

AND HOW CAN THEY HEAR WITHOUT SOMEONE

PREACHING TO THEM?

A Survey of
congregational
origins of
WLS Graduates
from
1955-1979

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And How Can They Hear Without Someone Preaching To Them?

"How can they hear," St. Paul queries, unless someone preaches to them?" In one segment of the confessional Lutheran church today, church history in the making concerns itself with the identity of those 'someones.' Who are the ambassadors of Christ in his New Testament church? Where do they come from? At first glance these questions appear to be rather academic having answers of limited usefulness..

After all, the theology and faithfulness of a seminary graduate are surely of far greater importance than his congregational origin, assuming that the graduates being compared share equally an orthodox, Lutheran affiliation. Yet the congregational origin is quite possibly the key to discovery of the choice of career intention of the graduate. What influenced that young man to apply^{for} and receive his theological education? Must not some ingredient in the program of the local church have been the key? Thus both the congregational origins of graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will be graphed and recorded and leading WELS recruitment centers recognized. However, not the local congregational origin but the local pastor of that local church is seen by this writer as the key link in the recruitment chain. Some pastors are more effective worker-training recruiters than other pastors. Why is that?

It is the writers intention that a paper which apparently answers only a curious question or supplies synodical trivia be given a useful application. This paper seeks to formulate a congregational recruitment system, aware that this topic may lie more closer to the realm

of practical theology than that of historical theology. Do congregational recruitment systems exist? How can the local parish possessing the Word and the Spirit present to Christ more of those potential 'someones' that St. Paul made reference to?

WELS historians point out that their transplanted German-speaking church fathers recognized the importance of supplying and training those 'someones.' The Wisconsin Synod in 1878, the Minnesota Synod in 1883, and the troubled Michigan Synod in 1885 all underlined their concern for seminary training in their parishes by their organizational actions. Do the heirs of their theology share an equal concern to place worker-training on a lofty plateau?

II. Objectives

A willy-nilly, haphazard approach of random WELS pastors could admittedly supply some useful information, but very likely a survey based on chance plantings would reap a harvest of information containing an equal share of speculation. But tracing congregational backgrounds of seminary graduates and allowing those graduates whose pastors are master recruiters to comment would reach the heart of the issue. Thus the papers objectives:

- I. To determine congregational origin at birth of WELS seminary graduates, according to home state.
- II. To determine congregations who are leading suppliers of seminary graduates in the WELS.
- III. To learn from the pastors of these congregations what 'special' means if any, were employed to recruit students or to maintain their interest in the pre-ministerial and ministerial programs.
- IV. To single out any trends over the course of the twenty-five year period which appear to emerge.

III. Observations

The recruitment of candidates in the prophetic Old Testament church or the apostolic New Testament church has never been depicted or characterized as a 'head-hunting game.' Moses and Jeremiah illustrate from their personal experiences that while the candidate is issued a call from the Lord, the candidate never 'calls himself.' Paul's pastoral epistles emphasize the selectivity the Spirit employs by ^{itemizing} qualifications of those candidates whom He chooses. Recruitment needs to be viewed as a vital activity carried out in accord with the Great Commission, not as a mere game of numbers.

In contrast to recruitment, typically, other extensive congregational programs exist which by their very nature occupy the brunt of a parish's awareness and a pastor's time. Stewardship programs, TAS efforts, education on the primary and secondary levels all vie for church council time and budget-dollar concerns. Is it possible that recruitment on the local congregational level may be escorted to the back pages of Council agendas where the item remains on indefinite hold?

Since the local pastor is influential or even dominant in shaping the attitudes of the voter's assembly, won't his attitude toward recruitment to a greater or lesser extent be instrumental in ^{molding} church policy toward recruitment? Not wanting to insert his own subjectivity into the effort and realizing the extreme limitations of his first-hand knowledge, this writer very cautiously will state that two views and their variations appear to dominate thinking over the issue of worker-training recruitment.

- 1) "The Lord will provide." This attitude would be typified by the position that it really isn't one's duty to attempt to replace or attempt to increase numbers of pastors. Those who preach in WELS pulpits and administer sacraments are called anyway, therefore human effort in the recruitment process is unnecessary.
- 2) We recognize that the parish pastor is only a more comprehensive office in the church and universal priesthood. We are aware that the pastor or any other called worker never possesses a more God-pleasing spiritual gift than the non-called Christian. But St. Paul is calling on me as a member to appeal to the intellect and the will of potential workers with the gospel message.

