

**MC²:
The Roots and Beginnings of the Multi-Cultural Ministry
Committee**

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What does it mean to be a Lutheran? Many thoughts will likely first pop into one's mind when this question is posed. Some may think of idyllic rural churches in the Upper Midwest. Some may think of coffee served at every church gathering or potluck meals which wouldn't be complete without a Jell-O salad. But what does it really mean to be a Lutheran? What are some things that set us apart as Lutherans from other Christian denominations? What are the things that are essential to being a Lutheran, the vital elements without which we would fail to properly call ourselves Lutherans?

When Martin Luther adopted the three "solas" as the watchwords of the Reformation he set apart his efforts to reform the church from what had previously been taught in the Roman Catholic Church. The fact that sinners are saved "sola gratia" means that no matter who someone is or what that person has done, salvation is purely by God's grace alone. The fact that sinners are saved "sola fidei" means that each sinner is saved by faith in Jesus Christ and by his atoning sacrifice on the cross and miraculous resurrection, not by any work or effort on the sinner's part. The fact that each person is saved "sola scriptura" means that the power of salvation lies in God's inspired, efficacious Word, not in the power of the preacher and not found in popular philosophy or the most current societal trends. Not only do these reformation principles continue to serve Lutherans today, but also they continue to set Lutherans apart from other denominations.

In his reforms Martin Luther also sought to undo some corruptions in the way Christianity was practiced. In his teaching and preaching he

emphasized the universal priesthood of all believers. Each believer is a servant of God called to serve God by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. He emphasized Christian freedom. Believers are not under a New Testament ceremonial law, nor are they beholden to anti-Scriptural decrees of self-imposed church hierarchies. Instead, Christians are free to worship and serve their Lord in a God-pleasing manner. He also put the Christian faith in the context of the common man. He translated the Bible into a language the people could understand and wrote hymns instructing the people in biblical truths in musical settings appealing and edifying to the common people.

The same aspects of faith emphasized by Martin Luther are today emphasized in our Lutheran Church. What he so earnestly fought for we still cling to today and allow to separate us from other denominations. The essentials for being a Lutheran remain the same.

Those essentials make the Lutheran Church uniquely suited for ministry in the 20th and 21st century America. The belief in “sola gratia” and “sola fidei,” the dominance of the message of objective justification mean that a person is saved by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ regardless of his or her country of origin, ethnic heritage, or social and economic standing. The doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers means that all Christians today can and should be trained to carry that message of forgiveness and salvation to other people. The belief in “sola scriptura” leads Christians today to proclaim God’s Word confidently to all people, even if those people happen to be different than the proclaimer. It also gives Lutherans the freedom to put the

teachings of Scripture into the context of the hearers, even if that context is different ^{From} ~~than~~ the traditional experience of previous generations of Lutherans.

Christian freedom allows believers to express what God has done and to praise him in styles of music ranging from 16th century European to spirituals of the American South.

In short, there are many things that we think of as making us Lutheran, but there are a few essentials that truly make us Lutheran. These few essentials also uniquely equip the Lutheran Church to proclaim God's plan of salvation across cultures.

Part One: The Roots of the MC²

In 1967 a group of pastors in Milwaukee, Wisconsin formed the Inner City Pastors Council.¹ Pastor Richard Seeger of St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Church formed the group comprised of ten pastors from nine churches to address the needs of the pastors and congregations in the central city of Milwaukee. At this time many churches were leaving the central city, merging with other churches, or disbanding entirely. At times the group served the purpose of allowing pastors to air grievances about frustrations and concerns in their ministries and congregations resulting from the changing neighborhoods in which their congregations were located. More importantly, the group served to strengthen WELS congregations in the city. Pastors met to give mutual strength and encouragement to their brothers struggling in service

¹ Westendorf, Rolfe. "WELS in the Inner-City." March 1, 1982, p. 4.

in their changing congregations. As the ICPC met for support and study it grew to serve a wider purpose and influence.

The WELS first became involved with the inner city as a result of the work of the Inner City Pastors Council. The ICPC devised a three-year plan for evangelism in the inner city by using young people to teach vacation Bible School at inner city churches and training them to work with the African-Americans residents of the city in the process. To carry out the plan the ICPC requested a grant through the Aid Association for Lutherans. Since the grant request had to be made through a constitutional entity of the synod, the Commission on Evangelism by making the grant request for the ICPC first became involved with inner city mission work.

The WELS as a synod specifically began to look at people of other cultures as its mission field in the 1970s. In response to a position paper written by Pastor Kurt Koelpin of Atonement Lutheran Church, the General Board for Home Missions “officially recognized the inner city as a mission responsibility” on August 5, 1971.² Pastor Koelpin called the GBHM to draw its attention to the issues facing the inner city and apply resources to serve congregations in changing neighborhoods in order to “avoid the stigma of serving mainly the Caucasian in the financially restricted suburb.”³ In response Pastor Norm Berg, “the Chairman of the General Board for Home Missions appointed an Inner-city Mission Study Committee to examine the

² Ibid., p. 7.

position paper and the questions raised therein.”⁴ The study committee analyzed the paper and offered solutions to the issues raised in the paper and submitted them to the GBHM.

