

The Development of
Kingdom Work Balance
in the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Philip Wilde

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Professor Fredrich

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Introduction: Definitions and Self-Defense

A Synod academy is closed. A recommendation reaches the Synod convention to close a world mission field. A moratorium is placed on home mission parsonage-building. A raise in synod code salary is delayed. No further manpower requests are approved. Graduates of DMLC and the Sem remain unassigned. Pre-budget subscriptions fall \$1.8 million below budget requests. The Conference of Presidents produces a "Sing to the Lord" filmstrip detailing the gloomy situation and further cuts that may have to be made.

Meanwhile, opportunities abound for mission work at home and abroad. The Board for World Missions plans to ask the convention to authorize fifteen new missionaries, including five to an entirely new field. The General Board for Home Missions develops a "New Mode" of exploratory work among the unchurched in areas with no nucleus of WELS members. The Commission on

Higher Education struggles to provide modern, efficient facilities and effective training at our Synod schools.

What is the proper balance between our outreach efforts and our training system? How has the budget crunch affected the issue? What can we do to inform our members about Synod's needs and goals? What about the sentiments of some who say we are depriving our outreach efforts by wasting money on frivolities like a bell tower at NWC, an auditorium-gymnasium at the Sem, and/or a new hymnal?

"Kingdom Work Balance" is the attempt to answer all these questions, to respond to the opportunities the Lord has placed before us and to exercise responsible stewardship over the many blessings He has given us.

My interest in this issue began already in high school, when the future of our beloved Northwestern Lutheran Academy began to be questioned. So it naturally suggested itself as a topic for this assignment. As I began to tackle this problem, I was operating with a definition of "Kingdom Balance" in our Synod as being a matter of worker training vs. outreach, and sometimes even home vs. world missions. This admittedly simplistic concept was criticized, sometimes severely, by several of the men to whom I wrote for advice and information. Examples:

During the many years I was active in the Synod there was a good deal of reference to "kingdom balance." The interpretation of "kingdom balance" depended to a large extent upon whose ox was being gored. And yet, there were repeated honest attempts to define in quantifiable terms of what "kingdom balance" actually consists, but it was an elusive task. Furthermore, the concept was always

wrestled with in the narrowest of senses: Missions versus Worker-training. The debate could become quite vociferous, vigorous, and even heated but no satisfactory or long-lasting definitive ratio ever resulted. For all practical purposes the matter was left to resolve itself by the old tried and true equation of supply and demand with all of its practical implications.¹

First of all, I have some strong reservations regarding the topic under question. What is mission work? What is worker training? What is the difference? What is the mission of the church? How can that mission of the church be accomplished or carried out without worker training?

I abhor every attempt to put the various phases of the church's total mission in opposition to or competition with one another. They are all part of the whole, that is, the church's mission. Attempts to neatly categorize or pigeon-hole the work of the church invite unnecessary competition and jealousies and bickering and misunderstanding. I think very strongly that the real important thing is to keep everything in balance. It would be ridiculous to have a worker training program that would provide the Synod with 100 new pastoral candidates each year if only 50 of them could be used. On the other hand, it would be ridiculous to plan a mission program opening 100 new missions a year and a worker training program to provide only 50 of them. We speak of this as a balanced work program.²

...It is not at all a matter of priority or balance between worker-training and sending. THE WHOLE THING IS SENDING, as Jesus said: "As My Father sent Me, EVEN SO send I you."

There is no point or purpose in sending unless there is a message to send. And that message must be clear and complete: "teaching them to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED you." I need not quote all the sedes doctrinae concerning the full indoctrination of those who are sent; you know them.³

...You've touched on something that has bothered me for many years, that has driven the CHE up the wall on many occasions, that has sent Mission Boards home from their meetings agonizing that they didn't accomplish a thing, a topic that has brought good friends onto the Synod floor squaring off in not-always-so-friendly exchanges.⁴

¹Prof. em. Conrad Frey, "Kingdom Balance" (essay delivered to the WELS Conference of Agencies Rendering Evangelical Services; October 15-17, 1984), p. 1.

²Letter from Rev. Robert J. Voss; January 22, 1985.

³Letter from Rev. Edgar Hoenecke; January 25, 1985.

⁴Letter from Rev. David Krenke; January 26, 1985.

I realize that historically there have always been differing views in the Synod as to where the emphasis should be, worker-training or missions. It should never come to that—an emphasis of one over the other, surely never one at the expense of the other. That danger does exist.⁵

"Worker training vs. missions" is an unfortunate, artificial distinction; yet, as the last writer noted, it does become a practical reality. On the Synod level, the worker training, home missions (including CEF subsidy), and world missions divisions take up over 85% of the budget. When cuts have to be made, the choice comes down to either/or.

As is evident from the above quotations, personal opinion plays a large role in this topic, so this paper will be in large part an opinion survey. Still, even though no single, all-encompassing answer to this question will be forthcoming, certain specific guidelines can be found—as well as, I hope, enough hard facts to make this a true history paper.

In order, then, to trace "The Development of Kingdom Work Balance in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod," I intend to adapt a set of four essential elements for outreach proposed by a former Synod stewardship counselor:

If a church is going to reach out with the Gospel—assuming it is faithfully held—there are, according to the rules of the game, a number of elements which must be present. First, that church must have a strong sense of identity. Secondly, that church must have the manpower to carry out its mission. Thirdly, that church must have the resources available to fund that mission. Fourthly, that church must have the opportunity.⁶

⁵Letter from Rev. Ray Wiechmann; January 31, 1985.

⁶Rev. James P. Schaefer, "Stewards of the Mysteries of God in Today's World" (essay delivered to the Arizona/California District Convention; June 22-24, 1976), p. 16.