IV. Procedure

Entrance applications which contained useable information were acquired from twenty-five classes of Northwestern and Bethany College graduates who entered WLS between 1955 and 1979. The local parish at the time of birth and graduation was recorded along with the name of the parish pastor that the graduate listed as 'his' pastor. Some entrance applications were exempted due to missing information or illegible writing. (Please see appendix A, table 1 for these exemptions.) Then students who entered WLS but did not graduate were discluded. (Please see appendix A, table A for these exemptions.) A grand total of 869 graduating candidates became the select group that serves as the basis for this paper.

Then the graduates were grouped together by geographical location at the approximate time of their baptism and

confirmation. Valid or not, the congregational origin at the time of confirmation was used as the point in time when it was assumed the graduating candidate had determined to pursue a program of pre-ministerial training. This was not an arbitrary assumption; obviously all graduates did not uniformly determine to train for the ministry at the time of their confirmation. But because the majority of graduates of WLS from 1955-1979 did attend synodical preparatory schools, it was felt that the time of confirmation presented itself as the best point in time when the graduate had actually committed himself to pre-ministerial training. Therefore the pastor at the time of the ^{graduate's} confirmation was assumed to be the pastor who exerted the primary influence upon the graduate and upon his ^{name of the} parents. Usually the ^{graduate's} pastor at the time of his confirmation could be obtained by studying the educational record of the graduate, included in the WLS entrance application.

The next step was to group the graduates according to individual pastors who were assumed to be influential to greater numbers of graduates. It was found that fourteen pastors both active and retired were probably responsible for recruiting five or more graduates each. These pastors were sent two page form letters requesting insight into their recruitment tactics and observations about recruitment programs in general. (Please see appendix B, tables A and B.) Of these fourteen pastors, thirteen replies were obtained and the results of those returning letters incorporated into substantiation of the hypothesis, "the local pastor by his use of the Word and administration of the sacraments is the catalyst between the potential graduate and the seminary."

V. Inaccuracies

Rural counties such as those typical of northern Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan are served by fewer hospitals than more populous southern counties. Since entrance applications requested information about the place of birth rather than the home congregation at the time of birth, the home congregation could not be conclusively deduced in counties that bordered state lines, e.g. Marinette County, Wisconsin and Menominee County, Michigan.

More variables were evident in obtaining specific cities or centers, e.g. Minneapolis/St. Paul area, of origin and determining graduate's pastors at the time of their confirmation. Please note in part VI that the compiled lists are based upon entrance applications. The figures in these lists are assumed to be very accurate, but not without error. Part VI does not concern itself with graduate's pastors; this information is limited to part VIII.

VI. Information *

The following are listed as primary cities and centers of congregational origin of WLS graduates from 1955-1979:

<u>City/Center</u>	<u>TABLE A</u>	<u>Candidates</u>
1) Milwaukee County.....		95
2) Watertown/Ixonia.....		49
3) Saginaw/Bay City.....		30
4) New Ulm.....		23
5) Manitowoc/Two Rivers.....		21
6) Minneapolis/St. Paul.....		21

* Tables A, B, and C are based on graduates origin at the time of confirmation, while table D is based on origin at the time of baptism.

The following are listed as secondary cities of congregational origin of WLS graduates from 1955-1979:

TABLE B

<u>City</u>	<u>Candidates</u>
Mequon/Thiensville.....	12
Fond du Lac.....	14
New London.....	11
Appleton.....	15
Beaver Dam.....	10
Kenosha.....	10
La Crosse.....	10
Oshkosh.....	9
Fort Atkinson.....	9
Hartford.....	7
Juneau.....	7
Mankato, Minn.....	7
Neenah.....	7
Benton Harbor, Mi.....	6
Caledonia, Minn.....	6
Morton Grove, Il.....	6
Flint, Mi.....	5
Kaukauna.....	5
West Allis.....	5*

The following areas also are listed as congregational home of origin by 3-4 graduates from 1955-1979:

TABLE C

1) Greenleaf	5) Lake Mills	9) Waukesha	17) Livonia, Michigan
2) Green Bay	6) Detroit, Mi.	10) Jefferson	18) Markesan
3) Denmark	7) Pound, Wi.	11) Lansing, Mi.	
4) Medford	8) Mobridge, S.D.	12) Fairfax, Minn.	
		13) Marshfield	
		14) Sanborn, Minn.	
		15) Watertown, S.D.	
		16) Sturgeon Bay	

* 5 WELS congregations of West Allis not included under Milwaukee County.

