mid-position between the laity and thoroughly-trained ordained clergymen. Couldn't such an arrangement bring blessings to our U.S. congregations as well?

In this connection I can inform you of a meeting that took place here at Wisconsin Lutheran College on 10 March 1978. The meeting was called by President Gary Greenfield of WLC to explore, in a very preliminary way, the possibility of offering a two year college level parish worker program at this school. This brain-storming session, attended by a Seminary professor, a WLC student, a WELS layperson, two pastors, and President Greenfield, came up with no firm recommendations. Following, however, are a few of the points and questions that were discussed:

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with 6,000 congregations enrolls approximately 30 students at Concordia College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and 50 students (most are there to learn church secretary skills) at St. John's in Winfield, Kansas each year in their lay training programs. Could a church body of our size (1100+ congregations) generate enough interest and support to make a parish worker training program feasible?

There are a variety of ways in which lay people can serve the Church. This curriculum could help develop capable Christian lay leaders. Areas in which they might serve are youth work, teacher aides, pastoral assistants, evangelism coordinators in local churches, business administrators (either for large congregations or groupings of smaller churches), Sunday school and V.B.S. leaders, musical directors, church secretaries.

Graduates of the program as recipients of the Associate of Arts Degree might serve as unpaid volunteers in their spare time, as paid part-time parish workers, or they could be employed by the respective congregations as full-time parish workers.

Unresolved questions: Would WLC be obligated to provide placement services for parish worker graduates? Should a parish worker program be controlled by our WELS with a "call committee" making assignments?

It is no secret that two non-Christian cults in our country, the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, make very effective use of their rank and file members to peddle their spiritually poisonous teachings across the U.S.A. and around the world. Who of us here has not been visited by zealous, well-scrubbed young Mormons who carry on the custom of contributing a year or two of their lives to the cause of communicating the doctrines diabolically dreamed up by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and other leaders of the Latter Day Saints? Who of us here has not had well-programmed, robot-like Watch-tower peddlers and propagandists at our doors scores of times? Its easy to dismiss the vigorous activity of these errorists as work-righteous fanaticism, to classify them as psychopathic personalities who thrive on persecution, who are really secretly delighted when people slam doors in their face, thus enabling them to see themselves as martyrs, as a remnant people courageously suffering ridicule and rejection by the heathen majority, all for Jehovah or the Twelve Apostles in Salt Lake City. However, those seemingly omnipresent Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses ought to spur us on to greater witnessing efforts. By God's grace, we have pure truth, the saving Gospel, to share with our fellowmen. Should we show less zeal, dedication and organization than those aggressive agents of Satanic error? What blessings would result if a parish worker program caught on in our circles and it became a common practice for our college-age young people to contribute a year or two of their lives to the cause of communicating Christ compassionately with their respective God-given talents! What blessings would result if the middle-aged or retirees in our Synod would enter such a program to pursue a second career, dedicated to the sharing of the Gospel! We have no right to deprive our people of the joys of witnessing by failing to offer training and equipping programs that could prepare them for effective evangelism outreach. I believe a parish worker program, such as that discussed

at WLC, has great potential for tapping the now largely latent and dormant God-given witnessing talents of our laity.

#### D. Class II Leaders.

In their very helpful book cited earlier, Ten Steps to Church Growth McGavran and Arn make a point that should be strongly emphasized in most of our WELS congregations. They put church leaders in five classes and zero in on category II as follows:

. . . meaningful involvement of laity in outreach, according to their unique God-given gifts, is necessary for healthy church growth. Men, women, and youth must be helped to see the many ways in which they can evangelize. The concept of classes of leaders will go far toward getting Christians involved in evangelism. Here is a summation of the concept.

Class I Leaders - members whose energies are used primarily in the service of existing Christians.

Class II Leaders - members whose energies are primarily directed to serving and evangelizing non-Christians in their ministry area in an effort to bring them into the Body of Christ.

Class III Leaders - volunteer or partially paid leaders of evangelistic Bible study groups, new fellowships, chapels or small churches.

Class IV Leaders - full-time paid professional staff.

Class V Leaders - denominational or interdenominational leaders.