Encouraged to elaborate on some of its solutions offered to the GBHM, the Inner-city Mission Study committee advised the formation of national inner-city mission seminars. Following the encouragement of the study committee, the GBHM held the first Inner City Mission Seminar in Milwaukee October 13-15, 1972. The seminar was held to help both the inner city congregations and the synod see their obligations in the inner city mission fields. Lay members and pastors were invited from inner city WELS congregations across the nation as well as representatives from the Synod’s administration and worker training system. The seminar served not only to raise awareness of the mission field in the inner city, but also to strengthen attendees in their resolve for this outreach. It also helped to disseminate information and promote policies for inner city mission work.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary first officially became involved in this mission field and assisted in the endeavor when Professor Carl Lawrenz presented his theological paper “Extent and Limitation of the Great Commission in Inner City Church Work.” The paper not only stated that Scripture implicitly includes inner cities in the Great Commission, but also

³ Koelpin, Kurt F. “A Study Document Re: A New Mission Horizon: Established Church in a Declining Neighborhood.” March 8, 1971, p. 7.

⁴ “The Report of the Inner-city Mission Study Committee to the General Board for Home Missions.” July 30, 1971, p. 1. (Rev. Henry Paustian, Chairman; Rev. Rolfe Westendorf; Rev. Daniel Gieschen; Mr. John Metzger; and Mr. Arthur Schaefer)

that “strongly suggested is a special obligation toward those who are there where we not only are but where we have been for a long time.”⁵

The Synod continued the inner city mission seminars for the following years. These seminars proved beneficial for raising awareness of the inner city mission field, strengthening the attendees, and providing viable resources for work in the field.

Building upon the relative success of the inner city mission seminars, it was hoped that the district mission boards of the GBHM would be able to implement the ideas produced and promoted at the seminars. When it was realized that the Southeastern Wisconsin District Mission Board was more accustomed to dealing with forming new missions in suburban settings the Inner City Mission Committee was formed in 1975. Pastor Norm Berg worked to make the ICMC a sub-committee of the district mission board. In 1979 the Book of Reports and Memorials cited the formation of the ICMC and noted its objective was: “To act as a service agency to the GBHM and the DMBs in inner city mission work.”⁶

In practice the Inner City Mission Committee was often frustrated. In working to assist the Southeastern Wisconsin District Mission Board in supporting mission work in urban settings it often grew frustrated with the apparent philosophical differences between the DMB and the ICMC members.

⁵ Lawrenz, Carl. “Extent and Limitation of the Great Commission in Inner City Church Work,” Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, vol. 70, no. 2; Northwestern Publishing House: Milwaukee, Wi; April 1973, p. 88.

⁶ Reports and Memorials for the Forty-Fourth Biennial Convention; Assembled at Northwestern College; Watertown, Wisconsin; August 1 to 8, 1979.

Some of these were ideological differences regarding the form of monetary support for urban missions and timetables for self-support.

The Inner City Mission Committee often sought to champion the cause of cross-cultural mission work for the WELS by bypassing the previous avenue and dealing directly with the GBHM. In this regard the role of Pastor Norm Berg cannot be overstated. His constant sympathetic ear helped to lend legitimacy to the ICMC. The committee served to give examples of ongoing urban mission work. It served as a voice publicizing urban mission work in the WELS. And it served as an advocate for urban missions and prospective urban missions throughout the United States and Canada.

The next change for the ICMC came when it realized that the same thing that happened on Milwaukee's north side was also happening on the south side. In 1981 the Inner City Mission Committee changed its name to the Multi-Cultural Mission Committee to reflect the inclusion of St. Peter Lutheran Church on Milwaukee's near south side, a largely Hispanic neighborhood. It became more concrete to the committee that cross-cultural work in Milwaukee involved reaching across more than one culture.

When the Board for Home Missions sought to create a committee for cross-cultural outreach with greater influence it formed the Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee. The constituent members of the BHM's new Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee were pastors representing various geographic locations throughout the United States. This new committee also had representation from various ethnic groups or pastors and lay people working

among various ethnic groups. Their work was expanded to include the United States and Canada. Its organization was more directly tied to the BHM. At this time the Inner City Mission Committee and Multi-Cultural Mission Committee continued to focus on cross-cultural work within Milwaukee.

With the new MC² working on the synodical level, the Inner City Mission Committee adapted to fit another need of the inner city congregations. In 1992 the Revised Inner-City Mission Committee was formed. It is comprised of lay members from inner city WELS churches, most of whom are ethnic minorities. This group has been entrusted with the task of guiding and directing the path of the WELS inner city congregations.

While the work of the inner city Milwaukee groups may seem to have been surpassed by the newer MC², their work continues in its context. Area representatives have formed the Urban Mission Committee as a subcommittee of the Southeastern Wisconsin District Mission Board to continue voicing the concerns of central city within the district. When in 2000 the pastors of the Milwaukee area reconfigured the conferences into an urban conference and its two constituent circuits, they largely replaced the Inner City Pastors Council. Yet it still functions at least organizationally to carry out the annual Inner City Vacation Bible School.

While the newer MC² carries the banner for cross-cultural ministry on the synodical level today, the importance and influence of the predecessor groups is indisputable. Not only did they with the Lord's help succeed in stemming the tide of fleeing and dying WELS congregations in the central city

of Milwaukee, but they also helped the synod see the value of expanding ministries in the central city.

The “Talk About the Savior” evangelism program of the 1970s has its roots in the inner city of Milwaukee. Responding to the new evangelism opportunities created by vacation Bible schools the pastors of Milwaukee began to study “Evangelism Explosion” by D. James Kennedy. They invited a fellow inner city pastor from Detroit, Michigan, to join them. When Pastor Wilmer Valleskey revised the ideas presented in “Evangelism Explosion,” he produced the “Talk About the Savior” evangelism program.

Other products from the inner city groups such as the inner city vicars, seminary students working at Northside Ministries and Southside Ministries are largely incalculable, but may benefit our synod and its congregations immeasurably for generations. The pastors, lay members, and congregations of inner city Milwaukee have also served our synod as past examples and ongoing illustrations of cross-cultural ministry.

