

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

GOD'S WORD IS OUR GREAT HERITAGE: DEFINING WELS PASTORAL  
RECRUITMENT PHILOSOPHY FOR CONTINUED EXCELLENCE IN RAISING UP  
FUTURE PUBLIC MINISTERS

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## ABSTRACT

Our Lord has been calling and equipping his people to know, love, and serve him since the beginning of time. For he also called and sent specific individuals to guard and watch over his people so that they would see his promised grace to come. In The New Testament, he willed men to serve in the office of public ministry to all people. Today, he is still extending a wonderful blessing in having individuals who carry out this public ministry for all people. God's people have the freedom to train individuals to serve in this God-given capacity and privilege. Therefore, his people also have the freedom to encourage individuals for service to the Lord. But, how do God's people promote this specific God-given privilege and blessing within a world that is also encouraging individuals to pursue different vocations? This thesis seeks to define "recruitment" philosophy for the public ministry of pastors. It starts by looking at why God's people encourage men for the public ministry. Then, it shows the impact of that biblical recruitment philosophy through WELS's history of recruiting men into public ministry. It highlights the contrasts between the world's view and religious view of recruitment and the potential challenges of public ministry recruitment today.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is no surprise that recruitment for the public ministry is connected in the same breath to gospel ministry itself. Nikolaj Frederick Severin Grundtvig's hymn, "God's Word is our Great Heritage," has been used to remind people of their "chief endeavor," in spreading the gospel message to all. This hymn has been sung within WELS to remind people how God preserves his Holy Word through his people and especially through public ministry. God keeps his Holy Word pure and allows those individuals to articulate and speak its truths. How do people "keep its teachings pure?" The process happens not just looking at the God-given public ministry and carrying it out, but in encouraging men who desire and want to serve in that God-given privilege.

This writer does not have the years of study, experience, or special insights as many of the men who are cited and have been interviewed for this paper. So, the reader may be asking, "why write on a topic like this?" It is not because of the shortage of pastoral candidates felt over the last couple years. It is not the stories and murmurings from the early 1990s in having a glut of pastoral candidates. The drive and purpose simply comes from a desire to speak the truth with clarity and precision. Since this writer is very close to just "having been recruited" into public ministry, the question is not a matter of examining and looking at every experience, opportunity, or role model which "got one enrolled" for public ministry. Rather, the desire is this: how does one balance Biblical teachings and principles with a human understanding and a changing culture in promoting pastoral public ministry?

Is there one right way to recruit? The answer is no surprise either. God does not tell us how to encourage nor does he reveal how he instills that desire in men who want to pursue public

ministry. Yet, there is a right way to read God's plan for his people and therefore, a right mindset to have in preparing the next generation. What does it take to understand that? The approach which Pastor Jon Hein used for his essay at the WLS Symposium in 2018 can also be used as a guiding light throughout this thesis, "Let us see how all these aspects require two things: *careful listening* to the Word of God followed by *careful reasoning*."<sup>1</sup>

When raising up the next generation for public gospel ministry as God desires through his people, a mindset needs to be distinguished as those future gospel ministers are encouraged and trained through their higher education. Higher education is used to train far more people than just future pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. Therefore, precaution and recognition need to be recognized while defining pastoral recruitment philosophy as two realms coexist with each other. The realms are God's Word and the world's world. James Bachman excellently defines listening and reasoning while keeping in mind Lutheran approaches at the higher education level:

Trusting in God and his gift of reason, Lutherans are not afraid to examine where strategies crafted by atheists may lead on specific issues in the physical sciences, the social sciences, business, economics, education, the arts and humanities. But Lutherans, as people of faith, stay alert to the ways in which faithless people, expert in the specifics of their disciplines, begin to encroach on questions about God and humanity that require research strategies rooted in a stance of faith. Christianity has long been criticized for imposing a one-size-fits-all approach to knowledge on the world; ironically, popular veneration of science in the modern university is now at risk for imposing its one-size-fits-all approach on the world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Hein, "The Shepherd Leader at Work: Moving Forward," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, Septemeber 2018, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4405>.

<sup>2</sup> James V. Bachman, "Lutheran Theology and Philosophy: Faith and Reason," in *The Idea and Practice of a Christian University*, ed. Scott A. Ashmon (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 181.

## PART 1: ENCOURAGEMENT OF PASTORAL PUBLIC MINISTRY

When writing on something connected with gospel ministry, and encouraging individuals to pursue becoming a minister of the gospel, certain items can be overlooked, misconstrued, or implied from reading and digesting a thesis connected closely with ministry. As Professor Joel Fredrich wrote at the beginning of his article about the divine institution of ministry, the same opinion and views are held by this writer when talking about ministry:

Presenting an essay on the ministry at this time has its risks. Like a latecomer to a long and complicated conversation, the essayist may step on toes without realizing or intending it. He may naively use a turn of phrase which says more than he wants to say, at least in the minds of those who know books and articles he has never studied. He may laboriously reinvent the wheel, or he may take for granted points that deserve a closer look. The conversation on the ministry is centuries old, and the amount of literature produced in the last one hundred fifty years alone is daunting. The ministry was a matter of keen interest among Lutherans in the nineteenth century. Professional New Testament scholars took up the issue intensively in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. The early part of the century saw some intensive study of the issue within the Wisconsin Synod as well. Questions about the ministry continued to receive attention thereafter, but it seems that in recent years the study of the ministry has gone back into high gear. The ministry is a hot issue in many denominations, particularly among Lutherans, and the WELS shares in that surge of interest. With such a topic, and such a history of discussion, I submit this essay to the correction of wiseheads, and I look forward to the improvements which you, esteemed brothers, may suggest.<sup>3</sup>

### **The “Why” of Gospel Ministry**

With that in mind, it is nothing ground-shaking that the “why” of gospel ministry begins with the call and mission of the entire body of believers. It is not new information because this is the way God has graciously chosen to operate with his people. President David Valleskey

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<sup>3</sup> Joel Fredrich, “Divine Institution of Gospel Ministry,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 2009, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4119>.

Of WLS made special note about this both with Biblical backing and with a historical example from *The Smalcald Article: The Power and Primacy of the Pope*: “The keys [i/e., the gospel ministry] were given to the church and not merely to certain individuals: ‘Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt 18:20). Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter: ‘You are a royal priesthood’ (1 Pet 2:9).”<sup>4</sup>

God has called and is still calling his people to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people belonging to God. The “why” of gospel ministry happens because God has formed and created it this way. God has not allowed people to be encouraged and “recruited” into his family of believers as mere people who seemed interested, as if to stress or promote a decision or action that resulted in their joining the body of Christ. God did it all and still does.