The key to dynamic, effective church growth is in recruiting, training, and utilizing Class II leaders.

A bar graph showing actual numbers of Class I and Class II leaders in the congregation helps many churches perceive that their energies, efforts, and finances are devoured in maintaining the church and that most of their leaders are Class I's. Recruiting Class II's then becomes reasonable and necessary.

Developing and structuring Class II leaders into the church program begins in the new members' class. These new believers are helped to discern the Body and to identify their gifts and abilities within the Body. Here they discover that all Christians are witnesses. They are taught to use their gifts in outreach ministry.

Structuring means training Class II leaders and providing various programs and opportunities for them. People involved in outreach ministry regularly meet together for encouragement and coordination, much as other boards and committees meet for their business.

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Class II leaders should be recruited, trained, and deployed. They should be recognized and appreciated for their ministry. In a growing church, Class II leaders are the task force reaching those who have yet to believe.<sup>30</sup>

The same co-authors, McGavran and Arn, stress that congregations should make a self-study to determine how their lay leadership talent and time are being utilized. From their experience they observe that

A church's use of time correlates significantly with its pattern of growth. Lay leaders have only so much time to devote to the work of Christ and the church. Christians will, of course, witness on their jobs; yet for specific work after hours there is only so much consecrated time available. Lay leaders have jobs, homes, families, and other responsibilities. Hence, available time needs to be used wisely and well. A good beginning would be to measure the number of meetings and hours in a typical church month. The result would probably reveal that 90 per cent or more of the available time turned inward and a small fraction turned outward toward non-Christians in the community.

If a church will devote the same number of hours and people to outreach as it devotes to its members, in one year that church will see significant growth.

Investing talent in outreach is a second important resource in structuring for growth. There is a tendency for congregations to put their best leaders and most talented members on boards and committees which turn inward toward maintaining the existing structures. The result is that the church may grow internally but fail to grow in membership.<sup>31</sup>

The March/Easter 1978 issue of the periodical, The Milwaukee Lutheran, reported on a survey in suburban Houston to find out what motivated people to choose the particular church where they were members. These were the results:

12% chose their church because of prior denominational affiliation; 8% on the basis of the architectural beauty of the structure; 3% because of the person in the pulpit; 18% because of convenience of location; 21% because there were people in the congregation they respected. A large predominant 37% were influenced by the fact that friends and neighbors took an interest in them and invited them.

While we may hesitate to describe it as evangelism strategy, we

<sup>30</sup> McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps to Church Growth pps. 108, 109.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 112.

surely should be more sensitive to the need in WELS for many more Class II  
 leaders in our respective congregations, lay leaders who will be outreach-  
 oriented, keenly evangelism conscious, who will be the kind of warm friends  
 5 and outgoing neighbors who will take an interest in the unchurched, to invite  
 them to worship, and to urge, train and inspire others in their congregation  
 10 to do the same. In recent years there has been much talk about "relational"  
 evangelism. In his revised book D. James Kennedy defines this type of  
 evangelism as follows:

15 As the phrase relational evangelism is used here, it means using ex-  
 isting relationships and developing new ones as channels through which  
 to communicate the message that God has done all that is necessary to  
 reestablish man in a right relationship with himself and his people.

20 Every human being is the center of a network of relationships. For  
 example, consider yourself. You were born into a family and thus are  
 related to your mother and father, brothers and sisters, grandparents,  
 25 aunts and uncles, cousins, nephews, and nieces. When you marry, this  
 network is enlarged. Not only would you be related to your new hus-  
 band or wife and the children and possibly grandchildren that will come  
 from your union. Your marriage also brings you into your marriage part-  
 ner's family. You then have a whole network of inlaws.

30 Many relationships develop from your work. You are an employer or  
 an employee. A number of people are your fellow workers.

35 When you select a place to live, the residence comes with a set of  
 neighbors.

Over the years, you develop some special friendships.

40 When God the Son became a man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, he  
 entered in to most of the same relationships that you and everyone else  
 has. Mary was his mother. Joseph was his stepfather. He had brothers  
 and sisters, cousins and uncles. He worked in the carpenter shop in  
 Nazareth. He, too, developed special friendships. He loved his family.  
 45 Even as he died on the cross he made arrangements for John, his special  
 friend, to take care of his mother. While Jesus loved his earthly family  
 and friends, he was most concerned that they be in God's heavenly family.

