

Ministry and Missions:

The ministry of Pastor Thomas Spiegelberg

*I have become all things to all men
so that by all possible means
I might save some.*

1 Corinthians 9:22

Timothy Spiegelberg
Senior Church History Thesis
Paper and Interview
04/16/2003

Interview Outline Pastor Thomas Spiegelberg

The Early Years

Birth through Elementary school, 1939- 1953

- 1 Birth – when, where, how (*Appleton, WI, Nov 3, 1939*).
- 2 Family – parents (*Ken, Ruth*), siblings (*Tim, Jane*).
- 3 Family life growing up (*Ken was farmer, milkman, Banta Company*).
- 4 People who were influential in your early years (*Pastor Ernie Tiefel*).
- 5 Education through elementary school (*Trinity, Neenah, 7th + 8th Grade*).
- 6 Church involvement.
- 7 Early hobbies, interests.

High school, College, Seminary, 1954 – May, 1966

- 1 **High school** – where, why (*Northwestern Prep School, 1954 - 1958*).
- 2 Influences toward ministry (*Pastor Ernie Tiefel*).
- 3 School extra curriculars (*Tennis, Wrestling*).
- 4 People (*Gary Schroeder, Merle Wagenknecht, Malchow, Westerhouse, Kowalke*).
- 5 Hobbies, interests, jobs (*Kitchie, Bakery, Banta Company*).
- 6 Commitment toward ministry
- 7 **College** – where (*Northwestern College, 1958 – 1962*).
- 8 People (*Sandra Weiss, Ted Olsen, John Henning, Stephen Valleskey*), hobbies, extra curriculars.
- 9 Commitment toward ministry
- 10 **Seminary** – where, (*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1962 – 1966*).
- 11 People (*Bill Schweppe, Prof. (Peewee) Lawrenz, Prof. Schuetze, Pastor Ed Weiss*).
- 12 Vicar year (*Arlington, Minnesota, 1964 – 1965, Pastor John Bradke*).
- 13 Significant events (*Married June 19, 1965, Sandra Weiss*).
- 14 Commitment toward ministry.

Career in Ministry

Call day, Mercer, Hurley, Wisconsin. 1966 – 1969.

- 1 Family situation at call day
- 2 Describe call day.
- 3 Describe your assignment churches (*Hurley + Mercer, WI*).
- 4 Good or bad situations, housing, wife's reaction.
- 5 Rookie mistakes and successes.
- 6 People (*Ernie Craw, Don Mears*).

- 7 Family events during ministry at Mercer / Hurley (*Theron, 1967, Becca, 1968*).
- 8 Insights learned from ministry in Mercer / Hurley.

Indianapolis, Indiana, Divine Savior Exploratory. 1969-1973.

- 1 Thoughts when debating the call.
- 2 Church situation (*exploratory*).
- 3 Difficulties and successes in Indy.
- 4 People (*Robert Kohlmeyer*).
- 5 Family (*Tommy, 1971*).
- 6 Insights learned from ministry in Indianapolis.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Risen Savior daughter congregation. 1973 – 1977.

- 1 Thoughts when considering call to Milwaukee.
- 2 Church situation you were going into.
- 3 New problems to overcome, and new blessing found in Milwaukee.
- 4 People.
- 5 Family (*Tim, 1976*).
- 6 Insights gained in Milwaukee.
- 7 Significant events.

Eagle River, Alaska, Peace Exploratory. 1977 – 1985.

- 1 Thoughts when considering a call to the boonies.
- 2 Church situation you encountered (*rugged, isolated*).
- 3 Alaskan peculiarities encountered.
- 4 People (*Pastor Zietlow, Bill Bakeburg, Dr. Skala*).
- 5 Family (*Marcus, 1979*).
- 6 Insights gained from Alaska
- 7 Significant events, special stories.

Grand Junction / Montrose, Colorado, St. Paul / St. John. 1985 – 2003.

- 1 Thoughts when considering call.
- 2 Churches you were going into.
- 3 Problems / blessings in Colorado.
- 4 People (*Tim Poetter*).
- 5 Family
- 6 Insights gained in Colorado.
- 7 Significant events encountered (*tent ministry*).

Ministry – Looking Back.

1. How has the church scene changed from when you started in 1966 until 2003?
2. How has your ministry changed over that time?
3. How did your family help or hinder your career?
4. Regrets?
5. What are you most proud of in your life?
6. What insights did you gain from your ministry?
7. What insights would you pass on to missionaries just going out?
8. Closing thoughts?

On March 23, 2003 I interviewed Pastor Thomas Spiegelberg. There were many things, which went through my head when deciding whether or not to interview my own father. I knew he had had an interesting life. I had lived my whole life during half of his ministry, yet I really did not know the intricacies. There were many questions I wanted answered. I wondered about what had driven him or rather guided him to become a pastor. I wanted to know what his expectations were when entering the ministry and how his ministry has lived up to those expectations. My father spent the greater part of his ministry in mission settings. I wanted to know how he had changed over the course of his ministry and how he felt mission work had changed over the course of three decades.

From 1966 – 2003 my father worked in the mission field. There have been and will be many more who work in the trenches of our synod that do not make it into history books yet they are just as significant to our synodical history as a professor, or district president. My father lived through three decades of change and as he went he, adapted, persevered, and preached the Gospel unflinchingly. My father said to me, “people are people no matter where you are and people need to hear God’s word.” That is the theme, which carried him into, and through his career. That is the theme, with God’s help, which made him as effective, and faithful a preacher at the start of his ministry as he was the day he retired.