These four principles will be applied to WELS history broken down into four periods during which major changes were made in our sense of Kingdom Work Balance. These periods are:

- I. From the 1850 founding to the 1868 break with the European mission societies;
- II. From 1868 to 1900, when our colleges and seminary were well established and the Synodical Conference was founded;
- III. From 1900 to 1953, beginning with J.P. Koehler's term as Seminary professor and ending with John Brenner's retirement from the Synod presidency;
- IV. From 1953 to the present, covering the break with Missouri and rapid mission expansion throughout the United States and in new world fields.

I. Groping for a Toehold: 1850-1868

It would be easy to write off this period of Wisconsin Synod history as unimportant for a study of its kingdom work balance. It was a time when there were hardly any synodical programs or funds to balance. It was a time when the Synod was a small group of pastors working hard to take care of the most rudimentary spiritual needs of the flood of German immigrants in Wisconsin.

Yet kingdom work balance is in itself only a reflection of a synod's response to the Great Commission, its sense of purpose. And that the infant Wisconsin Synod certainly had. Because of the small number of pastors, the pivotal figure for instilling in them a sense of purpose was their first president, Johannes Muehlhaeuser.

Who in 1850 needed another Missouri Synod? If Muehlhaeuser had been of the "old style" Lutherans, there would have been no need for a Wisconsin Synod. Muehlhaeuser gave to the Wisconsin Synod warmth, a passion for souls, for the work

of the parish ministry.⁷

As for the four elements required for effective outreach, the Synod was just beginning to grow. The founding pastors were influenced by Muehlhaeuser's "New Lutheran" laxity in fellowship matters, and so lacked a strong sense of confessional identity. Manpower, resources, and opportunity for work outside of Wisconsin were just not there. "In each of these vital areas the infant Wisconsin Synod was notably weak."⁸

Not to Muehlhaeuser but to his successor, Johannes Bading, and to Christian Philipp Koehler, Bading's neighbor in the old Northwestern Conference, belongs the credit (humanly speaking) for the rising sense of Lutheran confessionalism in the Synod. Although the Synod remained weak in manpower, resources, and opportunity, this improved sense of identity eventually led to the break in 1868 from the unionistic mission societies in Europe that had founded the Synod, as well as to the establishment of fellowship with the Missouri Synod in that same year, and the subsequent founding of the Synodical Conference in 1872.

Muehlhaeuser did, however, instill in the infant Synod a desire to do the work of God's Kingdom:

So Muehlhaeuser was not the founder of the Wisconsin Synod's confessionalism, nor did he organize it as it developed. But what he represented was no less great, a personal living faith, child-like trust in his Savior, and

⁷Schaefer, "Some Reflections on the 125th Anniversary of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod" (Metro-North Pastoral Conference; May 19, 1975), p. 4.

⁸Schaefer, "Stewards..." loc. cit.

a burning zeal to build His Kingdom and spend himself in the work.⁹

Under his leadership the founding fathers recognized their weaknesses in manpower, resources, and opportunity, and moved to correct the situation. In the 1850's, attempts were made to train workers at institutions outside the Synod. By 1861 Bading could, in his address as president to the Synod convention, bring up the idea of founding a Wisconsin Synod seminary.¹⁰ Reisepredigt and immigrant mission efforts were undertaken as early as the 1850's, and the custom of mission festivals was imported from Germany.¹¹ Despite the lack of resources during this first period of Synod history, there was a response to the Great Commission, a response that was surprisingly well-balanced.

II. Scrambling to our Feet: 1868-1900

The developments of this period with the greatest impact on the sense of Kingdom Work Balance were the growth of the Synod's educational system and membership in the Synodical Conference.

In retrospect it may be somewhat surprising that fellowship with Missouri and membership in the Synodical conference did not wipe out Wisconsin's desire for its own worker-training system. It would have been easy to lean on Missouri's well-established schools; such was, in fact, the case from 1870 to 1878. A growing

⁹John Philipp Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (Sauk Rapids, MN: Sentinal Printing Co., 1981), p. 72.

¹⁰op. cit., p. 119.

¹¹Eric Hartzell, "Mission Zeal of the Infant Wisconsin Synod, 1850-1893" (WLS Senior Church History paper; March 9, 1976), pp. 3ff, 11ff, 16ff.

sense of identity in the Wisconsin Synod, not only as a confessional Lutheran synod but also as an entity separate from Missouri, can be seen in Wisconsin's rejection of the state-synod plan proposed by Missouri and Ohio. By refusing to become, in effect, the Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod committed itself to finding a way to train its own workers. By the end of this period its colleges and seminary were an effective source of pastors and teachers.

Fellowship with Missouri and membership in the Conference did reduce Wisconsin's opportunities in home mission work.

The organization of the Synodical Conference federation in 1872 further shut off opportunity for the Wisconsin Synod. Missouri was all over the country—fustest with the mostest. There was no question—it was carrying the orthodox standard and it was planting it far and wide. The abortive attempt to form state synods, fostered in the early days of the Synodical Conference, also led to sizeable gains for Missouri as it engulfed smaller groups in its districts, already organized along state lines. While there were occasional quarrels about erecting "competing altars" between Missouri and Wisconsin, for the most part Missouri was left alone to establish congregations among the large German immigrant population of Illinois, Michigan, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota. Its two seminaries, operative since Missouri's organization, poured out the manpower. Its resources were adequate to place their pastors strategically where they labored sacrificially.¹²

However, membership in this conference did give the Wisconsin Synod the opportunity to partake in efforts it could not otherwise have started on its own. The Negro Mission was a Conference project that was initiated during this period. Other projects at home and abroad followed in the twentieth century.