When outlining the importance of early cross-cultural work in the WELS the Lord cannot be thanked enough for men like Pastor Rolfe Westendorf and Pastor Norm Berg. Pastor Berg chaired the synod’s (General) Board for Home Missions when the synod saw great mission expansion and entrance into all fifty states. Throughout all these numerical growths and challenges he continued to keep an eye toward cross-cultural outreach. He demonstrated that he “just had a heart for inner-city work” as he advocated for Inner City

Mission Committee before the BHM.⁷ Pastor Westendorf was called to pastor the flock at Siloah Lutheran Church in Milwaukee in 1967. Since that time Pastor Westendorf has served the flock of Siloah reaching out to the church's immediate neighbors, shepherding the mixed-race flock, and seeking involvement and leadership from the congregation's African-American lay members. He has also gently and firmly counseled and cajoled the synod. In his years of service at Siloah and to the Kingdom of God at large he has continued in his determination to open the eyes of area pastors and synodical leaders not only to the ripe mission field within the inner city, but has also held before their eyes the possibilities of different approaches to biblical ministry to people from different cultures, races, and economic backgrounds than the way the WELS has traditionally carried out its ministries.

Part Two: The Beginnings of the MC²

In the late 1980s as the influence of the Inner City Mission Committee was being felt and, noticing published trends in demographics, voices began to call for an expanded commitment to cross-cultural ministry in the WELS. Pastor Harold Hagedorn replaced the retired Pastor Norm Berg as Administrator for the BHM in 1988. Pastor Berg had previously advocated broader cross-cultural work and an increased role for the ICMC in the late 1980s. The ICMC, however, had to acknowledge that it was unable to meet expanded commitments.

⁷ Personal interview with Pastor Harold Hagedorn on April 17, 2002.

Pastor Hagedorn had already experienced frustrations in reaching out to other cultures in his ministry in parishes. “Congregations and mission boards had already recognized that they had opportunities to share the gospel cross-culturally,” notes Doctor Glen Thompson, “but they were unsure of how to do it.”⁸ As Administrator for the BHM Pastor Hagedorn began to closely follow demographic studies, especially ones that tracked the “browning of America.” In conversations with Pastor E. Allen Sorum of Garden Homes Lutheran Church in Milwaukee they began to discuss a mission response to this trend. Both pastors saw an opportunity for cross-cultural ministry. Both pastors desired to elevate the need for cross-cultural ministry in the WELS for the changing landscape of America.

The MC² Takes Shape

In 1989 the BHM authorized a task force to look at multi-cultural fields.

The Synod reinforced the BHM’s efforts in convention:

Resolution No. 2

WHEREAS 1) The Board for Home Missions (BHM) has noted that the populations of the USA and Canada are increasingly multi-cultural in nature; and

WHEREAS 2) The BHM has noted that this reality presents ever-increasing opportunities for sharing the gospel with those who don’t yet know Christ; therefore, be it

Resolved, a) That we commend the BHM for noting these missions fields around us; and be it further

Resolved, b) That we encourage the BHM to address aggressively these opportunities God has given us to serve as Christ’s ambassadors.

ADOPTED⁹

⁸ Phone interview with Pastor Glen Thompson on April 3, 2002.

⁹ Proceedings of the Fiftieth Biennial Convention; pp. 64-65.

Pastor Hagedorn assembled a group of pastors with varying degrees of experience working cross-culturally to form the task force. The task force came back to the BHM with the recommendation for the formation of a committee of the BHM to look after multi-cultural issues and ministry. When the BHM approved the formation of this committee in 1990 the MC² was born.

Following the BHM's resolution, the Multi-Cultural Ministry Task Force submitted a mission statement, philosophy, and objectives to the BHM. The BHM in turn approved them and they became the mandate and guidelines for the formation of the MC². The following served as the "Mission Statement of Multi-Cultural Ministry of the Board for Home Missions:

Because our Lord has graciously given us the privilege of being His witnesses to all nations, and because He has placed before us the cultural diversity of all nations in the fields ripe for harvest throughout the United States and Canada, especially in urban areas, the WELS Board for Home Missions is committed to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in an ongoing way with targeted cultural groups

- 1) By informing and encouraging our fellow-Christians of the WELS about the multi-cultural opportunities with which God is blessing us.
- 2) By planting cross-cultural churches in promising new fields.
- 3) By encouraging and helping existing congregations to share the Gospel with cultural groups in their ministry areas."¹⁰

The BHM in its January 1990 meeting adopted the following philosophy for the MC²:

~> | "To accomplish the multi-cultural mission our Lord is graciously placing before us, we implore the grace and guidance of our Savior God and approach our work with a philosophy of ministry which acknowledges that

- 1) A creative ministry, within our confessional and Biblical standards, will be used

¹⁰ "Report of the Multi-Cultural Ministry Task Force," April 1989.

- 2) There will be a long term commitment to the development of such ministry
- 3) We will work with flexible criteria because of the diverse nature of multi-cultural work
- 4) New fields will be carefully targeted and evaluated
- 5) A team ministry approach will be considered
- 6) A “holistic” approach will often provide the entry points to a cultural group (Holistic deals with the balance between communicating the Gospel in Word and sacraments and illustrating the love of Christ in deed.)
- 7) The urbanization of our world will compel us as a confessional Lutheran church body to look for opportunities to evangelize ripe urban fields
- 8) It will be necessary to locate and develop resource personnel
- 9) The sharing of information on the opportunities for cross-cultural ministry will have increased and ongoing emphasis
- 10) Multi-cultural efforts will have a voice and vote on the BHM
- 11) Efforts will be increased to train workers from target cultures and to do so in ways which will not alienate them from their culture.”¹¹

The objectives of the MC² were slightly more specific. Some of those specific, rather short-term objectives were to:

Seek a multi-cultural ministry emphasis at the 1992 district conventions, seek to impact the worker-training system, including a possible multicultural outreach class in connection with the Seminary’s summer quarter, and seek to “propagandize” cross-cultural ministry by means of articles in the Northwestern Lutheran” and other media outlets of the synod.¹²

The objectives called for the identification and recruitment of various persons who are working in cross-cultural ministry to serve as examples, who would be able to train others for cross-cultural work, and who would be able to organize materials and publications for those working or seeking to work in cross-cultural settings. It set objectives for developing and evaluating new mission starts and gave them a set of goals.

