

The Life and Ministry of Lloyd Otto Huebner

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One time was all it took. In one moment it all became clear. I must have been about 13 or so. We were at grandma and grandpa's for the holidays. The usual fight had broken out between brother and sister, and apparently it was getting a bit out of hand. That is, until grandpa stepped in. He gave us one harsh look and spoke a few sentences of dismayed concern. Fear and shame filled our hearts to the brim. How could we have disappointed grandpa? How could we have upset him? We would never do that again!

It's a brief and short memory, but one that will never fade. And it was at that moment that I finally realized why thousands of other high school and college students felt the way they did about him. I empathized with the fear and shame they felt when caught in a sin and on the wrong end of that firm look. But even more memorable was that I understood why so many students loved my grandfather so dearly—that other look. Only moments after the reprimand we received a warm smile and a twinkle in the eye, a look that said, “You did wrong, but you're forgiven and I still love you.” It's something impossible to describe, but for those who have experienced it, they know exactly what I am talking about.

Though just a faint memory for many, I think “The President Huebner” look is very important in understanding why his parishioners, his students, and his family continue to love him so much. You see, that look represents Lloyd Otto Huebner's entire philosophy for ministry. When there was sin—be it by Farmer John down the road, a leader of the student body, or simply a raucous grandson—it was addressed with the full force of the law (harsh look). But that law was *always* followed by gospel reassurance that the sinner was forgiven both by God and by him (kind look). That's Lloyd Huebner in a nutshell—faithful minister of law and gospel.

That faithful ministry officially began with his assignment out of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1951 to serve as the pastor in Akaska and Tolstoy, South Dakota. Being a seminary senior patiently waiting an assignment, I can only imagine what thoughts could have been running through his head at the time. Yet despite a minimal salary, an extremely rural location, and a constant battle with mice in the parsonage, he still served faithfully. And the love those 100 people had for their pastor was very evident in their generosity. They made sure that the Huebner family would never go hungry as they filled their pastor's deep freeze to the point of overflowing.

How difficult it must have been for him to leave these people after three years of service. But the Lord did lead him to serve elsewhere—Wood Lake, MN. Here there were different issues to deal with. As this was the mid 1950s, the 850 members in Wood Lake struggled mightily with the decision to either join the LCMS or remain with the WELS. Lloyd Huebner again served as faithful pastor and led his people through these problems.

It was also at Wood Lake that Huebner fostered his appreciation for the teaching ministry. Perhaps that is why the Lord led him to accept a divine call in 1958 to begin a school in Fort Atkinson, WI. There must certainly have been many who doubted the possible success of a Lutheran high school in this location since several others were nearby. But nevertheless, Huebner served faithfully as the principal of this high school which began with only 41 students. The success that God granted to this school through its early leadership is very evident in the current state of the school. Lakeside Lutheran High School currently has several hundred students and boasts very successful academic, athletic, and extracurricular activities.

During the nine years at Lakeside Lutheran High School, Lloyd Huebner's abilities as an excellent teacher and leader for students became very evident. And if he displayed such abilities

in teaching, wouldn't it be nice if he could teach the teachers? Sure enough, the call came and was accepted in 1967 to be the dean of students at Doctor Martin Luther College.

DMLC ended up being the final stopping place for Lloyd Huebner's ministry. He spent 26 years there—13 as dean of students and 13 as president. Over those 26 years on the New Ulm campus he was a part of many important things. He led the college through financial problems and staffing cuts similar to the ones having occurred over the last few years in WELS. He was there when the DMLC library project started and was finished. He was a part of the push for an amalgamated college of both pastors and teachers. But most importantly, he was a part of the student's every day lives. The number of students who graduated from DMLC over those 26 years is in the thousands. That's a lot of students who got to know "the look" on varying degrees. Some likely experienced the look of reprimand more, others the look of love and approval. Either way, countless teachers in the WELS today experienced the gospel-centered and loving approach that Lloyd Otto Huebner had in his ministry at DMLC.

Even after retiring from the full-time ministry, Huebner was not quite finished serving the Lord. He had three stints (1995, 1997, 2000) as the assistant to the chaplain in Germany. During these months he had the chance to serve many souls not just in Germany, but also throughout Europe.

Presently, Lloyd Huebner enjoys a more full retirement. But that doesn't mean his days are ever dull or boring. He serves on the WELS OWLS committee. He assists with various ministries at his church (which just happens to be the one where his son, James, is the pastor). Huebner also continues to travel with his wife, Inez, across the country visiting children, grandchildren, and now even great-grandchildren.

The number of lives that Lloyd Huebner has touched during his ministry would be impossible to estimate. Needless to say, there are thousands of teachers, students, parishioners, and even family members to whom he ministered faithfully. During his interview, he said there was one thing he attempted to do with the Lord's help—have a love for the ministry and a love for the gospel, and then show that love to others. I think I speak for thousands when I say, “Pastor-Dean-President-Grandpa Huebner, thank you and well done.”