Apart from the Conference, Wisconsin was able to undertake a few new projects as well. Reisepredigt and immigrant mission work

¹²Schaefer, op. cit., p. 22.

continued; for a time there was a Jewish mission as well.¹³ Still, the work in the state of Wisconsin continued to be the most pressing opportunity before the Wisconsin Synod, as Bading noted in his 1883 convention address:

The pressing opportunity the Lord has given us is known. Every year thousands upon thousands of our people and brothers in faith spread out over the parts of this land in a mighty stream. Most settle down far from Lutheran congregations. Filled with their preoccupation for physical advancement, they neglect their spiritual needs. We have a holy and important mission and work to fulfill among these people which we will not be able to finish in our whole lives. The more zealously we strive to fulfill this mission, the more we will be working in the spirit of Luther and the more we will be following the admonition of the Apostle, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith."¹⁴

It was also during this period that work was begun among the Apache Indians of Arizona. This effort is traced back to the 1883 convention, when Bading appointed a committee to find a foreign mission field for the Synod to enter. After considering a number of fields, the Apache reservations were chosen, and work was begun in 1892. This effort is notable not only because it was Wisconsin's first foreign mission, nor also only because it is still in operation. It is particularly important to a study of Kingdom Work Balance in the Wisconsin Synod because it was opened at Synod's own initiative, not as a response to an appeal for aid. This would be a decisive factor in the twentieth century when a debate arose in Synod circles as to whether it was proper to enter mission fields on our own initiative, apart from any

¹³Hartzell, loc. cit.

¹⁴Translated by Hartzell, op. cit., p. 7.

appeal from outside sources.¹⁵

To return to the four essentials, this period is characterized by steady growth in resources as the Synod grew. Opportunities continued to present themselves, and a sense of actively looking for more openings developed. The Synod made the crucial step of establishing its own worker training system. But most important was continued strengthening of the sense of identity. In the first period, the members of the Synod struggled to become a confessional Lutheran Synod. In this second period, by contrast, the challenge was to become a confessional Lutheran Synod: not just an adjunct of Missouri, but a self-contained operation. The desire to respond to the Great Commission by training and sending reflects an even sense of Kingdom Work Balance.

III. Our Identity Crisis: 1900-1953

The parameters of this period are based on the premise that the attitude of Synod's leaders had a decisive effect on its sense of Kingdom Work Balance. The attitudes of two special men dominate the development of Kingdom Work Balance during this period of Synod history. The first is John Philipp Koehler, who was influential as professor at the Seminary from 1900 to 1929 and as the author of the first (and, so far, only) comprehensive history of the Synod. The second is John Brenner, pastor of St. John's in Milwaukee, and Synod president from 1933 to 1953.

¹⁵Rev. Leonard J. Koeninger, "Opening New Fields—Response to Appeals or On Our Own Initiative" (essay delivered to the World Mission Conference; October 13-17, 1975), pp. 1-2.

Koehler's sentiments about the educational and mission goals of the Synod are amply recorded in his History.

Another consideration: In outward matters the church is subject to natural developments like the rest of the world, under God. Not all groups or organizations have the same tasks. There are organizations, like peoples, that remain small in number and in that have a token of their mission to do intensive rather than extensive work, by which the world may even profit more. The Wisconsin Synod had a college that was off to a good start along fundamental educational lines. To maintain and develop that was mission enough for a while. The same applies to the preacher and teacher seminaries and the whole educational system. Then, the numerical growth of the organization ought to have come from within, to assure the compactness of the body and inward strength that grew from close identity and singleness of purpose; instead of having various heterogeneous elements thrown together and scattered units annexed that always required support which ought to have gone to the institutions, and besides did not receive the proper supervision. The result was that, in the field, the work of preachers and missionaries got to be more or less legwork instead of a continued intensive study of the Gospel, and the promising work of the institutions and their training was wasted. Where these principles, that govern all life on earth, are flouted in the church, it will lose that which it has as a special divine endowment even more quickly than it would otherwise.¹⁶

There was something not entirely sound about Synod's heathen-mission endeavor, the idea that a church is not diving up to its mission unless it engages in heathen-mission work, according to the Lord's great commission: Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. That idea is dogmatism, with a streak of pietism, and it provoked the criticism of Prof. Hoenecke.¹⁷

There never has been any doubt that Koehler favored the Synod's educational system over its mission work.

What used to be taken for granted as well, but has been recently questioned, is to what degree President Brenner followed Koehler's ideas. Many who were on the scene at the time report

¹⁶Koehler, op. cit., p. 196.

¹⁷op. cit., p. 198.

that Brenner agreed with Koehler. Examples:

I do President Brenner no injustice if I say that he would subscribe without reservation to the judgment of Koehler on the place of the Wisconsin Synod in the church world....

In the late 40s and early 50s when there was agitation for entering a foreign field, President Brenner stood aloof from the effort. Some might even have said he was hostile to it. His reports to the conventions of 1947 (where the search for a foreign field was authorized), of 1949, and of 1951 (at which the Japan and African fields were approved) cannot otherwise be interpreted. Judging from these three reports, which contained not one word or syllable of approval or encouragement for the effort, it is safe to say that he leaned toward Koehler's view...¹⁸

...In 1945...the thought of adding a new field was considered no more than a hair-brained fantasy. True, it took six years to bring it into being. But when one considers the drastic opposition that prevailed in many quarters, and that the idea caught fire throughout Synod in spite of it, we must count it as progress.¹⁹

In 1945, when the debt had, finally, been wiped out and a \$350,000 contingency fund had been set aside by the trustees to cover future budget shortages—and this had become known in May!—it was entirely consistent for the GMB to ask the Indian Executive Committee to present the proposal, based on Isaiah 49:6, seriously to study both obligation and opportunity for a global Gospel outreach. Since the Indian Mission proposal had been read to the Joint Synodical Committee in May, it came as a definite shock to have the president call the proposal "out of order" before the convention.

While it is almost impossible to set up a formula for the God-pleasing ratio between worker-training and missionary activity, the above demonstrates how easily even Christian leaders can stray from Christ's clear, repeated mandate to "go into the highways and hedges" that His house may be filled.²⁰

I recall how the synod president and others castigated the men who were responsible for our start in Africa. There definitely was an imbalance.²¹

¹⁸Schaefer, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25 *passim*.