50 God desires to use your relationships as bridges to reach those close to  
 you so that they be brought into His forever family. You are the salt  
 of the earth and the light of the world. Salt prevents corruption. It  
 makes one thirsty. Light helps people see where they are going. God  
 wants to use your life to show others the way, to cause others to thirst  
 for Him, to add taste to life and curtail the corruption of sin that is  
 in this world.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup>D. James Kennedy, Evangelism Explosion (Wheaton: Tyndale House  
 Publishers, Revised Edition, 1977) p. 199.

Surely a key part of our future strategy in evangelism should be to do away with attitudes that foster isolationism, frosty aloofness, fear and suspicion of outsiders. Without compromising our Scriptural standards or fellowship principles in any way we should seek to develop more Class II leaders in our churches who will risk effusive friendliness toward all whom they meet even if there are always some who seem to prefer lonely anonymity and shy away from close fellowship relationships.

#### E. Self-Study in Evangelism

Several years ago it seemed to be "the thing to do" for congregations to conduct self-study programs. Surely there is a danger that a church can devote much time and energy to such efforts with meagre or no apparent results. However, there seems to be a much greater danger also in our circles, to settle into ruts, to slip into slavery to hoary tradition, and to carry on activities out of force of habit, many of which have little to do with the church's real purpose. McGavran and Arn recommend that church leaders

Do not hesitate to look at groups which have existed for a long time and measure their productivity. If they prove to be ineffective, they should consider disbanding. . . . Establish a system of accountability with a mandate from the board and pastor to determine whether or not a program is helping the church to reach out and grow. A constant review of the various activities of the church, from the sermon to the cradle roll, could be most productive. This technique is necessary. Business firms take inventory, look at their progress, eliminate unproductive areas, and recycle for greater effectiveness. The church can use this management technique to good advantage.<sup>33</sup>

At the present time the congregation I serve is in the midst of a self-study on the basis of materials published by Parish Leadership Seminars of Indianapolis. The author of these booklets, Organizing around the Great Commission and Training and Equipping the Saints, copies of which have been purchased for eighteen of our church officers for

<sup>33</sup>McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps to Church Growth pps. 111,112.

minutes of study and discussion at our meetings, is Rev. Donald A. Abdon,  
 a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod clergyman. Prior to the study of the above  
 booklets, we also went through Oscar Feucht's Everyone a Minister, a 1974  
 5 paperback put out by the Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. I highly  
 recommend such a self-study, either with the above materials or similar  
 10 books that will cause the pastors and lay leaders of our WELS churches to  
 prayerfully consider our true purpose, to review our goals, objectives and  
 policies and to bring them back into line with the Lord's will for His church  
 15 where such correction or redirection is called for.

A church's performance in outreach and personal evangelism ought to  
 20 be a key topic in any self-study. I came across the following self-study  
 tool for evangelism in Local Church Planning Manual and include it here for  
 your consideration and possible future use:

#### EVANGELISM

1. Who is responsible for planning the evangelism program in your church?
- 30 2. How many persons were baptized by your church during each of the past  
 five years?
3. Do you feel your church wants to grow numerically? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
- 35 4. How does your church discover prospective new members?
5. Who is responsible to record the names and addresses of persons who  
 visit your church? What kind of follow-up is made on visitors?
- 40 6. What have been the main sources of new members over the past five  
 years? (such as church school, visitation evangelism, etc.)
7. What proportion of the persons who joined your church during the past  
 45 two years were related to persons who were already church members?  
 (such as children of members, etc.)
8. If you see a pattern in your answers to questions 6 and 7, does the  
 pattern suggest a need for new styles of evangelism or simply more of  
 what you are now doing? \_\_\_ New styles \_\_\_ More of what we are doing
- 50 9. Does your church use evangelism resources produced by your denomination?  
 \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
 If "yes", what contributions have these resources made to your church?

