

THE HISTORY OF THE WELS

MASS MEDIA MINISTRY

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"Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples" (I Chron. 16:23, 24). "Then I saw another Angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people" (Rev. 14:6).

Whether it is expressed in the Old Testament or the New, the message is clear: Let the world know about the Gospel! As believers of that Gospel, we are eager to carry out our Lord's command, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." It's a good feeling, then, to be members of a religious body that is firmly dedicated to that same gospel and its proclamation to others. As members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, we are blessed with the opportunity to join with fellow Christians in the common goal of letting a dying world know about life in Christ Jesus. Evidence to the fact that the WELS IS serious about spreading the Word, is the Synod's Mass Media Ministry committee. The purpose of this paper will be to document the story of how the Mass Media Ministry came to be and what it has and is doing to further the work of God's Kingdom. Part one will deal with early interest in radio and mass media outreach; part two will deal with the 1977 resolution of the WELS to investigate the feasibility of a nation-wide radio broadcast ^{and} the work of the Radio Research Committee in that regard; part three will explore the founding of the Mass Media

Ministry and its work in Synod from its inception to the present.

Although the resolution to begin a Mass Media Ministry was adopted only a few years ago in 1979, the use of radio especially is not new to the WELS.

Already back in the mid-60's there were a number of areas in our Synod where worship services or devotions were broadcast over radio. Churches in Milwaukee, WI, in the Fox Valley area of Wisconsin, at New Ulm, Minnesota, and the Quad Cities area on the Iowa-Illinois border were using the airwaves to reach others with the Word and to strengthen our own members with Scripture.

The idea of radio use specifically for mission outreach was also considered almost twenty years ago. In May of 1966, the Rev. Gary Baumler, serving a mission in New Brunswick, New Jersey, was thinking seriously about taking advantage of the radio to reach out with the Gospel. In a letter to Rev. Ray Wieckmann, the executive secretary of the General Board for Home Missions, Pastor Baumler inquired whether taped devotions might be available through Synod. These devotions could be broadcast along with a message identifying the mission and therefore serve as a useful tool for getting the message of the Gospel out to many people, as well as "advertising" the mission church and Synod.

It's no surprise, then, that the General Board for Home

Missions expressed an interest in radio as a mission means already in 1969. In June of 1969, the COP Finance Committee and Stewardship Counselor resolved to put the sponsorship and supervision of radio work in the US into the hands of the GBHM.

In July of 1970, the GBHM wanted to determine the feasibility, objectives and thrust of a Synodical radio program or programs and, to that end, formed a Radio Research Committee, chaired by Rev. Mentor Kiyath. The committee, however, lacked direction and never really got rolling. At just about this time, however, the Milwaukee Federation of WELS churches was thinking seriously about the mission possibilities of radio.

Since the mid-60's the Radio and TV Committee of the Milwaukee Federation had broadcast worship services over radio. These broadcasts had served our own people very well, especially those who for some reason or another were unable to attend regular services. No doubt they had carried the message of the gospel to the unchurched as well. But the Federation, already in the early 70's, were looking for and investigating the possibilities of a mission-oriented program.

The Radio and TV committees restated purpose, as of Jan. 1973, was "to effectively seek ways and means to communicate the Gospel in accord with our confessional principles on the basis of Scripture to reach as many people for Christ as possible with an emphasis on the unchurched." To accomplishing this purpose, the

committee ambitiously went to work, investigating what kind of programs could be used and the best route to take in producing such programs. Radio and TV material from other denominations were screened and discussed, the question of production was debated (whether to produce material "in-house" or "job-out" production), finances were also discussed. In trying to find solutions to these problems, the committee came to the conclusion that a Media Ministry and Pilot Program Coordinator was needed. Among proposed duties would be to study what was currently being done to communicate the Gospel on radio, TV and print; to coordinate production and placement of representative media pieces with a goal toward validating the ministry on a broader basis; to help develop an awareness in Synod of the need for a Mass Media Ministry; to pursue funding as appropriate and required. At this point, the GBHM was working closely with the Federation's Radio and TV Committee, with a view toward eventually founding a radio or mass media ministry in Synod. But the position of a Pilot Program Coordinator was never filled. Prof. Thomas Kuster of Dr. Martin Luther College, a man with media qualifications, was called, but declined to accept the call. The committee, after reconsidering the feasibility of a program director, decided to forego calling another man and decided that practicality dictated further study and investigation of a media program by the committee itself.