¹⁹Rev. A. Wacker, "Our Synod's Missions: 1942...1952...1962" (essay delivered in 1952; occasion not mentioned), p. 9.

²⁰Hoenecke, letter.

²¹Wiechmann, letter.

It should be noted that none of the men quoted here would want to be portrayed as intending any disrespect toward President Brenner. Without exception they also praise Brenner for his leadership in the debt-ridden Depression years, and for laying the Scriptural foundation for the eventual break with Missouri. Yet their estimation of Brenner following Koehler in the matter of Kingdom Work Balance has become widespread in Synod.

However, a more sympathetic evaluation of Brenner's zeal for missions has recently been made.²² In articles for The Northwestern Lutheran and in convention addresses, Brenner repeatedly promoted personal evangelism and faithful instruction of all members as vital to our Reformation heritage. He labored long and hard to restore the Church Extension Fund; elsewhere his attitude toward home missions was limited by the "gentlemen's agreement" with Missouri. He felt a proper zeal for world mission work as well, but was more concerned than many contemporaries for the debt problem, for laying thorough groundwork before making far-reaching decisions, and for fulfilling our share of Synodical Conference world mission projects before venturing out on our own. So if President Brenner was too cautious, he had good reasons.

If there is no unanimous evaluation of Brenner, there is no doubt that Koehler's attitude has been decisively repudiated.

Let us as a Synod zealously guard our institutions, that they may remain workshops of the Spirit of God and really educate young men and women to be co-workers of the Lord.

And then Synod must not fail to send out these mission-

²²Marc P. Frey, "The Mission Zeal of President John Brenner" (WLS Senior Church History paper; March 22, 1980), passim.

aries into the world. In near and distant fields of mission unnumbered souls are yearning for peace, and we are failing our Lord, we are not making the most of our opportunities if we do not supply the bread of life to the best of our ability. Synod has varied work to do which must be done, but home and foreign missions must always occupy the first place on Synod's calendar. Where too much emphasis is laid on secondary matters and the interest for missions lags, it is a sign of deterioration in Synod and Synod is surely not making the most of the opportunities which these times present.²³

Various explanations and extenuating arguments have been advanced to remove the stigma of this failure from the leaders for this lukewarm attitude and for branding the "mission brethren" in the Synod dogmatizers and pietists for advocating the cause of heathen missions.

It is a fact, however, that even a leading theologian at the Seminary who was well acquainted with the situation advanced such mitigating and rather philosophical arguments for the lack of mission interest.

...Where do we find anything like this kind of thinking in the directives given to the church in God's Word? To be consistent, this way of thinking should also fault the early church for sending the greatest theologian of all times, Paul the Apostle, on world mission journeys instead of keeping him at headquarters.... Was it mererhetoric that induced Paul to exclaim, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise" (Ro 1:14)? What is the thrust of the Epistle Lesson for Reformation Festival? Is it merely concerned with the restoration of the Gospel? "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel—to preach to them that dwell on earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people" (Re 14:6).²⁴

The philosophical rationalizations of J.P. Koehler on p. 196 are a case in point. I have not been able to find anything resembling this statement in Scripture: "There are organizations, like peoples, that remain small in number!..." To bless faithful witness with numerical growth is the harvest which God has promised (Is 55: 10-11) and it will come to pass, as He pleases. To seek false comfort for non-performance in texts like Jesus' word "Fear not, little flock," is to practice eisegesis instead of exegesis.²⁵

Finally, perhaps the most widely-read remark about Koehler's atti-

²³Rev. Martin J. Nommensen, "The Mission Opportunities of the Church in 1944" (essay delivered at the West Wisconsin District Convention; June 1944), p. 7.

²⁴Hoenecke, "Reflections on the World Mission Development in the Wisconsin Synod" (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly vol. 75 #3; July 1978), pp. 202-203.

²⁵Hoenecke, letter.

tude toward worker training and missions was that his was "a way of thinking from which the Synod has only in recent decades freed itself by the grace of the Lord."²⁶

Koehler's attitude toward missions is dominated by his concerns as a theologian and a church historian. He did not like to see mission work based on pure expansionism and desire for earthly glory, nor did he see any sense in setting up competing altars with Missouri. These are valid concerns.

Nevertheless, he seems to have been unaware of several major contradictions in his own opinions. His perception that "in outward matters the church is subject to natural developments like the rest of the work, under God"²⁷ explains both the Synod's struggle to establish its schools (of which he approves) and its expansion in the early decades of this century (of which he disapproves). Why should the Synod not expand in outward matters to follow its members as they took part in the economic expansion of the United States, as controlled by God? Not every town is so small that a single Missouri or Wisconsin congregation can meet the spiritual needs of the Lutheran population.

Moreover, Koehler admits that "the same 'mission brethren' were the ones who already did more than their share for the Synod's institutions." Nevertheless, he maintained that their "dogmatizing ...that heathen mission work is the best spur to the church's home endeavors remained a slogan at best."²⁸ Here he fails to recog-

²⁶Prof. Irwin J. Habeck, "J.P. Koehler's History of the Wisconsin Synod" (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly vol. 68 #4; October 1971), p. 225.

²⁷Koehler, loc. cit.

²⁸op. cit., p. 199.

nize the Christian's faith-born response to try to spread the Gospel however and wherever possible, a trait characteristic of the Synod since the days of Muehlhaeuser and Bading.

Manpower and opportunity continued to be available to the Synod during the first half of this century; resources, too, except during the Depression. But Koehler's concept of education over mission work can only be seen as a departure from the Synod's sense of identity (compare his remarks with Bading's 1883 address), a departure not quickly corrected by Brenner, though for other reasons than that he completely shared Koehler's view. But by the end of this period, the Synod's sense of Kingdom Work Balance was back on an even keel: a desire to respond to the Great Commission by training and sending dedicated workers.