¹¹ Ibid.

With the mandate from the BHM, Pastor Hagedorn began to assemble the committee. Most members who received formal invitations had previously been members of the multi-cultural task force. As stated above, a deliberate effort was made to enlist the services of a variety of pastors and lay members representing ministry experience from a variety of geographic locations in the United States among a variety of ethnic and cultural minorities. The initial committee included Pastor Glen Thompson of New York City representing an urban multi-cultural setting and the economically disadvantaged; Pastor Roger Sprain from Northwestern College representing Hispanic ministry; Pastor E. Allen Sorum of Milwaukee representing ministry to African-Americans; Mr. Clarence Rittmann of Chino, California; Mr. Duane Anderson of Alexandria, Virginia; Pastor James Connell of El Paso, Texas, representing ministry to Hispanics; and Pastor Harold Hagedorn from Milwaukee.

When Pastor Hagedorn first began to assemble the initial task force he asked Pastor Sorum to join the group. Having spent six years as pastor at Garden Homes Pastor Sorum had experienced frustrations in attempting cross-cultural ministry. So when Pastor Hagedorn extended the invitation, Pastor Sorum said, "No thanks, I only know what doesn't work in cross-cultural ministry." "But," he continued, "I will do it if you agree to send me to school to study cross-cultural outreach."¹³ Pastor Hagedorn put together a proposal to send Pastor Sorum to school to study cross-cultural ministry academically. Tapping into the inner city fund of the BHM Pastor Sorum was supported in

¹² Ibid.

his pursuit of doctoral studies in urban cross-cultural ministry. In 1989 he enrolled at Westminster Theological Seminary. Even before the MC² was officially formed Pastor Sorum became a resource person and an “indentured servant”¹⁴ to the MC² and BHM.

On December 7 and 8, 1990 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin the MC² met for the first time. Its agenda was full and wide reaching for that first meeting. It met to implement the Statement, Philosophy of Ministry and Objectives. It looked into proposed mission endeavors and sought to lend assistance to existing cross-cultural work. It strategized about its relationship to the BHM and the District Mission Boards. It received reports and encouraged its members to research and prepare reports.

From the beginning the members of the MC² saw their role as one of raising awareness for cross-cultural ministry within the WELS and for offering assistance for those working in cross-cultural ministry. “In a sense,” says Pastor Hagedorn, “we first had to convince people of the need and value of cross-cultural outreach and then secondly we had to help them to do that work.”¹⁵ It was clear to them that they had to lift up the existing cross-cultural ministries in the synod and speak up for potential cross-cultural ministries throughout the United States and Canada. To this end the MC² worked with new mission starts in cross-cultural settings and advised the BHM regarding these missions or potential missions.

¹³ Personal interview with Pastor E. Allen Sorum on April 19, 2002.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Personal interview with Pastor Harold Hagedorn on April 3, 2002.

Slightly less concrete, the MC² knew it had to have an academic emphasis. Besides Pastor Sorum's doctoral studies at Westminster each member was to be able to serve as a resource for the rest of the committee, then the entire MC² would be able to serve as a resource for the groups it served. This closely echoes Pastor Kurt Koelpin's call in his 1971 position paper to study the work of other church bodies regarding cross-cultural work. At the meetings the members were each given reading assignments. The individual members would then begin to assemble a bibliography which would serve as a pool and source of information on particular cultures.

While its philosophy had been laid out before the BHM by the task force and adopted by the BHM, the MC² sought to develop its philosophy more fully. The members of the committee came on board with an approach to cross-cultural ministry that involved listening and partnering. Pastor Hagedorn restates two of the simple conclusions which became obvious to the MC², "Early on it became obvious that one of the most basic things necessary for cross-cultural outreach was #1 to just get into the culture and listen, and then #2 in most settings it would also be necessary to show some deed of kindness."¹⁶ The members also saw the obvious value in partnering with workers in the ethnic groups which they were targeting. Cross-cultural work necessarily involves the lay leaders of that culture. The lay leaders need to be trained and brought up in God's Word to lead among their own cultural group.

¹⁶ Personal interview with Pastor Harold Hagedorn on April 3, 2002.

If the ministries among that culture are to survive and thrive called workers will also necessarily have to be cultivated from that culture.

When the MC² began its work its members understood the call to promote cross-cultural ministry throughout the WELS. What needed continuing discussion and clarification, however, was the committee's focus in the field of cross-cultural ministry and ways to go about promoting cross-cultural ministry. At the first meeting of the MC² Pastor Sorum presented his work "A Primer for Those Who Prepare Cross-Cultural Missionaries for the Urban American Context." The group was allowed to react and offer evaluations.