Valleskey again highlights how 1 Pet 2:9 speaks to this point about the gospel ministry:

These [royal priesthood, holy nation, etc.] titles have a number of things in common. For one thing, each of them was used by God in the Old Testament to describe his people, Israel. Second, each of these titles is a statement of fact. Christians do not have to strive to become “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” That is what Christians are. A third point of similarity is that each title is portraying the same truth as every other title; for each is a description of the holy Christian church, the communion of saints. The church is a “chosen people.” The church is a “royal priesthood.” The church is a “holy nation.” The church is a “people belonging to God.”<sup>5</sup>

As those called and formed by God for eternal life, Christians do the will of God. Peter states, “That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9 NIV 84). It is an absolute blessing and privilege to do Gospel ministry as part of God’s family. John Schaller declared the following about this command:

The Holy Scriptures incontrovertibly show that the ministry, that is, the commission to preach the gospel, is given to every Christian; that at conversion not only the ability but

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<sup>4</sup> David J. Valleskey, *We Believe – Therefore We Speak* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995), 146.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 146.

also the impetus for this preaching is implanted in him; and that the gospel by its very nature as a message presupposed this preaching activity and at the same time by the effect it has guarantees it will occur.<sup>6</sup>

### **The “Means” of Gospel Ministry in a Personal and Public Way**

The blessings from the Lord do not end there. Could the Lord use his believers to carry out the work of the church to its fullest extent and reach? Yes, of course he could and he surely does. He carries out gospel ministry work through jars of clay as he said in 2 Cor 4:7. Could he have people work forty to sixty hours a week and do full-time ministry work by teaching, preaching, and witnessing? Of course, he has already done things similar to this as witnessed through the life of the Apostle Paul and the faithful men and woman who work daily in their own vocations and spread God’s Word. But, even better, the Lord has also instituted and allows Christians to share the gospel message he gave them and creates faith in their hearts to serve in a very public way. Professor Thomas Nass noted in his article:

It is also clear in God’s Word that God wants a “public ministry” as well. God wants the church to have leaders who use the keys on behalf of other Christians. When Christ picked the apostles, he shows his desire for a “public ministry.” Ephesians 4 says that Christ gave apostles and other leaders to the church. When the New Testament gives qualifications for elders and deacons, it shows that God wants a public ministry.<sup>7</sup>

The Lord uses people to do this full time in their lives as their job and way to sustain a living.<sup>8</sup>

The public ministry given by the Lord can be defined by using the words of Valleskey, “God’s

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<sup>6</sup> John Schaller, “The Origin and Development of the New Testament Ministry,” trans. Roger Fleming, Mark Jeske, Daniel Schaller, in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (January 1981): 38.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas P. Nass, “The Pastoral Ministry as a Distinct Form of the Public Ministry,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1993, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/3401>.

<sup>8</sup> Another careful distinction needs to be made, that for the sake of recruitment, this paper is focusing on the forms of the public ministry related specifically to being a pastor as a full-time vocation. It is not meant to say that the elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers, or the faithful men and women who serve their church on behalf of others in whatever way that is etc., are not also helping for the good of the public ministry. The public ministry is



priests can put their priestly function into action in a second arena... that of the public ministry, that is, the ministry of the gospel, which one is called to do in the name of and on behalf of one's fellow Christians."<sup>9</sup> The Apostle Paul speaks about those acting as shepherds or pastors in Acts 20:27-32:

For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. *Be shepherds of the church of God*, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

The Apostle Paul mentions those serving as shepherds or pastors again in 1 Pet 5:1-4:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: *Be shepherds of God's flock* that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

What makes this form of ministry so unique is that God has instituted his people to carry on the encouragement and proclamation of his Holy Word to others. In addition, the Lord has also allowed others, through his divine work, to want individuals who are willing and trained to serve them for the sake of God's elect. Luther wrote about this:

You should put the Christian into two places. First, if he is in a place where there are no Christians he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within. Here it is his duty to preach and to teach the gospel to erring heathen or non-Christians, because of the duty of brotherly love, even though no man calls him to do so ... Second, if he is at a place where there are Christians who have the same power and

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not limited to pastors, staff ministers, or teachers. However, for the sake of God's people and at God's command, the focus has been taken to directly talk and encourage individuals to dedicate their time, energy, and life in fulfilling the job of being public ministry candidates through the role of pastor, teacher, or staff minister. This essay is directly focusing on gaining pastoral ministry candidates who are in their late teens.

<sup>9</sup> Valleskey, 150.

right as he, he should not draw attention to himself. Instead he should let himself be called and chosen to preach and to teach in the place of and by command of others.<sup>10</sup>

The distinction between the personal and public ministry is no small feat either. To be able to handle God's Word for the benefit of the eternal welfare of others is an awesome privilege and blessing. In fact, it does not make much sense that the means of the gospel ministry would be given to Christians both in a personal way and in a public way for the building up and growth of God's elect. Professor John Brenner expands on this privilege and right for the public ministers of the gospel:

In spite of our sinfulness, God has given us an amazing privilege. He has called people like you and me to the most glorious work on earth, the work of proclaiming his gospel of salvation. He could have chosen his holy angels to proclaim the gospel. He gave that privilege to them on a few occasions. He sent them to announce our Savior's birth to the shepherds near Bethlehem and also to announce his resurrection to the women at the tomb. From a human point of view it would certainly make more sense to entrust that precious message of salvation to those perfect and powerful creatures. But God has entrusted the task of proclaiming that message to people like us. He has condescended to call sinful human beings like you and me into the public ministry. What an amazing honor and privilege! St. Paul puts it this way: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake...But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Co 4:5,7).<sup>11</sup>

### **The “Manner” of Public Gospel Ministry**

Christians gather together to do gospel ministry both in a private (personal ministry) and, should a congregation call them, in the public ministry as well. However, not everyone is called to do such a task. Pastor Steven Degner notes, God “calls people to fit that need, often ordinary people and unlikely candidates on whom he bestows a special blessing of his Holy Spirit. The

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<sup>10</sup> August Pieper, “Luther’s Doctrine of Church and Ministry,” trans. in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (January 1963): 258.

<sup>11</sup> John M. Brenner, “Serving in the Public Ministry of the Gospel is a Privilege and an Honor,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 2000, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/746>, 7.

hands of God are behind the ordinary hands that select and call certain people to prepare God's people for works of service."<sup>12</sup> Brenner also explains this "manner" in the calling procedure that God carries out through the church:

Although every Christian has the authority to proclaim the gospel, every Christian is not equally qualified to do so publicly. God has given different gifts and abilities to different people. While every Christian has the authority to proclaim the gospel and to administer the sacraments, it would be disorderly for each Christian to exercise that authority in a gathering of Christians. Since God commands that in the church "everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Co. 14:40), a group of Christians will designate an individual or individuals to, exercise the keys in their name. When the church calls an individual into the public ministry, it is actually God, who is calling that person through them. St. Paul indicates that when he writes that those in the public ministry are gifts of God. "It is he who gave some to be apostles, some to prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...." (Eph 4:11). Paul encourages the elders at Ephesus, "Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). God issues the call through his people. That is why we call it a divine call. God places the individual into his specific office.<sup>13</sup>

The manner in which the individuals are qualified to receive a call is designated by the qualifications God has set on the public proclaimers and servants of his Word. Professor Daniel Deutschlander describes in even more detail the manner in which the church acts in relating the qualifications God sets for his public ministry candidates.

The ministry is called an office. That word is to remind us that the public ministers of the church are not such simply because that's what they decided they wanted to be as the results of some sort of "inner call." An office is a position into which one is placed by someone else. The public ministers of the church do not appoint themselves. As already noted, they are gifts of God to the church. They become his gifts and they enter in to the office of the ministry by a call. When we speak of the call into the office of the ministry, we are not speaking of some fluttering in the heart of the individual by which he all by himself thinks that he is or should be a pastor or teacher of the church. To be sure, the public servants of the church during their lives were moved by the gospel to desire such service. Paul says that desire is a good work (1 Timothy 3:1). But the desire alone is not a call and does not make one a pastor or teacher of men and women in the church. Paul tells us that those who desire that noble task should have certain characteristics. They

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<sup>12</sup> Steven C. Degner "Understanding Our Calling: The Doctrine of Christians Vocation in the Holy Scriptures," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 2006, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/1159>, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Brenner, "Serving in the Public Ministry of the Gospel is a Privilege and an Honor," 6.

should be mature men, able to teach, be of upright character and reputation, not new to the faith but experienced in Christian doctrine and life (1 Tim 2:3; 5:22; Tit 1:5-9).<sup>14</sup>