TABLE D

The following lists the congregational origin of WLS graduates from 1955-1979 at the time of their baptism, by state, province, and country.

<u>State/Province/Country</u>	<u>Candidates</u>
Wisconsin.....	470
Minnesota.....	116
Michigan.....	113
South Dakota.....	46
Illinois.....	36
Nebraska.....	19
North Dakota.....	14
Ohio.....	13
Arizona.....	10
California.....	8
Indiana.....	6
Montana.....	6
Germany.....	5
Iowa.....	4
New York.....	3
Colorado.....	2
Ontario.....	2
Oregon.....	2
South Africa.....	2
Texas.....	2
Arkansas.....	1
British Columbia.....	1
Connecticut.....	1
France.....	1
Maryland.....	1
Massachusetts.....	1
Mississippi.....	1
Missouri.....	1
Nigeria.....	1
Pennsylvania.....	1
Poland.....	1
Rhode Island.....	1
Uruguay.....	1
Washington (state).....	1

34 states, provinces, countries
 excluding U.S.A. and Canada

893 graduates

* based on available information

VII. Trends

Using table A on page six as a basis for comparison, one notes that three out of the four leading areas of recruitment are also homes to synodical preparatory schools or colleges. And the other three leading areas of recruitment are in locales served by WELS area high schools. Actually, table A is interesting, but misleading. Although the WELS congregations in these areas are indeed leaders in the field of worker-training recruitment, these congregations probably enjoy this distinction simply because of the presence of greater numbers of WELS congregations and pastors within their particular area.

Graduates of WLS are influenced by parents and relatives, the nearness of WELS high schools and peer decision. To what extent these elements have influenced WLS graduates in the past cannot be answered here. But the role of parish pastor as worker-training recruiter is definitely a major factor, if not the leading factor in the recruitment of WLS graduates as part VII will strongly suggest.

VIII. Parish Recruitment Program

objective: To make a conscious effort toward establishing congregational and pastoral interest in worker-training.

1. Personal, informal contacts with prospective graduates at an early age have more impact on the student than any other factor.
 - a. Requires special effort
 - b. Contact often afforded by day school
 - c. This contact is already a factor in recruitment among pastor's and teacher's children.
 - d. Substantiation:

" Encourage boys and their parents the moment you see them as possible servants of the Word (This may be in the early grades).¹

d. Substantiation (cont)

"We work with teachers in our approach to youngsters as low as 5th grade in our school."2

"Shared noon lunch program twice each week at school. Lunch cooks would seat me at different tables each time. While at the table with the younger children (grades 1 through 6 especially) I would make it a point to ask what the children on each side of me were hoping to be some day. Some replied, "Policeman", "Fireman", "Football player", or "Basketball player", etc. Some just shrugged their shoulders and said they never thought about it. At that point I would follow up by asking "And what if you don't make it as a "Green Bay Packer", "Fireman", "Policeman", etc. Have you ever thought about being a pastor/teacher?" Almost always the reply would be negative. At that time I would respond by telling them to "think it over; I think you might make a good one."

Regular follow-ups were made on such conversations in the lunch room. Discussion with child's teacher often lead to more detailed discussions with the children by the time they reached grades 4 and 5. Frequently parents would approach me and comment that "my son/daughter tells me that you have been talking to him/her to become a pastor/teacher. Most of the time we had the cooperation, and often the encouragement, of the parents. Only once did a father ask me to cease and desist encouraging his son toward the ministry because he wanted him to take over the farm some day.