The group also discussed the MC²'s role in relation to the BHM and the District Mission Boards. It was agreed that the MC² should serve in an advisory capacity to the DMBs. Rather than becoming an entirely separate entity, the MC² wanted to stress the fact that multi-cultural missions were the responsibility of the BHM. Because of this the MC² has never functioned on its own, but always in connection with the BHM. It doesn't have its own budget, but receives allocations from the BHM. According to Pastor Hagedorn this is because the "MC² partners with the BHM rather than becoming a thorn in the flesh of the BHM; it uses the existing structure to help see mission fields in existing congregations."¹⁷

After its initial meeting in 1990 the MC² struggled to find its purpose and identity. The MC² defined its role:

¹⁷ Personal interview with Pastor Harold Hagedorn on April 17, 2002.

We are advocates for the ethnic 'lost' as well as the ethnic 'found.'

We serve to provide assistance to the DMBs and to its BHM.

We are available to provide consultative services to congregations and DMBs.

We may also provide consultative services directly to pastors and lay leaders.¹⁸

The MC² struggled for its voice and validation. The members of the MC² performed field visits to potential multi-cultural missions. The members returned to the meeting to give reports on their field visits. To increase its voice the MC² advocated multi-cultural ministry workshops. The first workshop was tentatively scheduled for the fall of 1992. Acting on one of the committee's initial emphases of building up lay leaders and called workers from within ethnic minority groups, Pastor Thompson first presented the idea for the Multi-Ethnic Pre-seminary Program at the September 1991 MC² meeting. The committee also continued to review Pastor Sorum's "Primer for Those Who Prepare Cross-Cultural Missionaries for the Urban American Context." An appeal was made to revise the "Primer" into a more popular form which could be more widely distributed and understood by WELS called workers and lay leaders.

The MC² Produces

One of the first goals of the MC², according to Pastor James Connell, was to find out which congregations in the synod were located within changing neighborhoods. When a survey to that effect was returned the results were astonishing: ½ to 1/3 of the congregations surveyed fell into the category of

¹⁸ Minutes of the MC² meeting held February 8 & 9, 1991.

changing neighborhoods. Equally amazing was the number of congregations willing and asking for help or information on cross-cultural outreach. Because of this interest the MC² began inviting pastors and lay members to a multi-cultural mission seminar in April 1992. At the seminar the people were divided into groups and sent out to do interviews. Minorities from WELS congregations were called upon to do presentations for the groups. The attendees were then given lists of books to use as resources for their variety of ministry.

One major area of emphasis in the formative years of the MC² was to produce a philosophy of ministry to guide the MC² and form a foundation for future cross-cultural ministry. As stated above, the members of the committee saw real value in researching the research of other people working in cross-cultural ministry. They felt a need to develop principles which could serve as a basis for their work and principles which they could share with others seeking to carry out cross-cultural ministry. In 1991 the MC² summarized some of the basics of its philosophy into the "20 Theses on Multicultural Ministry." These theses emphasized the worldview that each person carries with him or her. It acknowledged that some of these beliefs may be formed apart from God's revealed Word and may actually be sinful. In seeking to preach the gospel across cultures the preacher needs to be mindful of his or her own worldview and needs to seek to translate God's plan of salvation into the worldview of the hearer. The theses acknowledge that while it is God's Word which has the power to convert souls, the preacher of the gospel will seek to understand the people and culture of the people to whom he or she seeks to preach and

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proclaim the gospel in a way that is meaningful to the person in that target culture. When the MC² was able to present the philosophy of multi-cultural ministry to the district conventions it achieved one of its goals of gaining a voice for its work. Its struggle for validation, however, had just begun.

In the summer of 1992 the members of the MC² were asked to present the philosophy of the MC² to as many district conventions as possible. They were asked to either present the philosophy as agreed on by the committee and articulated by Pastor Sorum or to present the philosophy in their own words for the context of the specific district convention.

Pastor James Connell remembers presenting his own paper at two district conventions. When he presented “Now is the Time for Cross-Cultural Mission Work” at the South Central District Convention, he remembers it being received well. When he presented the paper at the Arizona-California District Convention the reaction was a little tougher. No one expressed disagreement with the ideas presented in the paper. However, Pastor Connell says, “People there just thought of it as a lot of talk, but not really doing anything.”¹⁹

A different reaction met the MC² presenters at the Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention in the summer of 1992. Pastor Hagedorn presented the paper “The Philosophy for Cross-Cultural Ministry” to the convention. The ideas in the paper had come from the members of the MC². Pastor Sorum had written the ideas down and produced the document. The

¹⁹ Phone interview with Pastor James Connell on April 12, 2002.

members of the committee then gave their input and revisions until the paper stood in the form delivered to the convention by Pastor Hagedorn.

The minutes from the convention give some details of the reaction to “The Philosophy for Cross-Cultural Ministry”:

Discussion of the essay was held with Pastor Hagedorn at the podium. Numerous concerns were expressed about both content and tone of the essay. Discussion time was extended. The following motion was made and seconded: 1. That we reject the essay, “The Philosophy of Cross-cultural Ministry” because of its uncertain sound; 2. that we urge this essay not be further disseminated; 3. that we urge the committee responsible for it to prayerfully produce a document addressing this important issue and that the new document have a clear, Scriptural and Lutheran Confessional sound; 4. that the new document be presented to our district in assembly in 1994; and 5. finally, we urge that the new document after approval be disseminated to all who have received “The Philosophy of Cross-cultural Ministry.” At 12:07 PM the floor was given to Pastor Sims who closed the morning session with prayer.