IV. Stretching to Keep Up: 1953-1985

Even more than the previous sections, this section is based on the premise that Kingdom Work Balance is a matter of attitudes and educated guesses. Lengthy quotations from conference essays and from letters responding to my request for information and advice will continue to be the dominant feature of this paper. It is my hope that the reader will bear with me and agree that the attitudes of the present Synodical leadership form history as valid as the attitudes of Muehlhaeuser, Bading, Koehler, and Brenner.

Despite the Synod's rapid geographical and numerical growth over the last three decades, its president continues to set the tone for its Kingdom Work Balance in many ways.

Presidents Oscar J. Naumann and Carl H. Mischke have been recognized both from within and from outside of the Synod as promoters of mission work at home and abroad.

The Board for World Missions is deeply and sincerely grateful for the understanding and support which the mission program has received for the twenty-five years of President O.J. Naumann's tenure in office. We know that the entire synod under his mission-oriented leadership rejoices with him over the progress in all of our fields...²⁹

[The Naumann administration] is remarkably untainted by the desire to preserve the existing order just for the sake of preserving it. Through changes in program and structure that boggle the mind, the president has maintained the same posture: there is nothing sacred about the way we did things in the past; if change will serve the Kingdom's purpose in the future, let's go! That enlightened leadership has presided over changes which would send a John Bircher into cardiac arrest.³⁰

The Seminary faculty has also been praised for its role in this mission expansion:

During his entire administration [President Lawrenz] has proven to be a reliable advocate and counselor for the cause and the course of our World Mission program both in his capacity as head of our theological seminary as also in his office as chairman of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations. This relationship is of primary importance for the proper administration and development of our part of the Kingdom work, world missions.

Professor Lawrenz and the entire Seminary faculty have freely given of their time and concern in so many ways that it is difficult for me to enumerate them all.³¹

However, no one has criticized the Synod for ignoring its schools during this period. The campuses of DMLC, NWC, and MLS have been almost completely rebuilt from just a generation ago. A complete campus was purchased to relieve overcrowding at New Ulm, and so

²⁹Hoenecke, "Reflections...", p. 208.

³⁰Schaefer, "Reflections...", p. 8.

³¹Hoenecke, op. cit., p. 209.

MLA has become MLPS. Major facilities were added to the Seminary campus, with more work scheduled to begin this year. Even at Mobridge, despite its alleged proximity to the edge of the planet, a new dining hall and student union building was added to the NWLA facilities just a decade before the school was closed.

Besides the Synodical leadership, the other vital ingredient in the development of Synod's Kingdom Work Balance during this period was the suspension of fellowship with the Missouri Synod and the withdrawal from the Synodical Conference. No longer could Synod members be transferred to a sister synod when they moved beyond WELS boundaries. Most of the Synodical Conference foreign missions and sister churches remained with Missouri. As a result, the Wisconsin Synod saw itself as the last church body of any size that continued to proclaim the Reformation message of the Gospel in its truth and purity.

We say this without boasting, but we are the only church left that has the pure Gospel. I wonder if we're aware of that. ...If we really appreciate what we have, I wonder if we should be more eager to share it.³²

Present attitudes toward Kingdom Work Balance revolve around the theme that we must do the one without leaving the other undone, that training and sending are not opposed to each other but are the two vital aspects of fulfilling the church's single goal.

Sample opinions from various sources:

Did you know that our Synod uses about 40% of its operating budget in the worker training division? That's

³²Prof. Ernst H. Wendland, quoted in my class notes for his Missiology elective; May 4, 1983.

a high percentage. It does not surprise us to hear people suggest in all good faith that this percentage ought to be reduced in favor of a greater investment in home and world missions. But they have to be trained before they can be sent. And before we send them we'd better be sure that we know what they're going to proclaim.³³

I spent nine years serving on a district mission board. In those nine years I also had opportunity to view the larger work of the Synod throughout the country in sharing Christ with my fellow Americans. As I watched mission congregations install pastors and then worked with these men, I had many opportunities to thank God for giving us such talented and dedicated young men to serve in the mission fields.

Now I have become a professor training workers for those fields. I do not believe that my work has changed suddenly. The 40% of the budget which is spent on worker training is not somehow channeled away from outreach. It is a vital investment in it. The young men and young women who are trained in our schools will, by grace and power of God, proclaim the message of Christ crucified to the communities of our nation and the world.³⁴

I also think it's a mistake to differentiate between those two areas of the Lord's work. If training servants of the Word and sending servants of the Word aren't kept together as one concept, neither one makes any sense. One without the other is either impossible or it's a waste. Conceding this, there remains only one concern, viz., to do the best and most you can in both areas. It's not an option to do more of one at the expense of the other, or vice versa. It has to be: do the best you can with training, and the most you can with outreach. Anything less in either program is not acceptable.

As strange as it seems, the somewhat arbitrary division of resources which we have operated with has worked. That's quite critical to this question. It hasn't been perfect; nothing is. Yet over the years our experience has not been one-sided. Rather it has seen a constant fluctuating between more fields than men, and more men than fields, and the most desirable: enough well-trained men to staff as much outreach as we could handle. Perhaps that experience over many years is the most telling argument of all for operating as we do.³⁵

Always keep in mind the way in which missions and worker training do and must work together. The missions use the product turned out by our schools. Without a place to put

³³ President Carl H. Mischke, "To Provide a Teaching and Preaching Ministry" (The Northwestern Lutheran vol. 71 #10; May 15, 1984), p. 155.

³⁴ Prof. John A. Braun, letter entitled "We Need Both" (The Northwestern Lutheran vol. 71 # 19; October 15, 1984), p. 293.