The way those qualifications are nurtured and the manner in which the individuals are made ready comes clearly through the church. Deutschlander again comments on how the church carries out the right to distinguish and decide who carries these characteristic:

Who should decide when one has these characteristics sufficient to the task of being a pastor or teacher of the church if the decision is not just that of the individual through some sort of “inner call”? Already in Paul’s day the church itself decided who should service in the office of the ministry. Thus, the call comes from Christ through the church. The church has various ways of extending its call. Sometimes Paul himself chose workers to accompany him. But where the church was already established, such a decision was not without the mind and consent and will of the church itself. We see that already in Acts 6 .... The Holy Spirit worked directly but also through the members of the church (Acts 13:1-2). In Acts 14, 15 we note a whole range of actions taken by Paul and by the church as a whole in selecting those who should serve publicly in one form or another of the ministry.<sup>15</sup>

Luther also adds his thoughts on the sheer importance God, through people, has taken in declaring a call and command be given to those individuals who wish to serve in the public ministry. The manner that this happens is part of God’s will:

It is true that all Christians are priests, but not all are pastors. For to be a pastor one must be not only be a Christian and a priest but must have an office and a field of work committed to him. This call and command make pastors preachers.... It is God’s will that nothing be done as a result of one’s own choice or decision but everything as a consequence of a command or a call.... Let everyone, then, remember this: If he wants to preach or teach, let him give proof of the call or command which drives and compels him to do it, or else let him be silent.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds: The Splendor of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 478.

<sup>15</sup> Deutschlander, 478.

<sup>16</sup> Irwin J. Habeck, “Luther’s Attitude Toward the Public Ministry” in *Luther Lives: Essays in Commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Martin Luther’s Birth*, ed. Edward C. Fredrich, Siegbert Becker, David P. Kuske (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1983), 38.

### **Training for the Public Ministry**

With the Lord's Word, by his will, called by the very people the Lord has given a faith to know his Word in its truth and purity, people train for ministry. Those people who "desire a noble task" set their hearts and life on becoming a worker of the public ministry. However, how does a person with this desire develop and pursue a place where he or she is made ready to be called by the church and by the Lord himself into the public ministry? It happens with careful listening as this thesis has been articulating, not just with the citations and thoughts of men, but also with the Biblical backbone and structure in the public ministry. Christ himself instituted this office through his words to the men who knew the truth as he said, "You will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Paul reiterated this as well when he wrote to Timothy, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Pastor Gary Baumler also noted that distinction as he wrote, "Once again, we get our cue from the Lord. When he said to Timothy through Paul (2 Tim 2:15), he gave us a good idea of what our training program for the ministry should accomplish."<sup>17</sup>

So, careful reasoning also leads God's people to see that the training for those pursuing the public ministry lies in the requirement his people deem necessary and see fit for the pastoral office. President Armin Panning acknowledged this fact when he made his comment in the cause and reasoning of the confessional approach at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary: "A genuinely scriptural confessional stance, that is, loyalty to the Word, is worked by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it does not admit of negotiation. The type of program, however, and the practical preparation

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<sup>17</sup> Gary P. Baumler, "Providing the Next Generation of Pastors in the WELS: An Essay on the Role of Pastors in Recruiting More Pastors," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1987, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/292>, 6.

which a confessional seminary offers – that may indeed be determined by the supporting body.”<sup>18</sup>

Simply stated, the church has the freedom to decide how individuals are prepared and able to be called by the church and receive a call from God’s people. Deutschlander provides more detail and relevance as to what that this looks like today:

Thus no one becomes a public minister of the gospel apart from the call of Christ, which since the time of the apostles normally comes through the visible church. That call may be extended in various ways, as it was in the book of Acts. There is no divinely prescribed way of doing it. Because of that reason the church has a considerable range of freedom in setting up calling procedure. Whatever the procedure, due to respect and reverence for both the universal priesthood of all believers and for the holy office of the ministry itself needs to be exercised. Among procedures common in our day, for example, is that of officials of the church taking responsibility for assigning candidates for the preaching and teaching ministry; they do that with the consent of the church and only after the candidates have been certified by the training system for pastors and teachers as fit for the ministry. Even then, the call is considered as coming primarily from Christ through those they are being called to serve.<sup>19</sup>

Deutschlander goes into greater detail in the reasoning the church uses to properly call someone into the public ministry:

The various forms of the visible church then with a careful mind and eye on the Word of God call servants of the church to represent themselves and most of all represent Christ. Christ’s people must see to it that the called workers have been properly trained for the work they seek to do with and through the called worker. They make sure that the worker has pledged faithfulness to the Scriptures and the confessions. They determine that the worker is of good public reputation and character. And then, asking the blessing of God on their deliberations, they extend a formal and public call to the worker.<sup>20</sup>

The methods of training public ministers has changed over the years. The methods are adapting to the wants and needs of the people the ministers are being trained to proclaim Gospel

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<sup>18</sup> Armin J. Panning, “Our Primary Calling – Providing Pastoral Candidates,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 27.

<sup>19</sup> Deutschlander, 478.

<sup>20</sup> Deutschlander, 481.

truths to and serve. Nass reiterates this point, “Because God has not spelled out the details, we have the freedom to structure our pastoral ministry in the way that we want. As Schaller says, ‘The pastoral ministry as such is not a Biblical, but rather in each individual case a historically developed concept. That means the pastoral ministry is for each time and in each place, what the church so says.’”<sup>21</sup>

Deutschlander also makes this point while adding that God’s people actually call those individuals who not only raise and train up the candidates for the public ministry, but see to it that all the functions needed for carrying out gospel ministry are accomplished. God’s people carry out public ministry through calling people to engage in the many facets of sharing God’s Word. Those facets involve sharing God’s Word directly to believers and unbelievers, and also indirectly by training and readying those individuals who will go out:

Thus, in our day, when the church needs public servants to carry out one or many aspects of the Great Commission, we extend Christ’s call to people who have the necessary character, training, and ability to meet those specific needs, whether as a parish pastor, a school teacher, a professor to help train still others pastors and teachers, a synodical official, a counsellor in a social welfare agency of the church or for any of a number of other functions needed and useful for the carrying out of the Great Commission. And so the circle is completed in every age repeated: Christ creates and strengthens the Church through the public ministry of the gospel; the Church this created and strengthened calls still others in the name of Christ to preach and teach the gospel at home and in all the world.<sup>22</sup>

Professor Paul Eickmann wrote a brief paper with this special training in mind as he explained the rationale behind why God’s people see the benefit in having pastors receive liberal arts degrees. His comment from one ministry graduate in his paper highlights the benefit of public ministers receiving this type of training:

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<sup>21</sup> Nass, 255.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Call and Ministry* (Watertown: Northwestern College, 1993), 13-14.