By the mid 70's, the committee had produced two programs that

would nurture our WELS members, while at the same time hopefully touch the doubter, the skeptic and the unchurched. The two programs were called Music for the Master and Message From the Master. Music for the Master, hosted by Rev. Roger Drews, Radio and TV Committee Chairman, consisted of lectionary readings for each Sunday of the church year accompanied by songs and hymns from the different choral groups of our Synod. Message From the Master was a service of the preached word along with hymns. Six pastors from the Milwaukee area preached for this program on a rotating basis. Progress was also being carried out on another front--facilities. Mr. Frits Dinesen, a Milwaukee businessman and member of the Radio and TV Committee, installed a recording studio in his furniture warehouse, which permitted program preparation independent of any radio station or private individuals. But innovation in and enthusiasm for a radio ministry, especially in regard to its outreach potential, was not limited to a certain sector of our Synod in Milwaukee.

The Western Wisconsin District's Missionaries' Conference, assembled in Madison on Sept. 27 and 28, of 1976 heard a report concerning radio work our pastors are carrying out other than airing full Sunday morning services. Surveys were sent out to 20-25 of our WELS pastors engaged in this kind of radio programming. The 15 responses that were received and formed the basis of the report indicated that at least a few of our pastors were interested in and convinced of radio's outreach potential.

Some programs used were devotional in nature, others followed a Bible study format; some were short sermonette series on the Lord's Prayer, Beatitudes, etc.; others were of a question-and-answer nature. The point was that in all these different formats "outreach to the unchurched seems to be uppermost in the pastors' minds."

An awareness to the opportunities radio could provide to spread the Word about our Synod, our congregations and the Gospel seemed to be ever-increasing. Back at Milwaukee the GBHM stepped up their efforts at determining some guidelines for the establishment of a media ministry by surveying missionaries concerning radio work in 1977, and by working even more closely with the Federation's TV and Radio Committee. In March of 1977, the GBHM met with representatives of the Federation's TV and Radio Committee to discuss the formation of a Radio Research Committee to serve the GBHM. Real progress, Pastor Norman Berg, chairman of the GBHM noted, had been somewhat stymied in the past due to a lack of a practical, energetic committee. A formal committee could tackle the job of gathering research, engaging personell, and making recommendations to the GBHM. Members for such a committee were discussed and Pastor Berg reported that, from the financial end of things, \$10,000 would be available due to contributions mainly from the Lutheran Womens' Missionary Society, with \$6,000 requested from budget and a possible grant of \$35,000 to be requested from AAL. With this organizational

meeting, it looked like the ball was really going to start rolling. But I'm sure few could have guessed how far it would go in the next two years.

II

The 1977 Resolution of the WELS to investigate the feasibility of a nation-wide radio broadcast and the work of the Radio Research committee in that regard.

Less than four months after that joint GBHM-Federation TV and Radio Committee meeting, the opportunity to put that Radio Research Committee into action presented itself. At the 1977 WELS convention at New Ulm, Minnesota, the assembly passed a motion to the effect that the Wisconsin Synod go on the radio. With this Synod backing, the Radio Research Committee started on a long road of planning, perfecting and monitoring a viable radio format and program for the Synod. The first order of business was organizing and appointing a committee. Heading the committee was Rev. Roger Drews, pastor of St. Johns of Oak Creek and chairman of the Radio and TV Committee of the Federation. Other members included Mr. Frits Dinesen, a South Milwaukee businessman and member of Grace Lutheran, Milwaukee. Mr. Gordon Heupel of Chicago, Illinois, a member of Jerusalem in Morton Grove and head of FilmComm, a company which produces radio and TV commercials; Mr. Anton Lusthoff, a member of Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, a member of the Synod A-V committee, and a sound consultant in the

Milwaukee area; Mr. Budd Reth of West Bend, Wisconsin, a member of Good Shepherd and chief Television producer for WTMJ-TV; and, later, Mr. David Runge, retired religion editor of the Milwaukee Journal and a member of Atonement church, who had a wide range of contacts and experience in the media.