³⁵ Letter from Prof. William G. Zell; January 29, 1985.

the graduates, without graduates to staff the stations, both ends of the tent suffer. So let's get away from the idea that there is competition between these two departments, because really there isn't. The two are more interdependent upon each other than either of them individually will admit.³⁶

The balance of kingdom work is a constant challenge. Officially, the Coordinating Council is charged with this responsibility. Possibly there are better ways to keep mission growth and training of workers in balance. But simply to assume that we can expand our mission work by curtailing our worker training is sort of like selling the rear tires on your car so that you have money to buy new tires for the front. Basically they are part of the same effort. We cannot separate the mission field from the "home front." The mission effort and funding depend on strong self-supporting congregations to supply both the will and the wherewithal to expand the mission fields.

If the above comments have confused you, let it teach you not to ask such questions of musicians.³⁷

My first reaction is that mission work and worker training are not antithetical. They are simply two sides of the same coin. I would like to think that mission work begins with the thorough training of young men and women and ends with the work of these same people out in the harvest fields of the Lord. One without the other is impossible. Thus, we would never want our schools to become houses of theological research such as the ones I observed in New England when I did my graduate study there. Less than ten percent of their graduates actually entered ministry. Nor would I like to see our mission fields peopled by young men and women who were given a once-over Bible college type of education which might fire them with enthusiasm but leave them in the lurch when the Devil himself would put the pressure on. Historically our balance between missions and worker training has worked quite well.³⁸

I believe the present emphasis our Synod has placed on Worker Training and Mission Work is about the right emphasis. While Worker Training takes a good chunk of the Synod budget... yet we must not forget that worker training is also "mission work," for without worker training we would not have people to staff our churches and schools.³⁹

After considerable personal discomfort about the Coordinating Council's methods of "balancing our programs" (and some reflection), I conclude that if our all-knowing God entrusts to His flawed followers the spreading of His saving Gospel, it's not too much to expect that He will guide the

³⁶Krenke, letter.

³⁷Letter from Rev. Kurt J. Eggert; February 4, 1985.

³⁸Letter from Prof. John C. Lawrenz; February 19, 1985.

³⁹Letter from Rev. Robert J. Zink; March 1, 1985.

same flawed people to answer the questions you pose when they are faced with them in real life situations.⁴⁰

I was somewhat disappointed that none of my correspondents wanted to take a specific stand on the effect of budget crunches on the Synod's balance of programs. This time I'll limit myself to one quotation which represents the opinions of the others as well:

A budget crunch will always affect divisions in various ways. But I would be hard pressed to suggest who takes the hardest jolts. Budget cutting goes on in all divisions. My personal observation is that the crunch has little, if any, effect upon the balance in kingdom work that we endeavor to maintain.⁴¹

All the correspondents stated in one way or another that budget cuts don't affect the total balance; when necessary, they are carried out as fairly and evenly as possible. None of the writers seemed to want to say much more; apparently there exists no previously established ranking that is followed when budget cuts are made. However, it is my observation that budget crunches have, unfortunately, forced us to make some unpleasant choices. One academy has been closed; a world mission field was threatened. More than my correspondents wanted to admit, I believe we as a Synod have been forced to ask "Can we afford this?" rather than "Do we need this?" all too often. (This is not intended to criticize the decisions that were made.)

Looking at each of the major divisions of the WELS during the past three decades, we find an overall pattern of growth not be-

⁴⁰Letter from Mr. Robert P. Raasch; March 25, 1985.

⁴¹Letter from Rev. Daniel W. Malchow; January 23, 1985.

lieved possible a generation ago.

The World Missions division has grown to the point where we now have missions or sister churches on five continents.⁴² At least as important as the statistics and geography is the underlying approach to opening new missions:

We ought not lock ourselves into any one or two rigid ways in the opening of new mission fields; we must remain flexible and follow where the Lord leads.

This is in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. As one reviews the Book of Acts and the Epistles, one is struck by the flexibility with which the early church and its leaders met mission opportunities. They were not rigidly locked in, but adapted to each situation. Form, organization and methods evolved from opportunity. Nor did this lead to chaos and disorder. Where the underlying objective of the real mission of the church is clearly understood, where the Great Commission of the Lord is joyfully responded to, there field and form will generally head in the right direction.⁴³

Our Home Missions have seen similarly remarkable growth.

Before the break in 1961 with the LCMS, we were not doing so well in Home Missions either. That's the year I became chairman. We were in 17 states, had little mission thrust, little policy and an ancient CEF that was broke. The Lord showed us the way and for the last quarter-century we have forged ahead.⁴⁴

As in World Missions, so in Home Missions the Synod has seen not only numerical growth, but also a more determined effort to actually reach those who are unchurched, rather than just keep up with WELS members as they move beyond a convenient distance from the nearest WELS congregation. A "New Mode" of doing exploratory work among the unchurched is just now getting off the

⁴²Complete accounts may be found in two essays by Rev. Theodore A. Sauer: "A Look at our WELS World Missions Principles, Policies, and Objectives" (Pacific Northwest District Convention; June 17-19, 1980), and "Sons and Daughters from Afar: An Epiphany Look at our WELS World Missions" (Metro North Pastoral Conference; January 16, 1984).

⁴³Koeninger, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴⁴Wiechmann, letter.

ground. At a September 1984 GBHM consultation on the New Mode, comments included: "Maybe for the first time we're following the GBHM's goal" of reaching the unchurched, and "If we ignore the New Mode, then we go back to no mode."⁴⁵ At present this New Mode has the status of a pilot project, an experiment that is applicable to no more than half of our Home Mission openings. Yet even if this specific project does not prove useful, the fact remains that our Synod for the first time has the manpower, the opportunities, and the willingness to do more in the US than keep up with our own members.

In the area of education in general and worker training specifically our Synod has seen changes as great as in its outreach during the last three decades, though these changes have not been publicized so much. It is in this area that we face the greatest challenges in the immediate future.