Looking back on my college and seminary years reminds me of a funnel. The wide end of the funnel was my time in college. There was so much to learn, so many subjects. By the time I graduated from Seminary I was at the narrow end of the funnel.... There was only one thing to learn and proclaim... Jesus Christ and Him crucified thank God for the diverse, liberal-arts education I had in our worker-training schools, but, most of all I thank God that we were constantly reminded there is really only one thing you can do with it all... – lay it at the feet of the Savior and say, “Here am I. Send me!”<sup>23</sup>

Eickmann also added the even greater work and power displayed in training up future public ministers. He wanted to highlight how the professors and teachers set an example in how they live and show the love Christ has and constantly gives to his people. He made this comment in that distinction:

We probably could not agree in detail on a body of liberal-arts knowledge which every pastor or teacher should possess. We can, however, aim at presenting to the church a certain kind of human being....I am not describing now the Scriptural requirements for ministry.... Those prerequisites talents and fruits of the Spirit are “givens” in our conception of ministry. Now do I speak here of the love for people which we are emphasizing more and more in our conception of the preaching and teaching ministry. The genuine love for people Christ looks for is a fruit of faith, nourished by the means of grace. As we seek an increase of Christian love in our students we must enrich their spiritual lives and improve the spiritual example we set.<sup>24</sup>

### **Gaining Public Ministers**

As we listen to the Lord’s calling both in the personal and public ministry, it is no surprise that there is careful reason in training individuals for the public ministry, and also in gaining individuals to train for the public ministry. As God works through his Word and Sacraments to create and sustain faith in the hearts of individuals, the body of Christ grows. It

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<sup>23</sup> Paul E. Eickmann, “The Blessings of a Liberal-Arts-Based Worker-Training Curriculum in an Age of Specialization,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1990, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/132>.

<sup>24</sup> Eickmann, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/132>.



does not just need more people to serve in public ministry, but it wants individuals to consider serving with that privilege. The Lord wants there to be people who serve others for the good of the ministry so that all may be saved. As previously mentioned, God, mediately through his people, calls men and women to oversee and serve his church. God says it plainly through the words of Paul in 2 Tim 2:2 that he wants believers to do this task publicly for others. This rationale is extended through a thorough explanation that God commands gaining public ministers:

God literally commands in the Scriptures that we encourage and train future ministers of the Gospel. Paul wrote to Timothy, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). During his earthly ministry Jesus instructed his disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers (Matthew 9). In Romans 10, Paul simply raises a series of questions that illustrate the need to send out workers. Sinners need to hear the Good News of the Gospel. Consequently, God desires those who know that good news to find, prepare, and send out messengers to tell others.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, there is always a need for men and women who want to serve by command of God as a blessing to his people. Careful listening leads his people to see that God gives this desire to individuals as a blessing to his church and wants his people to carry it out. Careful reasoning also leads his people to see that God allows his ministry and the way we encourage and gain public workers to be trained pursuing this privilege. As a result, God’s people can rightly go out and gain public workers and rightfully use the word “recruitment” to gain and train those people who have a desire to serve in the public ministry. The WELS “Rationale for Recruitment to the Gospel Ministry” states this point in the underlying principle at work:

People make decisions every day. We recognize, ultimately, that the decision to study and prepare oneself as a candidate for the public ministry of the Gospel is a work of the Holy Spirit and a fruit of faith. In this special sense we see that *recruitment* is the work of our God who works solely through his Word.

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<sup>25</sup> “A Rationale for Recruitment to the Gospel Ministry,” Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, November 15, 2018, <https://bme.welsrc.net/download-bme/who-will-go-recruitment-resources/?wpdmdl=3270&ind=2>, 29.

At the same time, we may properly say that congregation and individuals can offer evangelical encouragement to individuals toward such a decision. We may also call this recruitment.<sup>26</sup>

That desire to train for and work as a public minister is something God gives to his people. It does not make one better or more sanctified than others, as the Lord has given all his believers unique gifts and talents. That desire is God-given and a blessing to so many of God's people, something that does indeed affect the lives of many firsthand. Deutschlander expounds on the thoughts that go into thinking about the desire to train for public ministry:

Is this the time for you to prepare to offer Isaiah's prayer? Those seeking to answer that question need to look first and foremost to the gospel. It is through the saving message of forgiveness and salvation that the desire is born and the longing is created to make the work of sharing that saving gospel a life time work. The future pastor or teacher of the church is first overwhelmed by that fundamental, all important truth: Christ Jesus came to save the world, and therefore he came also for me, even for me; oh that I might live to give what I have received! That desire is good and God-pleasing, as St Paul tells us (1 Tim 3:1). That is a proper motivation, the only proper motivation.<sup>27</sup>

The point of intersection between the act of encouraging ones into the public ministry and the ones who desire or have the desire to pursue the training for the public ministry is this: God's power and promise is at work. Recruiting is not done to bolster numbers or for personal gain.

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<sup>26</sup> "A Rationale for Recruitment to the Gospel Ministry," Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, November 15, 2018, <https://bme.welsrc.net/download-bme/who-will-go-recruitment-resources/?wpdmdl=3270&ind=2>, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Call and Ministry*, 14. Deutschlander also adds this to the decision process. "Someone who is driven by the law does not have a proper motivation for what is essentially a gospel ministry. We encounter such in our student body from time to time who are driven by guilt to seek the ministry. They reason this – since sharing the gospel is the most important work in the world, I should want to do it; if I don't do it, I'll be turning my back on God, letting him down. That's not how it works. Only God can give the ability, and only God can give the desire. It is not a sin to want to serve God as a layman. In point of fact for some it would be better for them to continue to serve as a laymen. God may have given an ardent love for the gospel and its proclamation. But at the same time the individual may have numerous obligations that make it clear that the full time public ministry will have to be left to someone else. For if someone with large debts were to leave those debts unpaid, while he pursues the public ministry that would not to be God-pleasing. Those whose family responsibilities would have to be neglected in order to study for the ministry need to remember that the responsibilities of a husband and father come from God too. To neglect divinely given obligations in order to pursue a call into the public ministry is likewise not God-pleasing. Such a one will not be able to meet some of the most important qualifications for the ministry (1 Timothy 3:5) and at the same time risks falling under the judgement of God (1 Timothy 5:8). The point is that God provides his dear children with many choices that he leaves us free to make."

Rather, recruiting helps those individuals see if their desire to bring God's good news to all people is something that they could see themselves doing full-time service for the public ministry or by using their God-given faith in a personal way.

One cannot ultimately create that desire in another individual. One can however encourage and recruit by sharing what gospel ministry is like. Then that individual is left to decide if training and working in the public ministry is a worthy desire for them. In fact, his or her desire continues to change as the individual learns and sees more clearly what the ministry is all about. God is the one, however, to give that individual the desire to decide if they would like to pursue public ministry or not. WELS states in the underlying section on "A Rationale for Recruitment to the Gospel Ministry:"

However, though there are many resources and tools available for the recruiter to use, the task of recruitment toward the public ministry dare never be reduced to mere salesmanship or public relations. Always remember that the recruiter's first goal is to be a faithful servant of God who knows that the fruits of his efforts will only come about by God's grace and blessing."<sup>28</sup>

Deutschlander again comments on the process one goes through in deciding, as one sees the desire within and the encouragement from God's people to pursue his desire to train and ready himself for the public ministry:

The point is this that God provides his dear children with many choices that he leaves us free to make as we seek to devote our lives to him. If you meet the restrictions that St. Paul outlines in 1 Timothy 3, i.e., if you have not made other choices which eliminate the public ministry as a choice, if you have the abilities which come from God to study successfully those things that the church needs her public pastors and teachers to know, if you have the desire and the freedom to make the sacrifices necessary for such study and for the life of a called servant of Christ, then this may very well be the time. The choice then is yours to make, whether to serve him as a faithful layman or to prepare for the day when he may be pleased to call you into his public ministry. God provides you with the opportunity to consider that choice and to make that decision. But he does not make it for you. Whether you decide that this is the time to come to us [Northwestern College (NWC), Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC), Wisconsin Luther Seminary (WLS) then, and Martin Luther College (MLC), WLS now] or the time to remain in God's service at

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<sup>28</sup> "A Rationale for Recruitment to the Gospel Ministry," 24.