I believe the personal and informal contacts with the individual child at the early age level and subsequent with the parents had more impact than any other single thing."3

2. Continued contact and encouragement during pre-confirmation instruction and beyond is instrumental.

- a. Trace the educational route of your church's pastor and prospective pastors.
- b. Visit worker-training schools.
- c. Mission of Month in Day School
- d. Value committed, dedicated students who motivate non-committed students.
- e. Appeal to the emotions of students.
- f. Substantiation:

"Though I did not correspond much with them while they were away at school, I used every opportunity when they were home or I would be at their school, to visit with them, find out how things were going, and encourage them. It is important to show interest!"4

f. Substantiation (cont)

"Try to select a youth's strength and show him how he could use it at NWC (sports, music, languages etc).⁵

"Stressed worker training and importance of preaching and teaching ministry by setting aside a 50-minute class very early in the confirmation class and traced the educational route options open to those thinking of becoming pastors or teachers. Then, in January (mid-school year) selected certain students and spoke to parents telling them their son/daughter had good qualifications and potential and encouraged parents to consider pastor/teacher training route for their children."⁶

"In 7th or 8th grades or both give them a day or 2 at NW Prep or at M. Luth. Prep or at Saginaw."⁷

"I would tell my classes experiences that I had in the Apache Indian Mission. I have also been on the World Mission Board for 24 years and am quite familiar with all our mission fields overseas. I would naturally share much of this information with my classes and my congregation."⁸

"We had a number of young people leaving for Northwestern and DMLC while I served Calvary. My observation is that having some of these young people attend our schools plays an important role in influencing others to join them. Then I always went along with the Synod's suggestion to have a Recruitment Sunday annually."⁹

"We have often had recruitment teams or professors in our class-rooms, at organizations, or on School/Home Society programs. We've informed recruitment officers of young people to approach. We've always tried to reflect our total joy in the ministry."¹⁰

"Our Christian Day School teachers encourage the young people to enter the work of ministry - preaching or teaching. Having a 'mission of the month' we talk about the various schools that are the recipients for that month."¹¹

3. Actually approaching parents and students and informing them of worker-training needs.

- a. Financial encouragement
- b. Even students with modest gifts
- c. Turn social occasions into recruitment opportunities.
- d. Substantiation:

"Encourage, do not discourage boys of modest gifts, if they show determination to use God-given talents.

Show parents of modest means the many different ways in which the Lord supplies the necessary cash.

Use every dinner or wedding invitation to speak to parents who have future teachers or pastors in their nest!"¹²

d. Substantiation (cont)

"A positive approach to the ministry - encourage parents and family to assist and pray for a godly leading in their decisions."¹³

4. Continual encouragement of high school, college and seminary students completes recruitment efforts."

- a. Student aid fund
- b. Letters of encouragement
- c. Student preachers and liturgists
- d. Substantiation:

"Used Seminary students to conduct liturgy in home church as soon as possible in their Junior year. Invited each student to preach at home church at least once each year. Established the policy that the student received the door collection at time when he conducted his first liturgy in his home church (\$200-\$300 per student).

Most important result: Members of church were constantly made aware of home students studying for the ministry.

Established policy in which Ladies Aid gave a Christmas gift to NWC, WLS and DMLC students each Christmas. Mission Aid (evening) Society set aside \$10.00 per year and offered it to seminary students in their Junior year toward purchase of their first robe."¹⁴

"We do thru letters keep our young men in contact with us and always seek to talk to them whenever they are home. The letters are the newsletter of the congregation as well as others.

We have established a Student Aid Fund, which may have a little bearing on those especially who have need of such funds."¹⁵

IX. Conclusion

WLS graduates are likely to originate wherever there are WELS congregations. The presence of congregations with larger memberships and the presence of greater numbers of congregations in a given area will likely result in more men graduating from WLS than areas containing fewer WELS churches or churches having smaller memberships. Certain congregations prominent in the recruitment of future WELS pastors have established this distinction partially because the congregations have taken steps to motivate young men to apply themselves to pre-ministerial training. Certainly the local parish pastor also exercises a key role in educating the parish and developing a greater awareness of the Great Commission.

ENDNOTES

¹Rev. K. A. Gurgel

²Rev. H. E. Paustian

³Rev. E. H. Huebner

⁴Rev. David Worgull

⁵Rev. J. W. Mattek

⁶Rev. E. H. Huebner

⁷Rev. K. A. Gurgel

⁸Rev. F. H. Nitz

⁹Rev. F. H. Tabbert

¹⁰Rev. H. E. Paustian.