The Christian Day School has always been a blessing to our Synod, and many congregations rank their schools first on their list of priorities. Two of my sources sounded warnings about this desire for parish schools:

Furthermore, it seems that at least some of our young pastors begin their ministry with some kind of feeling that their ministry will be evaluated largely on the basis of how quickly they can get an elementary school started, whether or not a congregation is ready for it, or whether or not the congregation at that time possesses the necessary resources and has the wholehearted support such a project requires. Compounding the situation is the fact that a congregation in its planning to open a Christian day school seldom, if ever,

⁴⁵From my personal notes taken at Mission Seminar student steering committee meeting; December 11, 1984. More on the New Mode was published in the 1985 Mission Seminar booklet, on file in the Seminary library.

addresses the propriety of upgrading its synodical support in the same proportion to the drain it will make on the resources of the Synod which is expected to train the workers at considerable financial loss. This militates against "kingdom balance."⁴⁶

Someone at the Sem is or was convincing our men that the CDS is the third Means of Grace. Small, one-room schools are being opened too soon with too little, and some are being closed. Others will have a hard time of it. Some large schools are being supported at the expense of the mission dollar. I have also noted how quickly our men are ready to leave their posts in out-lying districts in order to get Christian Day School training for their young 'uns. Don't misunderstand. I am a strong school man. I started schools in two of the four congregations I served. The third had a school.⁴⁷

The greatest controversy to be faced in worker training is the matter of synod academies vs. area high schools as sources for pastors and teachers. Most of the comments from my correspondents were along these lines:

Maybe the Synod could operate without its prep schools. Maybe without those schools we could still train a qualified and enthusiastic clergy. However, speaking very personally, I'm one who would not want to take the chance.⁴⁸

One did some figuring on the financial savings to Synod from a system of Synod support for two or three language and religion teachers at each area high as a substitute for the academy system. "We could offer to sell MLS to the area people as we did the Academy and offer each High School a sizeable amount for each student produced."⁴⁹ However, there is another side to that solution:

Also militating against "kingdom balance" is the willy-nilly opening of area Lutheran high schools without adequate planning and without adequate resources. Here again there is no consideration of increasing synodical support in proportion to the resource drain on the Synod expected to

⁴⁶Frey, op. cit., p. 3.

⁴⁷Wiechmann, letter.

⁴⁸Malchow, letter.

⁴⁹Wiechmann, letter.

train and provide the workers. The fact of the matter is, in some instances at least, that funds that would ordinarily flow into the mission programs are no longer available and are even diverted to high school operation. I don't think the congregation to which I belong is an isolated example. Over two-thirds of its operating budget is devoted to local educational support, elementary and secondary. Its prevailing large deficit is almost exactly its commitment to the local area Lutheran high school. It has not in the past several years met its synodical commitment, much less increased it. In fact, the 1985 operating budget of the congregation calls for cutting back on its synodical commitment by about \$15,000 in order to try to balance its budget.⁵⁰

In other words, before we decide that dropping the academies would save money for Synod, much more mathematics must be done.

Another often-repeated refrain in this question is the quality of education being offered by the area highs:

With but a few exceptions the preministerial course at area Lutheran high schools doesn't compare all that favorably with that of the prep schools. When a boy who has taken German in a Lutheran high school all four years and is supposed to have a good background in the language finds himself at sea as soon as he begins the freshman German course at NWC, or when a boy has the same experience with regard to Latin, and when this situation repeats itself time and again, then one can see that this is so.⁵¹

But this too is not so clear-cut as it seems. As a graduate of a synod academy attending NWC, I often wondered whether we would ever be challenged to use the superior language training we had received in the prep schools. It often seemed that our college courses were aimed at the least common denominator.

Comparisons with the Missouri Synod are also cited:

Moreover, with such support for worker training, the Synod also continues to have control. Once we give up the support for our schools, as the Missouri Synod did, we can also lose the control over our schools, and many of these schools are often lost for worker training. Concordia College, Milwaukee, is a good example in that Synod: today it is more of a general

⁵⁰Frey, op. cit., p. 4.

⁵¹Prof. Richard W. Strobel, "The Role of the Prep School in our Educational System" (essay delivered to the Dakota-Montana District Convention; June 20-22, 1978), p. 12.

college, preparing very few for the ministry. Concordia was forced into this when its support from the Synod was cut. It had to seek its income from other sources to survive, and so became a more general college.⁵²

In his guest lecture to the Senior Class at the Seminary this spring, the Executive Secretary of the CHE stated that he personally and the Commission officially are in full support of the academy system. I do not doubt his sincerity. However, it was this same Commission that in 1979 gave the impression that chopping an Academy is an easy way to save Synod money. If this attitude has become widespread in Synod—and I believe it will, if it hasn't already—the CHE will have caused itself, at least in part, a lot of problems.

To return to the four principles for evaluating a church body, in the past thirty years the WELS sense of identity has grown to that of an independent, world-wide church body. Its manpower has grown from shortages at the time of the break with Missouri to enough now to have some unassigned pastor and teacher candidates. Resources are the big question mark: There is no doubt that we have been richly blessed; the challenge is proper motivation for and organization of our stewardship. Opportunities abound on every side.

⁵²Zink, letter.

Conclusion: Recommendations

At the beginning of this paper I noted that I did not expect to find any single, comprehensive answer to the problem of Kingdom Work Balance, but that several specific guidelines could be found. The guidelines I propose center on information, stewardship, and example.

GET THE PASTORS TO COMMUNICATE THE INFORMATION THEY GET FROM SYNOD, writes one correspondent.⁵³ "Our congregation has established a 'Synod Awareness Committee,'" writes another.⁵⁴ Synod periodicals and reports, convention essays, mission festivals, and missionaries on furlough are just a few of the sources of information available. Especially The President's Newsletter from President Mischke is refreshingly candid and detailed; if it would appear more often and be more widely circulated, it would go a long way toward reducing the importance of the well-known Synod grapevine. Especially what I would like to see prevented is the development of wingnut⁵⁵ positions such as the one that I used in my survey letter to bait my correspondents: that the NWC

⁵³Letter from Rev. Daniel M. Gieschen; January 25, 1985.