home, we are confident on the basis of his Word that your very desire to consider such a choice pleases him (1 Timothy 3:1). If you decide to remain in his service at home, we pray that he will continue to bless that choice. If you decide to study for the public ministry of the church, we pray that he will also bless that choice. If there is anything that we can do to help you make that decision which is best in your current circumstances, please let us know. In whatever ways we may assist you, in whatever you decide to do, may God our Savior be glorified.<sup>29</sup>

With this in mind, gaining public ministers can be done and shared by all. Recruiting is not just left for special people or specific called pastors and teachers although that emphasis has been and is being made to make sure this is done specially, but all Christians can and do recruit so that the candidates for the public ministry can be made ready and available to serve:

Today, however, God does not call people directly, using a voice from a burning bush or in a vision along a well-traveled road. Instead, God chooses to work through groups of believers such as our congregations or our synod to call people to serve him in the holy ministry. God expects his church to provide suitable training for those who would serve in the public ministry so that those whom the church may call will be able and well qualified to serve .... Who should do the seeking? Clearly, that seeking will be done by all those who want earthly shepherds to be found and trained, all those who will be blessed by the service those shepherds will render to the Savior and to his church. Who will seek? Who will recruit? Every believer will.<sup>30</sup>

What is the value not just in the act and mission of both actively training, but also gaining prospects to be trained and to serve as candidates for the public ministry? All of God's people carry out their mission of spreading the gospel by gaining individuals who are willing and able to carry out ministry publicly on behalf of all people.

As previously stated, another way of saying that God's people gain public ministry candidates is through the term "recruitment." However, the distinction when WELS uses this term has to be articulated carefully. It is hard to verify and define what people think when the word "recruitment" crosses their minds. A good working definition for recruitment can be found

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<sup>29</sup> Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Call and Ministry*.

<sup>30</sup> "A Rationale for Recruitment to the Gospel Ministry," 28.

in “Biblical Perspectives on Recruitment for Our Day.” That paper specified the root definition of “recruitment” was “to raise or strengthen an army, navy, etc. by enlisting personnel, or to enlist personnel into an army or navy, or to enlist new members for a party, organization, etc. The word carries heavy military connotations, a fact that does not please everyone.”<sup>31</sup> A quick search on Google would verify a similar definition today.

Considering that definition, perhaps there are questions as to why the church would continue to use that word when it is not worried about numbers or strength in numbers to defeat another school. However, WELS use the word, “recruitment” with a different definition: “The God-pleasing activity of the church which encourages young people at schools whose function is to prepare them for God’s call into the public ministry.”<sup>32</sup> It is in that exact definition that one sees careful listening and reasoning. There is careful listening to God’s Word in the gaining and raising up for a life of divine public ministry and careful reasoning which understands that God wants there to be leaders in his church. Christians can say that God wants his people to recruit those individuals who are thinking, imagining, or seeing the potential in their life for public service to God specifically as their full time occupation.

Perhaps another reason God’s people also use that term, “recruitment,” is because in the last 150 years, it has also been a term used for schools of higher education. This will be

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<sup>31</sup> “Biblical Perspective on Recruitment Our Day,” from the files of Ross Steljes, 5.

<sup>32</sup> “Biblical Perspective on Recruitment Our Day,” from the files of Ross Steljes, 5. It seemed beneficial to include it here from “Biblical Perspectives on Recruitment in Our Day”: Recruitment activity is not limited to worker training campuses. Our synod has had several recruitment drives directed at congregations. For years we have set aside Good Shepherd Sunday to focus on recruitment. Articles in our synod’s publications periodically urge parents, pastors, teachers and lay members to get involved in person-to-person recruitment. Financial assistance in the form of grants and scholarships have been set up by individuals, congregations, schools and the synod. Recruitment emphases are found in the curricula of our parish schools and area high schools. Sooner or later any program under the WELS umbrella should be concerned with recruitment, because all God-pleasing activities will seek God-pleasing leadership.

discussed in more detail in Part III of this thesis, but God's people live with a divine promise within a human world. As other schools, colleges, and universities are also training for specific vocations and to attain certain degrees, they also recruit. Yet, as the thesis will unfold, they do so for worldly reasons. Therefore, in gaining and training public ministry candidates there is a similar procedure. Public ministry schools use the same "platform" for gaining and raising ministry candidates:<sup>33</sup> It is the college or university institution. The procedure for increasing candidates for public ministry can also be called "recruitment" since the way pastoral candidates are trained is very similar in appearance to how secular candidates are trained. However, the end goal and reasons for recruiting are like the difference between night and day. Pastor John Braun alludes to this with his final comments on his booklet about thoughts going into public ministry training at NWC, "Academically, classes include history, English, psychology and languages, with a concentration on Biblical languages, but the students and faculty are bound together in a commitment to Jesus and his word. Campus life revolves around study, tests and classes like it does any place else...but with a difference."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Prange, email in May 2018.

<sup>34</sup> John Braun, *The Road Less Traveled: A Pastor's Thoughts for Someone Wondering About the Ministry* (Watertown, WI: Northwestern College, 1987), 19.

## PART II: TRACKING RECRUITMENT PHILOSOPHY

With that recruitment philosophy in mind, listening and reasoning in why, how, and what kind of people God's people encourage for ministry, it is also important to look at how the Lord's blessings of the public ministry to his church are being given constantly. George Stoeckhardt stated, "the rule of Christ in his church on earth shows itself in this, that Christ himself at all times awakens among Christians men who are willing to serve in his kingdom, whom he equips with the Holy Spirit and gifts, whose study and whose training he blesses and prospers and makes them capable and suitable to carry on the ministry of the New Testament."<sup>35</sup>

Yet, keeping in mind that recruitment through careful listening and reasoning, exists in an ever-changing society and culture there is value in seeing how the church carries out that mission and ministry through the world which surrounds it. Pastor Caleb Kurbis made this point in his paper, "Always Changing Yet Ever the Same." He said in the conclusion of his paper, "There was and will be an ever-changing environment. Nevertheless, the first hand perspective of these men [recruiters interviewed in his paper] continually pointed to something altogether the same amid the many changes. Be faithful. Stay the course. The harvest is plentiful. The Lord is the Lord of the harvest."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> George Stoeckhardt, "On the Establishment and Preservation of the Public Ministry," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 104, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 258.

<sup>36</sup> Caleb J. Kurbis, "First-Hand Historical Perspectives of Recruitment for Our Ministerial Education System Spanning the Last 30 Years," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 2010, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/2796>, 18.

### **Perspectives Gained in Seeing a Divine Blessing**

It is with that God-given lens that this paper will give a few occurrences of showing how God's guiding hand is always evident as he keeps giving candidates for the public ministry through recruiting and training. Specifically in WELS institutions, God's grace has been poured out through his Holy Word and through the men trained to handle that Word of God.

Pastor Wilbert Gawrisch noted this distinction looking back at 125 years of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary: "Over the years the needs of the church have changed, but the seminary's purpose of preparing shepherds for God's flock remains unchanged. The cornerstone of its curriculum is still *sola gratia, sola scriptura, sola fide*. God granting his grace that will not be changed."<sup>37</sup> As the the pre-seminary and seminary training has been set up since 1860, the leaders, pastors, and members have had doubts and worries. Yet, God's guiding hand was at work, as Panning also summarized in 1988 looking back on 125 years at WLS, "Perhaps nowhere more clearly than in those formative days is when our fathers had to wrestle with the matter of preseminary training."<sup>38</sup>

While reviewing the whole history of recruitment would be beneficial, for the sake of this paper, the historical perspectives gained will be looked at since the break in 1961 with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). Professor Panning included a quote from President Erwin Kowalke's proceedings from the 1961 convention to help distinguish the mood and feelings of the synod's training and raising up the next generation of pastors:

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<sup>37</sup> Wilbert R. Gawrisch, "Forward 1988: 125 Years of Preparing Shepherds for God's Flock," in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 6.