The clergy members of the Committee included the Rev. David Rutschow of Downers Grove, Illinois, who has been involved in radio in the home mission area; the Rev. Robert Sewall of Lubbock, Texas, who has successfully used radio in the Texas area with his 'Points to Ponder' program; the Rev. James Schaeffer, Stewardship Counselor and Public Relations Director of the WELS; and pastors Norman Berg and Daniel Gieschen, executive secretary and chairman respectively of the GEMM.

At the initial meeting on Nov. 21, 1977 the committee discussed objectives for the research. It immediately was apparent, from information gathered in the past that the days of a Lutheran Hour type of program were waning. From the initial meeting already, the committee agreed that the thrust of a Synod radio program should not be something only for our own people, but something with an emphasis on reaching OTHERS. To spearhead this research effort, the members agreed a full-time coordinator was needed. The duties and responsibilities of this position would be generally the same as those drawn up by the TV and Radio Committee of the Federation back in 1973. What the committee wanted in a coordinator was theological training, if possible,

but more importantly, an experience, interest in and dedication to the radio ministry. The committee decided to advertise in the Northwestern Lutheran for qualified candidates for the position of media consultant.

Of the ten men who responded, the one chosen for the position was Mr. Craig Halverson, Director of Communications for the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and a member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church of Lansing. Sporting an impressive background in film production and free-lance writing, Mr. Halverson accepted the challenge of establishing the scope, direction and development of radio ministry in the WELS.

Mr. Halverson's first course of action was to send out a questionnaire concerning radio work in the Synod to all WELS pastors. To those already broadcasting on radio, he asked what type of broadcasts were being aired, what type of audience the broadcasts were geared to, and what kind of interest there would be in Synod-produced material. To those who were not broadcasting on the radio, inquiries were made as to why there were not using radio and whether they would take advantage of Synodically/supplied programs. Included was a request that the pastors let the synod know about any programs that might be useful or musicians in the congregations who would be available for recording sessions at a later date.

Also on Halverson's agenda was requesting use of material for

the Milwaukee Federation's Message From the Master and Music for the Master programs as a pilot program project. When sufficient research into the present programs being used in various congregations of the Synod had been completed, Halverson hoped to develop production of "pilot" formats by December 31, 1978; test marketing could then take place by the end of March, 1979, so that a report could be prepared for the Book of Reports and Memorials for the WELS convention that summer.

At this point the committee thought that it had enough preliminary work and planning done so that a request for aid could be made to the Benevolences Committee of the AAL. The request for aid was submitted in the summer of 1978 and called for the amount of \$50,000. The figures submitted to AAL in the Benevolence Assistance form stated that \$18,000 was needed for the salary of the Research Coordinator and another \$4,000 for research and travel expenses he would incur. \$30,000 was to be used for the production and distribution of the programs and another \$20,000 to select radio markets and purchase air time. Tacked on was another \$2,000 for office expenses which produced a total budget of \$74,000. Private contributions and gifts toward the project had risen from \$10,000 in March of 1977 to \$24,000 in June of 1978. But that, nevertheless, left a deficit of \$40,000--the amount requested from AAL.

While waiting for a reply from the AAL Benevolence Committee the Radio Research Committee studied the responses to the radio

survey that Mr. Halverson had sent out to the WELS pastors. The responses indicated, to the joy and possibly surprise of the committee, that there was a very strong interest in synod-produced programming and a willingness to support programming which breaks with the traditional mode.

It was just such new and fresh programming which the Synod was seeking and reviewing at this time. The pilot programs in the works were a definite departure from the half-hour or hour long traditional "sermon and hymns" format. Programs being studied were, for one thing, generally "short" in regard to time; from 30 second "spot" announcements to one, five, or ten minute lengths. The format was also a far cry from The Lutheran Hour-type programs that were popular years before. Many of the pilot programs were simple Law-Gospel presentations, discussions on topics like creation or baptism, short statements about what God's Word says about some common problems of life. The type of people these programs were targeted for was also a departure from the norm. The short, basic Law-Gospel messages were geared for the unchurched or those who had fallen away. Something new and pertinent for today with emphasis on the unchurched was what the committee wanted to develop. Clearing that hurdle, they wanted to make sure that the quality of the programs in regard to recording and production would be equal to the quality of the content.