10. What are your congregation's strengths in evangelism? List.
11. How well does your evangelism program make use of these strengths?  
(For instance, if you have members with skills in visitation, do you provide opportunities for them to use such skills?) 5
12. How does your church help its members discover their evangelistic strengths, develop new skills, and use them?
13. What are your congregation's weaknesses in evangelism? List. 10
14. Do you feel all church boards and committees have a common responsibility for evangelism?  Yes  No
- In terms of carrying out its responsibility for evangelism, what is the relationship between your board (or committee) and the others in your church? 15
15. Have you ever discussed with other program units the implications of evangelism for their work?  Yes  No If not, do you feel you should?  Yes  No If "yes," when could this begin? 20
- NOTE: The Bible talks about *witness* in three arenas:
1. Service (diakonia) - Matthew 20:26
  2. Fellowship (koinonia) - Ephesians 4
  3. Proclamation (kerygma) - Mark 1:14-15; 16:15 25
    - 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
    - 2 Corinthians 4:5
    - 2 Timothy 4:1-2
16. List which of these arenas your church is using in its ministry of evangelism. 30
17. How is your church serving your community?
18. How is your church providing fellowship opportunities for your community? 35
19. How is your church proclaiming the gospel to your community?
20. What plan do you follow to discover new residents in your community? 40
21. How long has it been since your church participated in a community-wide religious census? Is one needed in your community now?  
 Yes  No 45
22. What image do you feel your community has about your church? How do you know what this image is?
23. Does your community feel that your church really cares about it?  
 yes  no. Does it?  Yes  No How can you tell? 50

24. In reference to fellowship, how do the members of your congregation support or minister to one another?

25. What kinds of experiences does your church provide for members:

- to know each other? - to trust each other? - to serve each other?

26. Regarding "proclamation," by what means does your church tell the story of what God is doing in the world through Jesus Christ?

27. How often (in the last five years) have you provided training for visitation evangelism? What Training methods have you used?

28. Do you hold evangelism services or preaching mission annually?

Yes  No

29. Write below any questions, suggestions, or comments you want to give to the Planning Task Force about your program of evangelism.<sup>34</sup>

The whole Local Church Planning Manual, put out by the American Baptists, is fairly expensive (\$13.50), but it would also serve as a helpful self-study tool since much of the manual is devoted to goal development and detailed directions for congregations to come up with precise definitions of their purpose.

#### F. The Denomination's Role

In his Effective Evangelism, published originally in 1953 and revised in a paperback version in 1976, George E. Sweazey closes out the final chapter of his book on Organizing for Evangelism with some recommendations concerning the role that a denominational committee (in our case, the Commission on Evangelism) should play in fostering and promoting effective evangelism. He makes the following observations, not all of which would be applicable to our WELS situation:

The Communion of Saints can be experienced as a communion of labor - the joining of a vast number of hands and minds and souls in some great enterprise for God. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is communicated not only vertically but horizontally, as the insights which have been granted to one congregation are shared with all.

<sup>34</sup>Richard E. Rusbult, Richard K. Gladden and Norman M. Green, Jr., Local Church Planning Manual (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1977) pps. 113-116.

A denomination's evangelistic organization is a clearinghouse through which the best ideas and methods which have been worked out anywhere are made available. Through its employed leaders and its area and district evangelism committees a vast amount of help can be transmitted to the local churches. Its schools and conferences provide in-service training for ministers in a field in which few have a chance to become expert. It educates the constantly changing lay leaders. It supplies printed and audio-visual tools for evangelism. 5

A denominational evangelistic program can stir all the congregations with the sense of being part of a glorious nation-wide or world-wide movement. Those who would dismiss their pastor's suggestions as impractical will accept those same proposals when the authority of the whole denomination is behind them. Slow-moving churches, which would never by themselves get around to setting the dates or making the plans for an evangelistic effort, may do so when the dates and plans are given to them through a co-operative program. 10 15

Though there may sometimes be reason to suspect that a highly publicized program has had its source more in official activism than in prophetic vision, it always deserves a thoughtful appraisal before it is rejected. The composite wisdom of a denomination's leaders is usually worth considering. Such a program usually offers new inspiration and better methods for doing what, one way or another, has to be done. 20