<sup>38</sup> Armin J. Panning, "Our Primary Calling – Providing Pastoral Candidates," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 22.



In its present plight our institution is like a ship at sea that has sprung a leak and that is being kept afloat only with the greatest difficulty. We fear that our poor ship will very soon go to the bottom. We fear, too, that the necessary help will not be granted, and if granted, will come too late; for many pastors and congregations in the Synod have up to the present time shown little interest in the existence and survival of the school.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, as Pastor John Braun noted in his book, “There were ‘prophets of doom’ who predicted separation from the LCMS would spell demise of the Wisconsin Synod.”<sup>40</sup> The WELS was heading into “uncharted waters” as Professor James Tiefel wrote.<sup>41</sup> He also added, “Some forecast the eventual demise of the synod, dangling after 1961 almost alone at the theological right of American Lutheranism.”<sup>42</sup>

Yet, as is evident from the size of WELS today, the predictions did not unfold as some had thought. In fact, there were unpredicted blessings in the split with the LCMS. People started to learn doctrine for themselves, to be unified and feel what true fellowship was like, and to no longer lean on “Big Brother” for help and a way out.<sup>43</sup> Professor Carl Lawrenz added this insight as well, “Thankfully, the focus in WELS turned toward building on what the LORD had graciously preserved. A series of synod-wide campaigns were mounted to inform and convince. They resulted in more young people studying for ministry, more congregations opening in more

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<sup>39</sup> Erwin E. Kowalke, “An Evaluation of Our Present Ministerial Training Course,” *Proceedings* of the 1961 synod convention, 152.

<sup>40</sup> Mark E. Braun, *Tale of Two Synods: Events That Led to the Split between Wisconsin and Missouri* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2003), 342.

<sup>41</sup> James P. Tiefel, “David J. Valleskey, President (1985-1996),” in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, ed. John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange (Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 2013), 274.

<sup>42</sup> Tiefel, 274.

<sup>43</sup> Braun, *A Tale of Two Synods*, 343.

parts of America, more missionaries sent to more mission fields, and more funds to make everything possible.”<sup>44</sup>

In terms of recruitment numbers, as Lawrenz noted, even with the feelings of despair after the LCMS break, there was an even greater blessing in disguise. Although WELS was no longer able to rely on the LCMS for pastors, there was an increase in enrollment at NWC.

President Carleton Toppe added this insight in  *Holding the Course* :

Yet the record is also a basis for hope. In the early 1960s, when the synod was regaining its breath after concluding its exhausting confession struggle with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Northwestern’s enrollments remained flat. From 1960 to 1963 they were: 180, 189, 187, 192. Then they surged upward: 222, 239, 258, 275, 298.

It was a time when the synod not only knew that it must go out on its own instead of leaning on its big brother, the Missouri Synod, but it also began to view its future course as an exhilarating challenge. It needed to multiply the numbers of its own congregations outside the Upper Midwest to gather in its own people, thousands of whom were moving to the Sunbelt and to the Southwest.<sup>45</sup>

However, in terms of recruitment efforts, it is also interesting to note, as Toppe does, the somewhat simple administration at the time. In terms of recruitment forces, there was not much. He writes, “It was a simpler administration in 1965. There was no academic dean, no recruitment officer, no financial aid officer, and no audio visual director. There was no secretarial service for the faculty and for the athletic director, and only part-time service for the president the bursar, the librarian and the business manager.”<sup>46</sup> At the time, it seems the Lord was blessing his church with pastoral candidates into the public ministry without much special emphasis on specific recruitment practices or approaches. It did not mean that encouragement toward public ministry was not clearly on display through God’s people, but there were no specifically called positions

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<sup>44</sup> John C. Lawrenz, “Carl J. Lawrenz, President (1957-1978),” in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, ed. John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange (Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 2013), 222.

<sup>45</sup> Carleton Toppe,  *Holding the Course: Northwestern College 125*  (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1990) 60.

<sup>46</sup> Toppe,  *Holding the Course: Northwestern College 125* , 9.

to see that recruitment was being done intentionally. But, soon to follow by 1971-72, a recruitment committee had been thought over and formed at NWC.

In addition, in 1981, Professor Gary Baumler who was serving as financial aid officer at NWC was also called to serve as the first recruitment director for NWC.<sup>47</sup> Baumler carefully noted what led to the first implemented recruitment position at NWC and the problems at hand with recruiting:

When I came to Northwestern College in 1976 and began to get involved with the school's recruitment program, a sense of urgency, if not of crisis, was filtering through our system. The Wisconsin Synod was on the move, awake to its mission responsibilities, growing. "Every State by 78" had become a slogan standing on the threshold of reality. Coincidentally, however, Northwestern's pre-seminary enrollment had suddenly dipped from a high of 290 in 1973 to 242 in 1976 (238 in 1977), even while the CHE [Committee on Higher Education] was predicting it ought to be growing—as high as 395 by 1989-90 (cf. CHE's "Supplementary Report on Worker Training Facilities" to the WELS, August 1977). On June 10, 1976 Northwestern's Recruitment Committee issued a report on "The Coming Manpower Emergency" calling the outlook "bleak" for pastoral candidates in the mid 1980's. In a January 1977 report, Prof. Jerome Birkholz (then of Michigan Lutheran Seminary) predicted "a low supply of candidates possibly beginning as early as 1982 and continuing through 1988." And he concluded that during those years we "could accumulate a backlog of from 125-175 pastoral vacancies." A decade later and nearing the end of the critical period targeted by Birkholz, look at what actually has transpired: The enrollment at Northwestern College has dipped to its lowest in 24 years (202 in 1986, 192 in 1963). And yet, instead of the anticipated backlog of pastoral vacancies, we face the danger of a backlog of unassigned candidates graduating from the Seminary. What happened—aside from demonstrating that we mere mortals make miserable prognosticators? In brief, a number of things happened: At first we as a Synod appeared to respond positively to the call to action. NWC's enrollment grew again, to 275 by 1981. We added a fulltime recruiter. We graduated our largest class in history by the spring of 1985. Larger numbers of public school graduates (17 in 1981) bolstered our enrollment while a thriving Bethany program increased the numbers entering Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (16 Bethany graduates entered WLS in 1980). But, then, we experienced the "low supply of candidates" projected by Birkholz. Acting like a hose with a crimp in it the flow of students to Northwestern slowed drastically. Coincidentally, the rapid mission growth by our Synod also slowed, decreasing the needs for candidates,

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<sup>47</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College* 125, 10.

creating the unexpected threat of an imminent (temporary?) oversupply of workers. So we have today's situation [January 1987].<sup>48</sup>

When Baumler left to serve as editor for the *Northwestern Lutheran*, Pastor John Braun was called to take his place. It was also during those years that Pastor Ken Brokmeier served as a full-time recruiter for NWC from 1988-1990 and for Martin Luther Preparatory School (MLPS) in Praire du Chien, WI from 1990-1994. After the amalgamation, which will be discussed later, Pastor Brokmeier moved to keep recruiting at Luther Preparatory School (LPS) until 1999. During that time, Pastor Phil Hirsch also moved from full-time recruiter at NWC to MLC until 1997.<sup>49</sup> Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) also added their first full-time recruiter, Professor John Sebald. He started as director at DMLC beginning in 1991 until he accepted a new call out of MLC in 2000.