To that end, the committee decided to use a "professional"

voice for the programs and to create a proper atmosphere for the message by placing it in a suitable music "bed." The "bed" would be the lead-in, background and closing music of the program. The music that was to be developed was then to serve as a logo for WELS radio work. As to the music itself, the committee was looking for something original in conception and contemporary in style. The lyrics were to express the main theme for reaching out to and inviting the unchurched--"Come to the WELS."

Over sixty letters were sent out to the various musical production agencies around the United States. Among those who sent in bids was a John (J. C.) Meyer, a highly successful producer of commercial music, stated that he would volunteer his time and talents in writing a music logo at no charge, except for the actual production.

The committee was happy to have a WELS member, and a qualified one at that, who was willing to use his talents in this area, and at the committee's November 6, 1978 meeting, they commissioned Mr. Meyer to develop a song/logo for the WELS Radio Ministry.

By Jan. 22, 1979, J. C. Meyer had a sixty second piano and voice version ready, as well as a 120 second version with full instrumental and vocal backing. The committee heard the two versions and heartily agreed to give Mr. Meyer the go-ahead to work on the finished product. The music was contemporary and catchy without being flash and reinforced the import of the

beautiful lyrics:

Come to the WELS and be filled with living water.
Come to the WELS for new life in the living word.
Come as you are; let your spirit be restored;
Walk in the new life of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Come as you are; lay your burdens down;
He calls you by name to a love that knows no bounds.
In a world that knows where not his voice can still
be heard.
Come and learn of me--I am the living word.
Come to the WELS for the living water and living
word.
Come to the WELS for the living water and living
word.

Things seemed to be rolling along quite well now. God had blessed the committee with several good and innovative pilot programs to use in test marketing. J. C. Meyer's music logo had turned out to be a very impressive and satisfactory piece of work, the Synod seemed eager to receive the fruits of their labor, and yet there was a problem. And, as is so often the case with a new venture, the problem was money.

Back in the middle of November, 1978 a grant was received from AAL for the sum of \$35,000. A shot in the arm, yes. But \$15,000 shy of the requested \$50,000. The committee decided to make a special request for funds in a letter sent to all congregations in Jan. 1979. The letter explained that \$15,000 was needed by Feb. 21, 1979 in order that the committee might be able to "test market" four different radio formats. This testing would determine the effectiveness of radio in assisting the congregations. Trusting in the Lord to provide the needed

dollars, the committee went ahead with the test marketing schedule.

The marketing was to be conducted in this way. All self-supporting congregations received two sample Music For the Master programs on a cassette. After evaluating the program, the congregations were asked to consider test-marketing a thirteen week series of Music for the Master at ten dollars per program. After broadcasting the series, if they desired, they could then make comments, pro or con, to the ^{GBHM} ~~X~~ concerning the program and its effectiveness.

At the mission congregation level, four programs were to be tested at selected test areas. The four programs were: 1) 60-second spot announcements--to build identification of WELS congregations (utilizing the J. C. Meyer "Come to the WELS" song; 2) Points to Ponder--60 second spots relating religion to everyday life, by Rev. Robert Sawall; 3) Belief and Unbelief--two minute segments providing a rational basis for religious belief and treating counter-arguments (again, with a music intro); and 4) Lifeline--(later called "Come to the WELS")--a five minute program designed to apply the Gospel to current events, youth interests, family and personal life, etc. (utilizing a music intro and closing). Sample cassettes of these pilot programs were also sent to our self-supporting congregations so they would be aware of and understand the direction our Synod was proposing.

The areas that were chosen for the test-marketing of these new programs were: Sacramento, California; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Wilmington, Delaware; and Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida. The stations that carried the pilot programs ranged in format from news to country to pop to album rock. The time slots when the programs were to be aired were in the afternoon "drive-time" area from 3:00-7:00 p. m.--when most people are driving home from work. To give a "national" dimension to the project, the committee also decided to take advantage of night-time clear channel programming. Some stations in the 50,000 watt areas can cover large segments of the country in the hours of 7:00 pm to 6:00 am. Broadcasting in those hours on those high-powered stations would provide this "national" exposure. The date for the test-marketing--April-August of 1979. In March of 1979, then, the committee could see some light at the end of the tunnel. With the research and development of the programs completed, all that remained was waiting for the test-marketing to begin and the results to come in and writing the formal Radio Research Report to be submitted to the 1979 convention at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin.