The evangelistic agencies of the denominations share each others' literature and leaders and ideas. The professors of evangelism from theological seminaries come together annually to keep abreast of scholarly and practical developments. Our shrinking earth makes the winning of people to Christ increasingly an international enterprise, with inspirations and methods going from one land to another. Today's evangelism is worldwide. In it the churches find the reality of the universal church as they labor together to make disciples of all nations and experience together the truth of the promise, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.'<sup>35</sup> 25 30

#### G. The Pastor's Role 35

Much more important than any denominational activity or the role of an evangelism commission is the role of the individual parish pastor in the practice of lay evangelism. The pastor is the key man, especially in our church body with its long-standing tradition of clergy dominance. If the pastor drags his heels in evangelism, it is extremely difficult, to say the least, if not impossible for evangelism-conscious laypeople in that pastor's congregation to carry out their priestly function of personally witnessing to lost souls. Accordingly, we respectfully call upon every pastor in our 40 45 50

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<sup>35</sup>George E. Sweazey, Effective Evangelism (New York: Harper & Row, publishers, revised paperback edition 1976) pp s. 275-276.

Synod to consider his call to be a discipler, an equipper, to carry out what has been called a ministry of modeling.

5 On the ninth day of my two week session at Fuller Seminary last January Professor Munger, a veteran Presbyterian minister, described his long-time custom when he served in the parish. He described it as walking people into ministry and what he did sounds very similar to our Savior's methodology, described so well by Robert E. Coleman in The Master Plan of Evangelism.  
 10 Munger stressed that in discipling or the ministry of modeling we pastors must avoid the impression of being superior. Indeed, we should see the lay-  
 15 person as an equal, as a colleague, and even as our teacher because laypeople can instruct us about the mind, values, and frame of reference of the lay-  
 20 people with whom they work and associate every day, in a way that we in the clergy cannot fully share. Munger described the following five steps which  
 25 would bring bountiful blessings if our WELS pastors would put them into consistent practice for personal evangelism purposes:

- 30 1. I (pastor) do it; they (laypeople) watch.
2. I (pastor) do it; they (laypeople) help.
3. They do it; I help.
4. They do it; I watch.
5. They do it; Someone else watches. . . and so on.

35 There we have a simple ministry of modeling and multiplication of witnesses that will, God blessing our Gospel testimony, win many precious  
 40 souls to Christ.

#### H. The Layperson's Role

45 We referred in the previous section to the key position of the pastor in implementing personal evangelism activity in our church body. However, it is a key position, not in the sense that he will do all or even most  
 50 of the witnessing. Rather he is the key man as he recognizes the potential of our WELS laypeople and organizes programs to train and equip them for witnessing, to tap and develop their God-given zeal and talents for talking

about the Savior. For in so many situations lay witnessing is far more effective and convincing with unchurched people than the witnessing of the clergy, though a pastor's testimony may sound more eloquent, easy, professional and polished. We agree with Wallace Fisher that "evangelistic work must be carried on primarily by the laity,"<sup>36</sup> and that "the proclamation of the Word (must) be viewed increasingly as a function of ministry to be exercised by the laity as well as the clergy."<sup>37</sup>

Fisher also cuts close to home with the following comment about a common attitude he has encountered in confessional churches:

. . . the casual attitude in confessional churches to regard the pulpit ("professional" preachers) and the church school (a little band of lay teachers - mostly female) as being adequate to expand the kingdom of God aborts personal evangelism.<sup>38</sup>

#### I. Methods

Which is the best way to evangelize? This continues to be a somewhat controversial question in our WELS where some prefer the "Talk about the Savior" tool, others favor a "cleaned-up" Kennedy "Evangelism Explosion" method sans Reformed theology, called "Soldiers of the Cross" prepared and compiled by Pastor-Missionary Gary Kirschke, while still others favor the "Share the Grace of Our Savior" approach written by Pastor Daniel Deutschlander which was approved and made available by the Dakota-Montana District Commission on Evangelism. Now some may wonder why we can't get our act together and adopt one method that can be used uniformly throughout the Synod. However, we see this variety in methodology, not only as inevitable in our highly individualistic church body, but also as desirable. Although the heart of any evangelism approach should contain a basic Law-Gospel presentation, there should be considerable room for variation and adaptation to take into account changing times, attitudes, and the kinds of people being contacted.