This paper will follow the three major headings, which are found, on the more in depth outline of the interview, *The Early Years, Career In Ministry, and Looking Back*. Pastor Spiegelberg’s early years are important to look at for a number of reasons. He did not come from a preacher’s family. He was the son of a blue-collar worker in the blue-collar town of Menasha, Wisconsin. My father’s home life was not the rosiest of

pictures. His mother, Ruth had some severe^e emotional problems and died early. He lost a younger brother and his dad held several different jobs. Yet all of these details you would not see in my father's face. His eyes and smile share none of the trials he went through as a youth, or as an adult for that matter. You will not find a chip on his shoulder. So we may ask the question how did a child of meager means and troubled home life manage to become a smiling Gospel preacher? The answer is in the question. The Gospel is the reason my dad is who he is and the reason he became a minister. Throughout all of the tough times the one constant was God's^w word, which was present in his life because of his parents.

My dad also had other good Christian role models, which were influential in his life besides his parents. His childhood pastor was^A Ernie Tiefel. My dad credits him with his conservative views on^s scripture and strong encouragement toward ministry. Pastor Spiegelberg attended just two years at a Lutheran elementary school. However, those two years were very influential in his life. It was at Trinity, Neenah, where he saw a picture of a room full of boys having a pillow fight. My father thought that it looked fun. With the encouragement of his pastor he enrolled at Northwestern Preparatory School.

My father had to work hard and depend on scholarships to get through school. This pattern of working as much as he could kept up throughout his years in high school, college and the seminary. He met some wonderful Christian friends who were a good influence on him, Gary Schroeder, Ted Olsen, and John Henning among many others. Pastor Spiegelberg credits the good friends he had around him with getting him through those years. He also met a young high school student named Sandra Weiss. Sandy's father, Ed Weiss was a WELS pastor, and gave Pastor Spiegelberg much encouragement

and advice. There were also many professors along the way who were influential in my father's life, Prof. Lawrenz, Schuetze, Westerhaus, and Kowalke.

I learned some very interesting things about my father's attitude going into call day. I have only known my father as a missionary, yet his thoughts prior to call day were far from that. He vicared in a large midwestern church and fully expected to be placed in the same setting. When he was assigned to two, small, Northern Wisconsin churches part of him was disappointed. But quickly he realized the opportunity and challenge of the situation.

My father was not expecting a mission call, or a fledgling church, but the idea was not foreign to him. He told me the story of when he was a young child he was awe struck by African missionary Bill Scweppe. As a child he remembers really wanting to ask him to bring him a monkey back from Africa. From that childhood innocence a seed was planted which germinated into a career in mission settings.

My father's career in ministry was vastly different in every setting, yet a common thread ran among them they were a challenge. My father's first church was a dual parish. He walked into a setting in Mercer where the church had recently had a bitter split; one half followed the pastor into the Missouri Synod and the other half were without a church building. He guided the church in Mercer through their split while also ministering to his second parish in Hurley. He did all of this within a three-year span.

His next call was too a true exploratory mission setting. The synod was in the midst of a push to get a church in every state. It was a time of great expansion. My father went to Indianapolis, Indiana and started a church there. My father said he had a good nucleus to start with. He did canvassing and many Bible information classes. He

was in Indianapolis for only three years and in that time he not only started his church but also had bought land and built before he left. Most home missionaries today are on a five-year plan to get to that level. The Lord greatly blessed his work in Indianapolis. One of the things Pastor Spiegelberg always tried to do was get involved in the community as much as possible. In an effort to do just that he became a volunteer fireman.

His next call was to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was to be an associate pastor at Salem Lutheran church and to start its daughter congregation, Risen Savior. This call had many different things, which Pastor Spiegelberg had to adjust to. He was to be an associate and a missionary at the same time. He used Seminary students to help with canvassing in the growing community surrounding his church.

It was while in Milwaukee that Pastor Spiegelberg received a call to Eagle River, Alaska. He accepted the call and a very new set of things to adapt to, and get used to. In Alaska his church moved ten times in eight years. They worshiped anywhere from a trailer home to a magnificent church on a hill overlooking the city. They say that anyone who cannot fit in, in the lower forty-eight states ends up in Alaska. There was a wide array of people, which my father encountered. My father approached the situation just as he had all of the others, "people are people no matter where you are and people need to hear God's word." The Lord once again richly blessed his ministry.

Pastor Spiegelberg's final call was to Grand Junction, Colorado. It was to a church in an area that had just suffered an oil shale bust. Thousands of people had been laid off in the city. Because of this the congregation, in the early years, would gain members but also quickly lose them as they moved out of the economically depressed

area. The message was the same. Sin and grace, law and Gospel were what the people needed and that is what they got from Pastor Spiegelberg.

From this interview I did not learn some wonderful, set of projects that really aided in mission work. I did not learn how to best do evangelism in certain settings. I did not learn any nifty new ways to do Bible information classes or confirmation. You cannot put into writing in a Pastoral Theology class the steps my father used in evangelism. He quite simply is a people person, which is not easily defined.

Pastor Spiegelberg emphasized “paying attention to details.” He found that if you pay attention and stay alert the Holy Spirit will open all kinds of avenues and opportunities for a minister. If one pays attention he can seize those moments and preach the powerful life changing Gospel. When doctrine is not involved a preacher must remain adaptable and creative.

There are two things, which have served Pastor Spiegelberg well in mission settings, his love for the Gospel and his love for people. He enjoys talking to absolutely anyone at anytime. His ability to talk and interact with people has led to many friendships and has opened many doors for introducing the Gospel throughout his career. Methods change from year to year and decade to decade, but two things never change, “people are people no matter where you are and people need to hear God’s word.” Because of this a preacher strives to reach people in any setting with the Gospel.

I have become all things to all men so that by
all possible means I might save some.

1 Corinthians 9:22