The report, as published in the Book of Reports and Memorials, documented the history of the committee and its work and supplied the following observations about the committee:

It is the opinion of the committee that nation-wide coverage can most effectively be achieved in today's radio market by centrally produced broadcast-quality

materials in areas throughout the country by locally identified congregations, with the possible addition of the night-time clear channel station programming. The committee is committed to using a radio ministry to advance our mission outreach primarily with and through the local congregations, self-supporting or mission, the "cutting edge" of mission work in our land.

Early in the research it was evident that the day of a "Lutheran Hour" format and distribution system is over as for the state of the radio industry is concerned. In radio's current format, programming must be geared to the characteristics of the target audience. (The target audience for the pilot programs was the 18-34 age group who listen to radio frequently and who are often searching for "religion".)

Our research and program production experiences and results to date . . . have already convinced us that a radio ministry is feasible and desirable as a mission arm of our Synod.

The report was generally well received and the Proceedings of the 1979 WELS convention report that:

WHEREAS 1) a mass media ministry, beginning with a radio ministry, would serve well the continuing purpose of our home mission program to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people within the limits of the domestic mission fields of the WELS; and

WHEREAS 2) such a ministry would effectively assist our self-supporting congregations as well as our mission congregations in reaching the unchurched of their communities with the Gospel; and

WHEREAS 3) the synodically requested radio research study has indicated that a radio ministry with programming along the lines of the pilot programs produced by the GBHM Radio Research Committee is feasible both as to production and nationwide marketing; and

WHEREAS 4) the initial WELS response to the pilot programs has been positive; therefore, be it

Resolved, a) that the Synod establish a mass media

ministry beginning with a radio ministry which is to assist our congregations and the Synod to reach primarily the unchurched of our land with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in addition to strengthen our members; and be it further

Resolved, b) that this mass media ministry be under the supervision of the GBHM; and be it further

Resolved, c) that this mass media ministry be funded by non-budgetary funds received through special gifts and offerings and congregational purchase of program materials; and be it further

Resolved, d) that development, production and airing of programs be implemented by the GBHM, engaging the necessary professional assistance as program needs require and funding permits; and be it further

Resolved, e) that the Synod president make provision for the review of all materials to be aired to assure doctrinal soundness; and be it finally

Resolved, f) that, whenever possible, audio personnel used be qualified individuals of our fellowship.

III

The founding of the Mass Media Ministry and its work in the Synod from its inception to the present

"The Mass Media Ministry" created by the Synod at the 1975 convention and so named because the future held the promise of work in all kinds of media in addition to radio, began operation soon after the convention. A four man "core committee" was appointed consisting of Radio Research Committee members Frits Dinesen and Budd Reth; Prof. Joel Gerlach, Professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and contributing writer for the pilot programs; Rev. Daniel Gieschen, chairman of the GBHM; and Rev.

Larry Zwieg, assistant secretary of the GBHM and chairman of this committee.

In the beginning, the Mass Media Ministry concentrated on what its name suggests--the mass media. Since radio was shown to be the most financially practical medium, as well as the medium with the greatest potential of reaching out to many people, radio became the heart of the program.

About six months after the inception of the program, it became very apparent that the committee was going to need help in producing new programs and in filling orders for the congregations who wished to use the Mass Media service.

Mike and dee Fronek, who were members of our mission in Ramsey, New Jersey had heard the Synod's "Come to the WELS" tapes and were impressed by the professional quality and the willingness of our synod to take advantage of the great opportunities available through radio and other media. When they heard about the need for a Mass Media Coordinator at Synod, they sent in their resume with a sample tape of the free-lance announcing and producing Mike had done in New York.