Why the added force upon a specific committee of recruitment and specific people to go out and recruit individuals? In short, it was from a lack of prospective students, but perhaps there were other contributing factors as well. Toppe noted that at the time there were also heightened recruitment efforts by others colleges which in turn led to the combined efforts by WELS toward their own encouragement of pastoral candidates. Toppe wrote, "Year after year, Northwestern enrolls many gifted young men in its ministerial training program. Mensa-class students, however, may be somewhat fewer in number than in the past partly because of intense recruitment by the nation's colleges, luring such students with free-handed scholarship grants and with promises of prestige and affluence."<sup>50</sup> President Toppe also noted that, to some degree,

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<sup>48</sup> Gary P. Baumler, "Providing the Next Generation of Pastors in the WELS: An Essay on the Role of Pastors in Recruiting More Pastors," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1987, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/292>.

<sup>49</sup> Kurbis, "First-Hand Historical Perspectives of Recruitment for Our Ministerial Education System Spanning the Last 30 Years," 7.

<sup>50</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College* 125,49-50.

the materialistic attitudes and life-styles of parents, worldly aspirations, rising tuition costs, and the social stigma from culture and impressions felt from TV evangelists on ministry discouraged and are still leading others to not accept the Lord's invitation into the public ministry today.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, Toppe wrote that the added recruitment effort seemed to be a benefit in 1990:

The program is extensive and it is actively pursued. But it must contend with attitudes toward the pastoral ministry what appear to be increasingly negative. It must endeavor to draw more enrollment from a shallower pool of secondary school students. There is good reason to believe that the college's recruitment program has kept Northwestern's enrollment since 1985 from declining well below 200....If Northwestern College is to meet the needs of the synod for a larger supply of pastors, a double portion of God's grace must rest on its efforts. These efforts must include recruiting in earnest by the synod's pastors and teachers.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to enrollment, another growing concern through the years has also been the lack of assignments for candidates at the end of their years training. Professor Brenner and Pastor Prange noted the years in lack of assignments for students from 1984-1996:

In 1984 there were 59 seminary graduates, but six candidates were left unassigned. This development came as a surprise but was a foretaste of what would come. It was not until 1996 that the assignment committee was once again able to issue a call to every senior on call day, a painful yet loving reminder that is it only through God's mercy and gracious calling that we have ministry. Pastors are not called to serve themselves but to serve him and his people.<sup>53</sup>

Really, this perception that has affected so many recruiters and ministry candidates, is not new to WELS. Professor Brenner and Pastor Prange noted earlier the first time that lack of assignments occurred as the Seminary moved to its Mequon site in 1929:

Unfortunately, the other product that the seminary had in abundance during those years [1929-1957] was graduates prepared for ministry but with no place to serve. In 1932 only one of 26 men received a call upon graduation, leaving a future seminary professor and president, among others, with no assignment. Only two of the 18 graduates were assigned

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<sup>51</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College 125*, 58-59.

<sup>52</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College 125*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange, "Chapter Nine (1972-1985): Through God's Mercy, We Have This Ministry," in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, ed. John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange (Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 2013), 241.

the following year... In 1935 the new synod president, John Brenner, announced that 32 theological candidates were still unassigned to a field of work in Christ's kingdom. The situation had hardly improved by 1943, when the seminary's assignment day left 17 and 19 graduates unassigned. It was the synod's first real experience of having pastoral candidates standing idle, with little prospect of seeing the situation improve. The men without calls found work elsewhere – some as teachers with parish schools, others wherever they could find work – until a suitable parish vacancy needed to be filled. Slowly but surely, as the nation emerged from World War II and the economy improved, the assignments became more abundant, and ripened fields were joyfully harvested.<sup>54</sup>

Recruiting during those periods of an abundance of candidates focused not only on human understanding, but also in the Lord's will of raising up public ministry candidates and focusing on the grace of God that needed to be preached and learned through all generations. In an interview, Kurbis asked Pastor Earle Treptow, who served as MLC recruiter from 1997-2002, about the method of recruitment used during these times of lack of assignment and finances. Kurbis wrote, "Pastor Treptow explained that he really didn't change much. His approach to lack of assignments was to speak very positively about preparing for the ministry and serving as the Lord wills. His consistent emphasis on God's grace for what the ministry is, especially as it applies to His Church was his directive instead of highlighting the negative." Kurbis also included, "Pastor Treptow did recall changes such as the kind of publications, number of visits, individuals on staff, and the kinds of discussion from person to person. Nevertheless his expressed intent was to never jump to a 'knee jerk' conclusion."<sup>55</sup>

In light of more recent years when the discussion has not been unassigned graduates, but smaller graduating classes and higher vacancy rates in WELS, the worry and concern remains. Yet, from the "pendulum swing" in the numbers with historical trends and adjustments in

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<sup>54</sup> John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange, "Chapter Seven (1929-1957): Let Light Shine out of Darkness" in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, ed. John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange (Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 2013), 165-166.

<sup>55</sup> Kurbis, "First-Hand Historical Perspectives of Recruitment for Our Ministerial Education System Spanning the Last 30 Years," 11.

methodology, one source of comfort is that the Lord is always the one in control. He supplies and institutes his pastoral candidates for ministry.<sup>56</sup> In fact, it was even said that the enrollment at NWC from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was “wave-like.” Ernst E. Kowalke, who served as President of NWC from 1913-1959, also made a similar statement in response to that “wave-like” attendance. He said NWC was a “Werkstaette des Heiligen Geistes” and that “God’s name is recorded here, and we have His promise, where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”<sup>57</sup> Brenner and Prange made a similar distinction of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well:

The Lord of the Church is in control of the future as he has been in the past. When he sees fit to allow the synod to have assigned candidates on call day, he teaches us all that serving in the public ministry is a privilege that no one owes us. When the number of vacancies in our synod rises and congregations lack pastors, he reminds us that no one should take having a pastor for granted. Every congregation and individual member has the responsibility to encourage young men to train for the ministry and support them with their offerings and with their prayers. As our Savior declared, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Mt 9:37-39).<sup>58</sup>

### **Decisions Made to Understand the Human Factors**

In seeing and knowing the hand of the Lord is at work blessing his people in ways not even yet seen and realized, there also comes the challenge of navigating through the waters of earthly decisions. Within an ever changing culture and community, there are constantly decisions being made to understand the human side of the equation so that Gospel spreaders are raised up

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<sup>56</sup> Kurbis, “First-Hand Historical Perspectives of Recruitment for Our Ministerial Education System Spanning the Last 30 Years,” 18.

<sup>57</sup> J. Brenner, W. Bodamer, E.E. Guenther, K.F. Krauss etc., *Continuing In His Word: The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), 170.

<sup>58</sup> John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange, “Chapter Eleven (2000-2013): Being Renewed Day by Day” in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, ed. John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange (Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 2013), 286.

and trained. A prime example of this is the pastoral ministerial education system WELS has in place through its worker training system. It is in an ever-changing place, goal, and mission through schools adapting and constantly reevaluating the methods to help God's people see their special blessing at hand to train future pastoral candidates.

A majority of the decisions toward recruitment for public ministry candidates come through the worker-trainer schools that have been implemented through the years. It is no surprise that the emphasis these schools have in WELS are pointed toward raising and training future ministry candidates. It is the funding, thoughtful planning, dedicated and hard-working professors and teachers, and the prayers and support of WELS members which are a great blessing in helping recruit public ministry candidates. Without them, it would seem hardly possible that there would be pastoral candidates each spring.