...Pastor Hagedorn respectfully withdrew the essay, promising to bring it back after consultation with the Seminary faculty and the Board for Home Missions. A motion was made and seconded to end discussion. Carried. The motion itself was called. A division of the house showed 128 in favor, 241 against. The motion lost. ...It was moved and seconded to accept Pastor Hagedorn’s offer to withdraw the paper. Carried.²⁰

When Pastor Sorum took the paper to the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary faculty, they found nothing doctrinally wrong with it. Pastor Sorum does, however, remember a point raised among the faculty,

“I remember Professor Brug saying something to the effect that, ‘You seem to say a lot in your paper about listening to your audience so you can know your audience and speak to them in a sensitive way. You seem to have forgotten your own point when you brought this paper before this convention.’”²¹

²⁰ Proceedings of the 38th Biennial Convention, Southeastern Wisconsin District; Assembled at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; Mequon, Wisconsin; June 10 & 11, 1992.

²¹ Personal interview with Pastor E. Allen Sorum on April 5, 2002.

Other members of the MC² assessed the reaction to the paper. “Some people,” assesses Pastor Hagedorn,

Heard the felt needs terminology and viewed it as being a Church Growth idea. Others associated it with the homogeneous principle – that some people are more inclined to listen to the gospel. Others heard the concepts of doing something to help people and take care of their social needs and viewed it as a helping hand rather than just a way to use an act of kindness to show care for people.”²²

“Many in attendance felt that the ethnographic and demographic emphasis took the emphasis off of Scripture and the efficacy of Scripture,” says Pastor David Rutschow, District President of the Southeastern Wisconsin District.²³ According to Pastor Sorum himself, “it seemed like people were reacting negatively because of perceived negative critical influence” in the authors quoted in the paper.²⁴

Even though the reactions to the papers presented at the 1992 district conventions may not have all been positive, some MC² members count the experience as beneficial. Pastor Hagedorn believes that “Even this negative reaction served a purpose because by creating a controversy it helped to raise awareness.”²⁵ Others believe the experience helped them formulate cross-cultural principles more clearly and more carefully. When Pastor Sorum revised the paper as a result of the convention he made changes in the quotations. Instead of quoting theologians of suspect backgrounds, he quoted

²² Personal interview with Pastor Harold Hagedorn on April 3, 2002.

²³ Phone interview with Pastor David Rutschow on April 5, 2002.

²⁴ Personal interview with Pastor E. Allen Sorum on April 5, 2002.

²⁵ Personal interview with Pastor Harold Hagedorn on April 3, 2002.

Pastor E.H. Wendland. He also quoted Scripture to say the same things which he had previously quoted non-WELS theologians stating scriptural principles.

The Synod in convention in 1993 acknowledged and encouraged the work of the MC²:

Resolution No. 3

WHEREAS 1) the Lord has called us to share the gospel with every nation, tribe, language and people; and

WHEREAS 2) people of other cultures live in neighborhoods of our congregations; and

WHEREAS 3) the Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee has provided us with tools to help congregations reach people of other cultures; and

WHEREAS 4) these tools have been reviewed by members of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary faculty and approved by our Board for Home Missions; therefore, be it

Resolved, a) That we encourage our congregations in multi-cultural areas to use these tools, and be it further

Resolved, b) That we encourage the Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee to assist these congregations in using these tools; and be it finally

Resolved, c) That we encourage the Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee to condense these materials for use by laypeople in our congregations.

ADOPTED²⁶

The next important milestone for the MC² came when the Board for Ministerial Education met together with the MC² to discuss the idea of a pre-seminary ministerial training program. In 1994 the BME approved the proposal originally introduced^d by Pastor Glenn Thompson and developed by the MC². As a result of the meeting Pastor Thompson was granted a leave of absence from his teaching responsibilities at Michigan Lutheran Seminary to develop curricula for the pre-seminary program.

²⁶ Proceedings of the Fifty-Second Biennial Convention; p. 83.

Today the WELS Congregational Evangelist Program functions as the first phase in the MEPP. The program offers the following definition: "An evangelist is a called worker who assists a congregation and its pastor or a district mission board by spearheading outreach in a specific cultural group or community."²⁷ Their pastors using materials developed and assembled by Pastor Thompson and the MC2 instruct the congregational evangelist candidates locally.

A Congregational Evangelist can serve local congregation after completing the program or he can continue the education process by enrolling in the WELS Multi-Ethnic Preseminary Program. This phase of the program "is designed to encourage mature WELS members from minority cultures to enter the ministry."²⁸ It no longer uses the local congregation's pastor, but instead "uses distance learning to provide the academic courses necessary for entry into Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, eliminating the need for several years residence at Martin Luther College."²⁹

Another significant milestone was passed in 1996 with the completion and publishing of Pastor Sorum's book "Change: Mission and Ministry Across Cultures." The book was a product of Pastor Sorum's completed program of study at Westminster Theological Seminary. It provides the theology of missions and guiding principles for missions in urban North America. This emphasis on theology and guiding principles is important because, as Pastor

²⁷ Pamphlet entitled "WELS Congregational Evangelist Program."

²⁸ Pamphlet entitled "The WELS Multi-Ethnic Preseminary Program."

²⁹ Ibid.

Hagedorn observed, “even some people who were willing to reach out cross-culturally still had a majority mentality for running the church or a paternalistic attitude in using ethnic leaders.”³⁰

It then gives concrete ways to carry out that mission. In the preface to the book Pastor Hagedorn expresses its practical value: “This book provides a process to follow so that the special opportunity the Lord God is giving to you may be seized.”³¹ The book became a resource tool and workbook for those entering into cross-cultural ministry. After its publication MC² committee members in resource and consultation capacities could point out not only the “what” of cross-cultural ministry, but also the “how.”

Transitions

In 1995 as the MC² sought to expand its role as advocate for cross-cultural ministry throughout the WELS it underwent reorganization. A continuing focus was to promote cross-cultural ministry and cross-cultural ministry opportunities. It saw the continuing relevance of visiting and advising mission fields. It continued to focus on developing a philosophy and process for cross-cultural ministry.