The committee at Synod was impressed with Mike and Dee's work and credentials, and after an interview with this production team, they hired them in early February of 1980. With a production/coordination/announcing team in the office, the load of filling orders was taken off the committee and plans for the

new programs could be started. Little did anyone realize, however, the constantly "new" plans and programs that lay ahead in the future.

If one would have to sum up the Mass Media Ministry in one phrase, it would have to be "growth and change." In the area of programs, the MMM produced new spots for Christmas, Lent and Easter; promotional spots for Vacation Bible School, and Sunday School.

In the area of services, the MMM began simply as an arm of the GBHM to provide our congregations with tapes to use for "radio outreach." But as time went by, it became apparent that help for our congregations in the area of air time buying was as important as providing quality materials. The Lord provided several WELS members in Milwaukee, Richard Lowe and Eric Hansen, who had backgrounds in the area of radio programming and who could serve as airtime buying consultants on a part-time basis.

Also, near the middle of 1980, the reports filtering back from radio efforts in the field began to indicate the need for a change in emphasis and focus. No longer did it seem reasonable to assume that a few announcements on the radio would, in most communities, "do the job." Now, other forces had to be employed. Congregations needed to use several means of outreach "in tandem" with radio to strengthen the impact of the "Come To the WELS" message. "Come To the WELS" brochures, doorhanger

bags, and newspaper ads were developed. Billboard ideas and direct mailing materials soon followed. Formats for canvassing and evangelism were refined and made available, with materials often the fruits of inventive and experienced men in the field. Already in late 1981 programs for television public service announcements were being produced.

Slowly, again the functions and services of the MMM grew and changed. The MMM, by 1983, was offering advice and ideas for taking advantage of cable TV time and lowering mailing costs and promoting "super-group" use of the MMM evangelism packages. "Super-group" use is where a group of WELS congregations in a certain area pull together in one big Mass Media campaign (implementing radio, billboards, newspaper, etc. and followed up by canvassing) in order to share the cost of an outreach program and to strengthen the impact to the unchurched.

The growth and change experienced by the MMM has been a positive and necessary metamorphosis. But as Mike and Dee Fronck saw the MMM changing, they realized in late 1981 that they were not "equipped educationally, creatively or professionally to create, formulate, direct or execute a mass media campaign." This quote, taken from the Directors General Report of the MMM, April 1982, simply called attention to the fact that Mike and Dee Fronck were trained and experienced in radio--and with the advent of mass media campaigns (radio and newspaper, billboards, etc.)--they found themselves in a job for which they were

unqualified. Mike Fronek went on in the Director's General Report to say:

Because of our limited skills outside of the broadcast area, we are unable to properly and effectively direct and evaluate the print material produced by this office. We are equally unable to choose and dictate an advertising campaign theme and direction. It is our feeling that the Mass Media Ministry needs to be staffed by advertising professionals who are competent in (1) the formulation and development of advertising plans, objectives, strategies and tactics; (2) the writing of both print and broadcast creative copy (each of which requires separate skills); (3) creative print material layout (not necessarily including the ability to produce finished art); (4) print production; (5) the direction of audio production (not necessarily to include the technical capability); (4) the basics of market research media planning and marketing.

The Fron^eks, then, departed on good terms from the MMM office on the 15th of February, 1982. But their work for the MMM did not come to an end. They agreed to produce, and still continue to do so today, some of the radio and TV spots for the MMM office. Their position was filled temporarily by Marion Brandau, who brought almost 30 years of experience in the advertising business with her. But it became increasingly evident that additional staff was needed. Enter John Barber. Mr. Barber, adult convert to Christ and member of WELS, had experience in producing media materials through specialty work he had done for the Oregon State University. Furthermore, Mr. Barber had extensive experience in writing, producing, and directing commercials in Hollywood to go along with an acting and singing career. Shortly after Mr. Barber joined the staff in 1982, Marion Brandau stepped down from

her position. That left a vacancy that could be filled by John's wife Lynne, a trained secretary. Once again, the MMM had a team in the office--a team that was equipped to handle the new responsibilities of a growing Mass Media Ministry.