¹¹Rev. F. W. Heidemann

¹²Rev. K. A. Gurgel

¹³Rev. J. W. Mattek

¹⁴Rev. E. H. Huebner

¹⁵Rev. F. W. Heidemann

APPENDIX A

Table A

921.....students entered WLS from 1955-1979 as incoming graduates.*
 48.....students' entrance applications not available
 904.....graduates of WLS from 1955-1979**

<u>Graduates</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Graduates</u>	<u>Year</u>
31.....	1955	28.....	1966
25.....	1956	36.....	1967
30.....	1957	32.....	1968
34.....	1956	39.....	1969
23.....	1957	33.....	1970
16.....	1958	45.....	1971
25.....	1959	42.....	1972
17.....	1960	55.....	1973
20.....	1961	44.....	1974
15.....	1962	48.....	1975
32.....	1963	61.....	1976
28.....	1964	59.....	1977
36.....	1965	63.....	1978
		51.....	1979

*based on available records

**not all who graduate filed appli.

Table B

904 WLS graduates from 1955-1979

893 WLS graduates with available records useful to determine congregational origin at the time of baptism.

869 WLS graduates with available information useful to determine congregational origin at the time of confirmation and so also useful to determine home pastor.

February 17, 1983

Dear _____:

I'm requesting your help in order to complete a second quarter Church History paper dealing with the subject of 'Lutheranism in America' for Professor Fredrich here at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The specific title of the paper is: "Congregational Origins of WLS Graduates from 1955 to 1979." Using entrance applications of 869 incoming students who enrolled at the Seminary as a starting point, the paper has as its objectives:

- I. To determine congregational origin at birth according to the state.
- II. To determine congregations who are leading suppliers of Seminary graduates.
- III. To learn from the pastors of these congregations what 'special' means if any, were employed to recruit students or to maintain their interest in the pre-ministerial and ministerial programs.
- IV. To single out any trends over the course of the twenty-five year period which appear to emerge. (e.g. Do certain geographic areas/cities which were leading suppliers of church workers in the late 1950s continue to hold that distinction?)

Since I decided to contact only pastors whom five or more graduates listed as 'their' pastor on their enrollment applications, you are a very important source of information for my paper. There are only fifteen pastors with information that can prove useful for the specific thrust of this paper.

Please don't mistake the motives for my writing this paper. We realize that the Holy Spirit supplies the workers for the Church of Christ when He calls them through the Gospel. But the Spirit also uses men to proclaim that call. Ideally one of the objectives of this paper will be to show whether some men use extra-effective means to recruit men in their ministries or whether workers for the Kingdom will come forward apart from any special efforts on the part of pastors. Of course there are variables in a paper of this type such as parental influence, education and so forth.

I realize that your time is limited and so I don't want or expect you to use a great deal of time dealing with the accompanying sheet I'm sending you. In short, I would like to know how God has used you to recruit pastors. Thanks for any information that you send me!

Sincerely,

Philip Sprude

APPENDIX B-TABLE B

Please return this completed sheet using the stamped pre-addressed envelope. Thank-you.

- I. What special means if any do/did you use in your ministry?
- a. stress worker training or importance of ministry in Catechism classes, Bible classes, or Day School.
 - b. inform people of the need for worker training in sermons, devotions, church publications.
 - c. send letters of encouragement to students involved in worker training programs at Synodical schools.
 - d. actively seek out and encourage those people who I feel are qualified for the ministry.
 - e. no special means used; I feel that those men who are ultimately chosen by the Holy Spirit to be pastors will come forth on their own initiative.
 - f. Please don't hesitate to make any comments that you feel will be useful to help me meet objective III of my paper.

- g. Please correct or add to the list below of men who listed you as their pastor.

cc: Rev. H. E. Paustian
Rev. F. H. Nitz
Rev. K. A. Gurgel
Rev. E. H. Huebner
Rev. J. W. Mattek
Rev. F. W. Heidemann
Rev. A. W. Tiefel
Rev. David Worgull
Rev. J. F. Brenner
Rev. G. W. Boldt
Rev. F. H. Tabbert
Rev. E. C. Pankow
Rev. F. M. Brandt
Rev. W. O. Pless