⁵⁴Letter from Mr. John W. Brooks; February 2, 1985.

⁵⁵"Wingnut": slang, synonym for "radical." Used as noun or adjective; connotes (one who is) "half-baked, hasty, not thought through."

bell tower is a waste of money that could go to missions. Somewhat more seriously, some have expressed the concern that the Seminary really doesn't need a new auditorium-gymnasium. But it is difficult to sympathize with such concerns when they come from students who are planning summer vacations to Europe, and/or who own thousands of dollars worth of cameras, televisions, stereo equipment, and so on. As many of my correspondents pointed out, this applies to every member of Synod.

Which leads directly to my second recommendation: stewardship. Reaching Out, though a great blessing, has exhausted our willingness to participate in special fund drives for a few years. It is now time to concentrate on the yearly budget, to educate members about the opportunities the Lord has placed before them, and to preach the Gospel to strengthen their faith-born desire to give. One specific area that I see needs improvement is in the stewardship training of future called workers. Sometimes I have noticed, or at least thought I did, that students at DMLC, NWC, and even the Sem know little if anything about the Synod's decision-making processes, or even about personal stewardship: how to set aside an amount, how to fill out an offering envelop.

Which leads to my last recommendation: example. I know it is most perilous for a Sem student to rely too much on his vicar experiences, but I know that last year our district president, in formal and informal situations, was constantly encouraging the called workers to lead by example as well as by word. Somewhere along the line this has dropped out of the Seminary curriculum; at least I do not remember it being so emphatically taught.

Called workers, and especially pastors, need to keep in mind what kind of example they are setting for their flocks. Any lukewarm attitude on the part of the pastor will tend to be interpreted as disinterest, if not disapproval, by the members of his congregation.

Kingdom Work Balance is a reflection of the Synod's response to the Great Commission. Awkward though it has been at times, the Wisconsin Synod has developed a remarkably balanced program of training and outreach. That response must continue to be the response of each of the Synod's pastors, and, through their example, of each of its members.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Resolution adopted at the 1977 Synod convention:

Appendix A

- WHEREAS fears have been expressed that the overall work of the church could be adversely affected by well intentioned endeavors of groups to meet the needs of the aged, the youth, the mentally retarded, and others; and
- WHEREAS enthusiasm of a minority for a particular program should be guided by the will of the Lord and should seek support by the majority of God's people; and
- WHEREAS our mutual interest in the total program of the church as well as our brotherly concerns lead us to follow order and decency; and
- WHEREAS proper and thorough planning contributes to kingdom work balance, and faithful stewardship requires careful planning of all new as well as existing programs, particularly giving attention to their implications for and effects upon the total program of the church; therefore be it

Resolved, a) That in planning new projects the planners give due and deliberate attention to the church's priorities in "serving all people in God's world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures"; and be it further

Resolved, b) That the planning schematics of every program in the church include planning, as necessary, in the following areas:

1. Organization -- involving pastors, teachers, and congregations in the decision making process
2. Enrollment (enlistment or occupancy) -- initial and potential
3. Finances -- operational and capital
4. Site and facilities -- including initial and long range planning
5. Curricula or programs -- including objectives, goals, and manpower needs; and be it further

Resolved, c) That the planning program in all areas outlined above proceed chronologically in the order outlined below and that no new phase of planning begin until the preceding has been completed. The planning phases are:

1. Initial discussion phase
2. Exploration phase
3. Planning phase
4. Implementation phase
5. Initial operating phase
6. Ongoing operation phase; and be it further

Resolved, d) That planning for special ministries be done in close harmony with the District Special Ministries Boards; and be it further

Resolved, e) That planning for area Lutheran high schools be done in close harmony with the District Boards for Parish Education; and be it further

Resolved, f) That our brotherly concerns draw into such planning for programs which involve more than one congregation the elected officials or responsible boards of the district or of the Synod; and be it finally

Resolved, g) That these resolutions be brought to the attention of the Synod and its districts and that all our fellow Christians be urged to follow this planning program.

RESOLUTIONS OF COMMITTEE ON KINGDOM WORK BALANCE

- WHEREAS the church's assignment from the Lord Jesus Christ is to preach the Gospel to every creature; and
- WHEREAS the implementation of this assignment has led and will lead to the establishment of many different programs carried out by individual congregations, groups of congregations, districts, and the Synod; and
- WHEREAS these programs of the church entail Christian education on every level, evangelism efforts, mission outreach at home and abroad, charitable endeavors, and social concerns; and
- WHEREAS emphasis in any one area may cause an imbalance that could implement one program at the expense of another or could jeopardize one or another's effective implementation; and

Appendix B

A request for information and advice was sent to the following present and past members of Synod boards:

Stewardship:

Rev. Daniel W. Malchow
Rev. James P. Schaefer

Board for World Missions:

Rev. Duane K. Tomhave
Rev. William A. Meier
Rev. Edgar Hoenecke
Rev. Theodore A. Sauer

General Board for Home Missions:

Rev. Norman W. Berg
Rev. Larry G. Zwieg
Rev. Daniel M. Gieschen
Rev. Raymond L. Wiechmann

Board of Trustees:

Rev. Elton H. Huebner
Mr. Robert P. Raasch

Coordinating Council:

Mr. John W. Brooks

Commission on Higher Education:

Rev. Robert J. Zink
Rev. Robert J. Voss
Rev. Kurt J. Eggert
Rev. Edgar A. Knief
Prof. Lloyd Huebner
Rev. Karl A. Gurgel
Prof. Carlton Toppe
Rev. Fred P. Zimmerman
Prof. John C. Lawrenz
Rev. Edmund O. Schulz
Prof. Theodore B. Olsen
Prof. William G. Zell
Rev. David A. Krenke

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