But along with responsibilities came problems. And, as mentioned before, with a new venture it is usually money. In this case, it was a combination of expansion, boosting costs, and giving decreases at the same time. By 1983 gifts dropped from \$25,000 the first year to only \$8,000. In 1984, today, the program holds a \$7,500 deficit. Hopefully, encouragement for giving to the Gospel-spreading arm of missions will be enough to get the money rolling back in. But the GBHM was seriously considering pushing for inclusion of the Mass Media Ministry under the Synod's budget at the 1985 convention. The growth and change in the MMM seems to dictate such action.

Indeed, the Mass Media Ministry has come a long way since 1979. In regard to its function in an outreach situation, the MMM has expanded from merely a service providing radio programs to outreach campaign organizers. In a common outreach campaign, the congregation requests outreach campaign assistance from the GBHM. If the request is approved, the congregation is directed to test the "pulse" of the area, that is, gather information as to what kind of people live in that particular area, what the economic conditions are like, what the interests of the people are, etc. the MMM then researches what kind and how much media would best

serve the area and makes a recommendation based on that study. The campaign is then divided into three basic areas: 1) The Familiarization phase--a media outreach is conducted, utilizing direct mail, billboards, posters, transit ads, newspaper ads, door hangers with tracts and brochures and radio and/or TV spots. 2) Locating prospects--door to door canvassing, telephone survey, or use of a prospect letter. 3) Follow up--the face to face sharing of the Gospel.

A new development in the Mass Media Campaign has been the use of a Travel Canvass Witness team made up of DMLC graduates and Seminary vicars (1983) and, more recently, Seminary graduates in place of Sem. Vicars. The TCW team is used in the canvass and follow up phases. The TCW team seems to be an effective part of the program, since they can effectively reach a large number of people and carry out that key follow-up work. By the time the TCW team leaves, each prospect should be visited at least three or four times. The prospects are then placed on a "nurturing" list and will hopefully be visited at least every one or two weeks. This follow up is another key to a successful program--it shows that our church does care about souls and is eager to share the Gospel. After the campaign is completed a questionnaire is sent out three months later to determine the effectiveness of the program.

That leads us to the question, "How effective has the Mass Media Ministry been?" If we are looking for numbers and

statistics, we would have to say that there hasn't been much success. Each media campaign does NOT automatically pull in fifty new members. Sometimes there are a handful, sometimes two or three, or one, or even none. But one must keep in mind that the purpose of a media outreach is simply to familiarize people with our church and Synod and what we stand for. The effects from that outreach may not result in immediate converts, but somewhere down the road, one, maybe five or even ten years later, someone may remember the WELS and what it offers from the media campaign and be lead to "Come To the WELS." One never knows when the message conveyed from that outreach will bear fruit. In that sense, that is, in getting people acquainted with the WELS, the MMM can be said to be a success. Furthermore, the dividends it pays just in motivating the congregation toward outreach and sharing the word makes the program worth it.

In the future, the MMM plans to produce more programs for all phases of the ministry. Aside from new radio programs, video projects have been in the works. the MMM recently produced "Traveling and Talking For Christ," a new video workshop series, and a promotional filmstrip for the Special Ministries Board, titled "The Heart of These." The potential for video production is almost limitless.

Plans for the years ahead also include placing the MMM under the new Evangelism Committee of Synod, as well as the GBHM. Ideally, the establishment of a WELS communication center where

new programs and projects could be produced would not only save the Synod money in the long run, but provide independence from outside agencies that are now called upon for many projects. As of now, due to funding from a Lutheran Brotherhood grant, 40-50 mission congregations will be able to conduct a total-media outreach campaign. In the future, the GBHM would like to be able to give every mission congregation the advantage of a mass media outreach.

In the Radio Ministry survey presented to the Wisconsin District Missionary's Conference in 1976, a pastor who had utilized radio as an outreach arm, said, "I am persuaded without reservation that God created the media for proclaiming the Gospel." The Mass Media Ministry of the Wisconsin Synod has operated since 1979 with that thought foremost in mind. By God's grace, the years to come will find the WELS Mass Media Ministry ~~contributing~~^{continuing} to use the media to carry out our Lord's command, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