A new emphasis of the MC² became to pass along the philosophy and process of cross-cultural ministry. To that end it began to mentor more pastors to put the cross-cultural mission philosophy in practice and spread it to other pastors and congregations willing to do cross-cultural ministry. It

³⁰ Personal interview with Pastor Harold Hagedorn on April 17, 2002.

³¹ Sorum, E. Allen. Change: Mission and Ministry Across Cultures. WELS Outreach Resources; Milwaukee, WI: 1999, p. vi.

sought a new focus in influencing the Conference of Presidents to allow them to sensitize and instruct WELS called workers and congregations. It also sought to get mission counselors on board to instruct missionaries how to use ethnographic interviews and the process advocated by the MC². Ideally, one mission counselor would become an expert in multi-cultural mission work.

In order to increase its voice it expanded the committee by adding subcommittees. Subcommittees were formed for Field and Program Development, Mentor Program, Special Programs, and Promotions. The chairmen of each subcommittee, the chairman of the MC², and the BHM administrator made up the MC² executive committee. The BHM also requested a full-time pastoral assistant for Garden Homes Lutheran Church on behalf of the MC² in order to allow Pastor Sorum to devote more time to consulting work for multi-cultural ministry across the synod.

The MC² again revised its purpose. The committee stated this purpose:

The MC² are trainers (involved in doing as appropriate). This must now be the approach because of the opportunities and time constraints. This training is not offered in a presumptuous manner but with the prayer that the Lord our God might use us for the blessing of many and to the glory of his name.³²

The committee also refocused its attention to the DMBs, congregations involved in SUCCORs, the Ministerial Education System, the Synod, and working with the Board for World Missions.

In 1996 the MC² developed the School for Urban Cross-Cultural Outreach. The SUCCOR was designed to be a quick, mobile way to consult

³² Minutes of the October 3 & 4, 1996 MC² meeting.

with pastors and congregations interested in cross-cultural ministry. One pastor experienced in cross-cultural ministry was sent to the interested congregation or group of congregations and presented the philosophy and process of the MC². The presenter would present the ideas of the MC², but would bring his own experience as credibility. The SUCCOR became the “cornerstone of the consultation process.”³³

In 1997 the MC² went into its third incarnation. The committee expanded to include men with experience and expertise in various areas of ministry. The committee again discussed its purpose. Changes were accepted to reflect the following:

Our purpose as a committee is to encourage WELS Christians and local congregations to support, encourage and, as opportunity presents itself, to conduct an urban cross-cultural mission and ministry. Our purpose also, therefore, is to lend guidance, encouragement, resources and accountability as appropriate. Finally, our purpose is to interact with all other areas of ministry (BWM, BME, BPS, etc) in order to infuse our entire church body with the guiding principles critical to cross-cultural mission and ministry.³⁴

In 1997 the Seeking Our Neighbor committee presented its finding to the synod convention. While it was a synodically appointed committee, it nonetheless advocated cross-cultural work and was influenced by the MC². At the synod convention it introduced its resolutions with this preface:

Subject: WELS Seeking Our Neighbor Committee
Introduction: In the fall of 1995, the WELS Seeking Our Neighbor (SON) Committee began the work for which it was created by our synod in convention. The synod had charged the committee with helping us all to “focus on the changing face of America and the

³³ Minutes of the August 1, 1996 MC² meeting.

³⁴ Minutes of the October 19 & 20, 1997 MC² meeting.

world, and the opportunities God is presenting to us to reach out with the gospel to people of every culture” (BORAM, p. 36). In the course of its work, the committee carried out extensive research in multicultural ministry and conducted numerous personal interviews with WELS public ministers from a wide variety of ministry settings as well as with lay members representing a diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, interests, and experiences.

Why this focus on multicultural outreach? Is this special emphasis really necessary? As Christians, we would like the answer to be “No.” We understand that if we all really acted toward each of our neighbors as Christ acts toward us and loved them as our Savior loves us, matters of race, culture, and ethnicity would cease to matter. As the SON committee very properly observes in its report, “The gospel transcends cultures, changes hearts, and has the power to remove the barriers which reside in our own hearts and in the hearts of those we are trying to reach.” In a real sense, then, the SON Committee’s focus and function exist because we are sinners. We realize we do not love our neighbor as Christ loves us, and so we do not always seek our neighbor for Christ as we might. IN an even more important sense, however, the SON Committee’s focus and function exist because we are forgiven sinners. We know first-hand the pardoning grace of our God, which is for us and for all people, and which God has commissioned us to share with the entire world. Because we know that grace, we may and we must share it with others.

With a firm grip on the blessings of God’s means of grace in Word and sacraments by which he has blessed us in the past, we turn our eyes to the future of our synod and of Christ’s church, and present the following resolutions intended to guide us all in seeking our neighbor: (p. 69-70)³⁵

While its resolutions were refreshing and far-reaching, it had no mechanisms in place to follow through on its recommendations.

In the late 1990s a movement began to consolidate the mission boards under one board responsible for all missions. A proposal was considered to join the World Mission Board and the Home Mission Board into something like a North American Common Mission Board. Part of the rationale for this new,

³⁵ Proceedings of the Fifty-Fourth Biennial Convention; p. 35-36.

unified board came from the observation that North America was becoming more multi-cultural because of the influx of immigrants. Any mission work carried out in North America could not ignore the differences and varieties in culture of the target groups. Because this new mission board might render the MC² obsolete, the MC² took a brief hiatus during discussions about its formation.