<sup>36</sup>Fisher, Because We Have Good News, p. 17

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 99. <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

Just recently I came across an article by Rev. Tom Wolf, Senior pastor of The Church on Brady in Los Angeles. Puzzled by the apparent contradiction posed by Acts 20:20 where Paul declared: "I did not shrink from teaching you publicly and from house to house" and Jesus' directive in Luke 10:7 - "Do not go from house to house," he has come up with what he calls OIKOS evangelism. Wolf says that "an OIKOS is a social system composed of those related to each other through common ties and tasks"<sup>39</sup> and he contends that

The apostolic church used the interlocking social systems of common kinship/community/interest as the backbone for communicating the Gospel. The basic thrust of New Testament evangelism was not individual evangelism, it was not mass evangelism, and it was definitely not child evangelism. The normative pattern of evangelism in the early church was OIKOS EVANGELISM. . . . Oikos evangelism is the God-given and God-ordained means for naturally sharing our supernatural message. The early church spread through oikos evangelism - evangelizing family members who saw the old sinner became the new saint; sharing with the neighbor who questioned how such a difference had come over his old friend; and reaching the guys in the local trade union or the oikos that played tennis together. . . . If oikos evangelism is God's key to the natural and rapid spread of the Good News, then life transformation is the key to oikos penetration and persuasion.<sup>40</sup>

The debate about evangelism methods is not likely to diminish or die out. However, such debate and disagreement, even in our WELS, need not be demoralizing or destructive to the cause of true evangelism if we can agree with Wallace Fisher that while there is "no 'best' way to evangelize except the way that works, it is unlikely that any 'way' will work unless a corps of lay evangelists is recruited, instructed, motivated, guided, and encouraged to do evangelistic work."<sup>41</sup>

How much should we expect this convocation to accomplish? Is this a good method to promote the cause of evangelism? Here the comment of David

<sup>39</sup>Tom Wolf, "Oikos Evangelism, The Biblical Pattern", Pasadena: Church Growth: America, January/February 1978, p. 12

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pps. 11,13

<sup>41</sup>Fisher, Because We Have Good News, p. 109.

Watson should prevent us from expecting too much from this meeting and make us realize that the real work of evangelism lies outside these walls, in each of the more than 1,000 congregations that make up our church body.

Watson warns about a "generation of Christians who may be spending more time talking or writing about evangelism than actually doing it".<sup>42</sup>

Several years ago I was privileged to participate in a Bible Translation Seminar held for a few days at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. As I prepared this convocation paper I pondered the practical results of that seminar. Surely those who took part were stimulated and enlightened by the series of essays we heard, but beyond the fact that the word went out throughout our Synod that the New International Version of the Scriptures seems to be the best of the new translations, and that it should not be classified as heresy to use something other than the King James Version in our circles, most of the fruits of that seminar remained behind the scenes at our Seminary and were not apparent to the average WELS member. In five or ten years it may be similarly difficult to recognize any dramatic, Synod-shaking results coming out of this convocation or even to be sure that this was the best way to spend \$10,000 on evangelism. However, if we have managed to get across the tremendous potential, largely lying fallow now, in our WELS laity for witnessing, and if you who are present can get that word and vision out to your respective fields of labor, our meeting these days, I'm confident, will not be in vain.

As David Watson quotes from an English broadcaster and writer, David Winter:

Eloquent speeches, visual aids, films, seminars and discussion groups are, after all, no substitute for the daily, unspectacular witness of the rank and file Christian. If that witness is consistent and open, then no improvement in tactics or strategy will better it as

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<sup>42</sup>Watson, I Believe in Evangelism, p. 99.

a means of winning people for Christ. If it is not, then no evangelistic programme, no matter how ambitious or sophisticated, will make the slightest impact.<sup>43</sup>

May this paper and this convocation be helpful in stimulating more personal evangelism, more joyous witnessing to Christ, by the rank and file members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod!

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid, p. 99.

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