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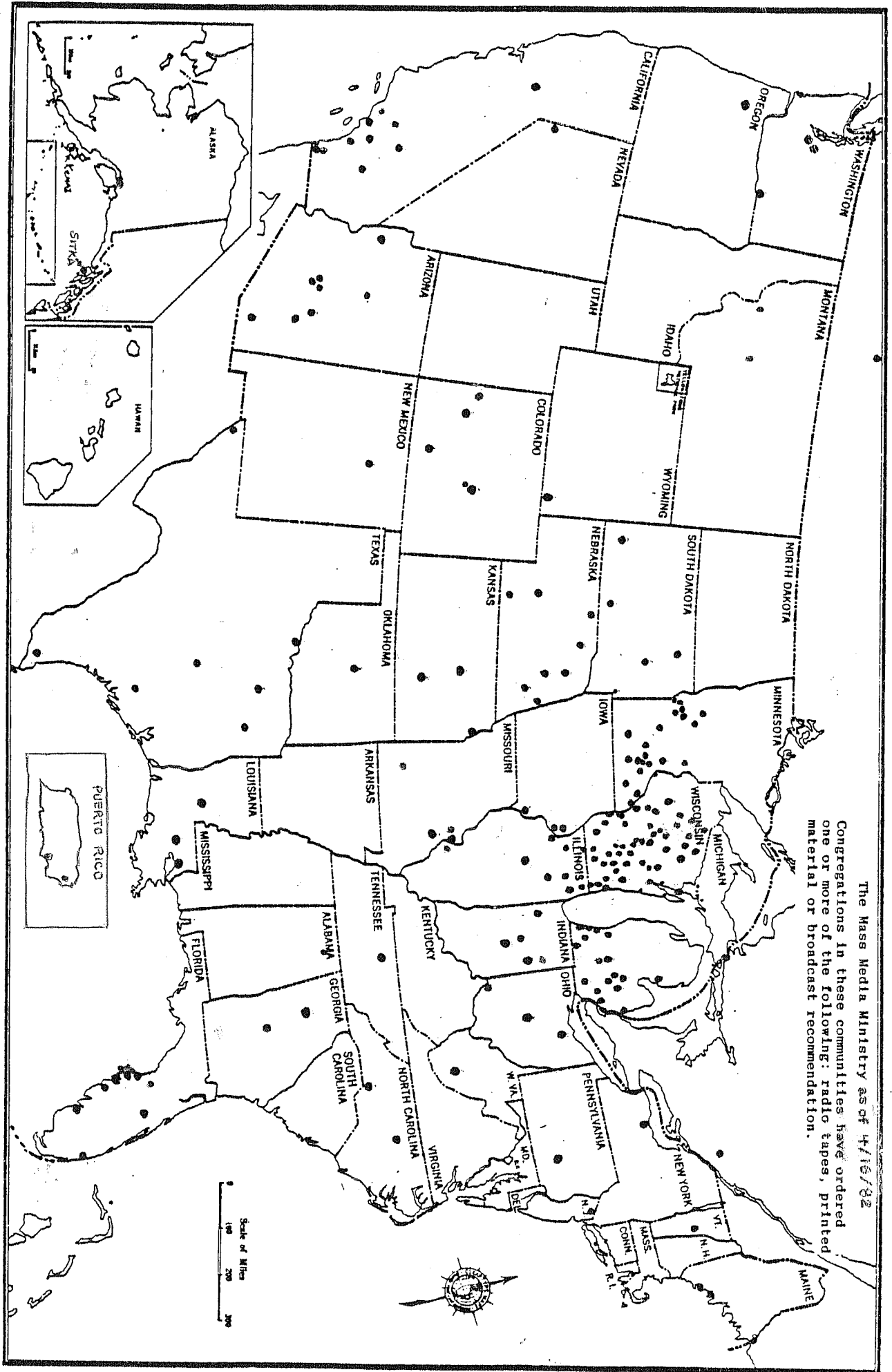
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WELS Book of Reports and Memorials, 1979 and 1981.

WELS Proceedings, 1979 and 1981

WELS Report to the Ten Districts, May 1980, and May 1982.

Interviews: Mr. John Barber
Rev. Norman Berg
Rev. Larry Zwieg



The Mass Media Ministry as of 4/15/82
 Congregations in these communities have ordered
 one or more of the following: radio tapes, printed
 material or broadcast recommendation.