When it became apparent that the new consolidated mission board would not materialize, the MC² once again took up its work in earnest. This fourth and most recent incarnation became a more streamlined committee. It now consists of the three consultants (Pastor Sorum, Pastor Mike Roth, and Pastor Leon Piepenbrink), the Multi-Ethnic Pre-seminary Program director (Pastor Glen Thompson), the Administrator for the Board of Home Missions (Pastor Hagedorn), and the Chairman of the Board for Home Missions (Pastor Ken Gast). This group sees a different purpose: they want to get the job done. They feel the WELS has begun to speak the language of cross-cultural outreach, now they want to get the WELS doing the work. The institutions and leadership of the Synod seem to be on board with the philosophy. Now the work of the MC² is to get the members and called workers of the Synod doing what they say.

Part Three: Achievements of the MC²

Pastor Sorum offers this important ground-rule when analyzing the achievements of the MC², "First of all, we have to remember that whatever has

been accomplished through the MC² has been accomplished by God.”³⁶ Pastor Roger Sprain provides this important reminder: “The Lord is the one who is waking people to see the mission fields around them.”³⁷

President Karl Gurgel sees the key thrust of the MC² as “creating a passion for all the lost.”³⁸ This passion began in the BHM and continued to spread from there. So far through its existence the “MC² kept what little cross-cultural work we had alive and made it more viable. It continues to advocate for cross-cultural work.”³⁹ President Gurgel attributes many of these achievements to God’s grace working through two leaders within our synod: “Pastor Westendorf doesn’t let us forget this important work. Pastor Sorum showed people how to do cross-cultural work, he gave us the ethnographic interview.”⁴⁰

According to Pastor James Huebner, Chairman of the Commission on Evangelism, the Commission on Evangelism puts into practice the principles of the MC². He offers one example: “Recently in Phoenix we took twelve district evangelism coordinators out to the streets to do ethnographic interviews. It opened the eyes of the coordinators.”⁴¹

The MC² can also point to specific accomplishments within the ministerial education system, according to Pastor Peter Kruschel, Administrator of the Board for Ministerial Education. “In general,” says Pastor

³⁶ Personal interview with Pastor E. Allen Sorum on April 5, 2002.

³⁷ Phone interview with Pastor Roger Sprain on April 6, 2002.

³⁸ Personal interview with WELS President Karl Gurgel on April 17, 2002.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Phone interview with Pastor James Huebner on April 5, 2002.

Kruschel, "it has helped students get first-hand contact with other cultures."⁴² The Minority Cultures classes at Martin Luther College are also using Pastor Sorum's book as a classroom resource.

At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President David Valleskey notes that the work of the MC² is felt largely through the "Culture Club." Pastor Sorum meets with interested students a couple times each year to discuss cultural issues. Pastor Sorum then gives the seminary students the opportunity to do ethnographic interviews on two Saturdays in the city of Milwaukee. He is also able to sponsor a trip taking the students to a major American city to witness cross-cultural ministry and to do ethnographic interviews in a different multi-cultural context. Professor Paul O. Wendland observes "the MC² has helped us to realize we have to think theologically about changes in our society."⁴³ In its Statement of Purpose and Objectives, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary now includes under the objective:

To instill in its students the kinds of attitudes that will assist them as they carry out their ministry in the contemporary world, e.g.,
 Confessional in stance
 Evangelical in approach
 Mission-minded in spirit
 Culturally sensitive
 Appropriately flexible
 Zealous to nurture and equip the saints."⁴⁴

The MC² also had an impact within the ministerial training system for training students from non-traditional backgrounds. Professor Emeritus

⁴² Personal interview with Pastor Peter Kruschel on April 18, 2002.

⁴³ Personal interview with Professor Paul O. Wendland on April 17, 2002.

⁴⁴ Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Statement of Purpose and Objectives, adopted by the faculty on February 14, 2002.

Armin Panning acknowledges that “Dr. Thompson and Dr. Sorum brought up the idea of training future pastors in their settings without taking them out of their homes. The MC² really advocated this approach.”⁴⁵ Professor Panning continues to wonder about the place for students in the system who take the non-traditional course. Now the seminary faculty has taken up the idea of the Multi-Ethnic Pre-seminary Program and run with it to develop the Pastors Studies Institute.

When Pastor Richard Lauersdorf became the Synod’s Vice President for Mission and Ministry he brought together the WMB, BME, BHM, and BPS to discuss how to do cross-cultural ministry. His Cross-Divisional Cross-Cultural Committee (more commonly referred to as the Double Cross Committee) came up with “The Guiding Principles for All WELS Cross-Cultural Ministry.” The innovation of this document, according to Pastor Michael Roth, is that “instead of a top-down mandate, they adopted principles that each called worker can apply.”⁴⁶

Pastor Connell concurs with the assessments of some of the current MC² members. The results so far are mixed, because, as Pastor Connell says, “the materials for cross-cultural work are there, but we still aren’t doing it. We could still use more seminars, more hands-on activities.”⁴⁷

How does one measure the success of a group like the MC²? Looking back to its purposes for existing when the committee was first formed, the

⁴⁵ Personal interview with Professor Armin Panning on April 9, 2002.

⁴⁶ Personal interview with Pastor Michael Roth on April 25, 2002.

⁴⁷ Phone interview with Pastor James Connell on April 12, 2002.

results of the MC² may be mixed. But in serving the WELS and serving the Lord its achievements are judged by different standards. First of all, credit must be given to God for any success granted to his human servants.

Secondly, the results are largely intangible because any group which serves the WELS and therefore the Lord has as its first goal the salvation of souls.

Perhaps a final thought from Pastor Westendorf is in order. He observes that by God's grace he has had "the privilege of watching our German immigrant synod become a worldwide multi-cultural synod."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Personal interview with Pastor Rolfe Westendorf on April 10, 2002.

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