First, the ministerial schools educate and grow sons and daughters from children into adults academically. Then, the Holy Spirit grows their faith through his Holy Word to see the truths of God more clearly and evidently in an ever-changing sinful world. Eickmann summarized the way Christian educators go about teaching and growing their students,

Christian educators do not see knowledge as if it were a vast loft full of hay, all the contents of equal status. It is rather like a spacious manor house with many rooms, serving various purposes for those who live there: a chapel, workshops, and offices, a library, living rooms, a kitchen, pantry and closets. An order of value is established in creation: knowledge of 1) God, 2) man, 3) the rest of nature....Scriptures do have specific teaching about God, about man, about how God would have man look at his world. The Scriptures lead the church to teach a Christian *Weltanschauung* in the church's schools. That means not only teaching theology but also teaching the liberal arts from a Christian viewpoint.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Eickmann, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/132>, 7.



An even bigger added bonus, with a special intentional purpose, is that prep schools also directly allow students to see their lives in public ministry. The Recruitment Strategy for the four worker-trainer schools in 1999 made it clear that their intention was to give opportunities, funding, and procedures for carrying out this specific goal (See Sample in Appendix 1).<sup>60</sup>

However, it is also worthwhile to see a system in place on the recruiting level as the worker-trainer schools have gone through various changes stemming back to 1961. It was at that time that the Planning Committee for the Educational Institutes of the synod suggested that the three college campuses, DMLC, NWC, and the special junior college in Milwaukee, be combined into a new facility in the Milwaukee area. However, that resolution was not passed and the three colleges continued to operate independently.

A few years later, there was also a push that did pass to have NWC separate into a high school and pre-seminary college. Kowalke highlighted specific challenges in 1965 towards the class structure at NWC:

What of the future? There will of course be problems; so much we can safely predict. There will be committee reports and faculty meetings at which these problems will be solved, at least until conditions change and new problems arise....Of much more important than the routine regulation of internal affairs will be the decision that must soon be made regarding the separation of the college department from the preparatory department and the possible relocation of one or the other of them. Whatever is done about separating the two departments of our school and about the possible relocation and rebuilding of one of them, there can be no questions about what must be the determining force in the shaping and preservation of our basic educational policy. That force is the Gospel of Christ, which our school is to represent both in our church and before the whole world.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Paul Prange, "Recruitment Strategy Review Committee Final Report," (1999).

<sup>61</sup> Erwin Ernst Kowalke, *Centennial Story: Northwestern College, 1865-1965* (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1965), 274.

The split on the Watertown campus officially came in 1974 for a variety of reasons academically and financially. The preparatory school received its own president and became known as Northwestern Preparatory School (NPS) alongside Northwestern College.

In addition to that concern on the college campus of NWC and NPS, there also was a decision reached at the synod convention in 1979 to close Northwestern Lutheran Academy (NLA) in Mobridge, South Dakota because of financial reasons. The school would join together with Martin Luther Academy (MLA) and form Martin Luther Preparatory School (MLPS) located in Prairie du Chien where the synod had purchased a former Catholic campus.<sup>62</sup>

Still, perhaps one of biggest financial challenges came in the early 1990s when there was intense discussion about amalgamating NWC and DMLC together into one single college on the DMLC campus in New Ulm. There also was discussion about joining together NPS and MLPS on the campus of NWC/NPS in Watertown. This topic had been on the table once before in uniting the teacher and pastor training school in 1961. President Carleton Toppe wrote at the time:

The cloud that hung over the future of Northwestern College as it concluded its first century was dispelled in 1965, when the synod determined that NWC should be not be merged with the proposed senior college for teacher training to be established in Milwaukee, but should continue on its Watertown campus as an independent pastor-training institution. A similar cloud has arisen as the college prepares to observe its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In 1991 the synod convention will have before it a Prep School Study Commission report that recommends merging Northwestern College with Dr. Martin Luther College on the latter's campus so that Martin Luther Preparatory School can be transferred from Prairie du Chien to the Northwestern campus and be merged with Northwestern Preparatory School. The future of NWC as an independent pastor-training college is again in questions. At present there appears to be considerable sentiment in the synod for retaining NWC as an independent, single-purpose college. For this the college can be grateful. It remains to be seen whether financial considerations will outweigh such

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<sup>62</sup> John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange, "Chapter Nine (1972-1985): Through God's Mercy, We Have This Ministry," 241.

factors as the educational and vocational focus of the college, and its past service in the preparation of young men for the pastoral ministry.<sup>63</sup>

In fact, it was not only financial reasons that caused the schools to amalgamate in 1995, forming LPS in Watertown and MLC in New Ulm. But, there were also new efforts to recruit, unified together (See Appendix 2).<sup>64</sup> Brenner and Prange included this note about the drive for recruitment prior to the amalgamation:

Despite the challenge of assigning available candidates, there were calls for continuing recruitment of young men for the pastoral ministry. The 1985 *Book of Reports and Memorial* (BoRaM) declared, “A great challenge facing our worker training system is the recruitment of enough students who will prepare to serve as future pastors and teachers.” This Board for Ministerial Education (BME) sponsored a recruitment seminar on the NWC campus June 11-13, 1986, with representation from all of the ministerial education schools and area Lutheran high schools as well. The WLS report in the 1987 BoRaM called for “vigorous recruitment if we are to have enough candidates for the 1990s.” “With an eye to an impending shortage of fulltime workers in the church,” the 1989 synod convention asked the Board for the Worker Training to expand its recruitment force. In 1991 the synod resolved that NWC receive funding for a fulltime recruiter as soon as possible.<sup>65</sup>

WLS Senior Nathanael Jensen also wrote a thesis on the amalgamation and its outcomes after a quarter of a century. He highlighted and summarized many of the scenarios, predictions, and goals of the amalgamation. He also explained a large part of the recruitment efforts that MLC was hoping to gain in joining forces in New Ulm. While his whole paper was a very worthwhile read, for the sake of brevity, part of his assessment is included here:

Similarly, the shift in the overall approach to recruitment by the admissions staff can also be indirectly attributed to the amalgamation. While the individual approach of each admissions counselor may vary, the present-day recruitment efforts from MLC consist more of general encouragement toward the public ministry than specific counselors or endeavors focusing on specific candidates for a specific track. A MLC student’s ability to switch tracks or transfer to another college rather easily are emphasized more strongly

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<sup>63</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College 125*, 156-157.

<sup>64</sup> John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange, “Chapter Ten (1985-2000): Struck Down, But Not Destroyed” in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, ed. John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange (Mequon, WI: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press, 2013), 254-255.

<sup>65</sup> John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange, “Chapter Ten (1985-2000): Struck Down, But Not Destroyed,” 255.

than before as an encouragement for high schoolers to give MLC a try as they continue deliberating what career path to take. This more generic recruitment for the public ministry would never have become the approach at a single purpose school with only the one pre-seminary program.

In my estimation, the impact which the more normal college experience which MLC offers has had an similar effect to that of pastors and teachers in the field promoting the pre-seminary program. By that, I mean that the impact has likely been very favorable but is impossible to really prove or explore. Societal trends indicate that NWC's all-male student body likely would have become more detrimental to recruitment than it had been in the past. Thus, the coeducational aspect of the college has certainly eased recruitment and increased enrollment for the pre-seminary program. The wider range of experiences and opportunities which a bigger school with a larger student body presents has also had a positive impact on recruitment. On the one hand, MLC is still not able to compete with all the different programs and activities other colleges and universities can offer. On the other hand, for most who are considering the pastoral ministry, MLC provides an adequate number and level of opportunities in which to participate and enjoy. The proposition that more young men would try the pre-seminary program since their friends—male and female—who were training for the teaching ministry would be at the same school makes logical sense but is once again difficult to substantiate. It certainly can be a comforting component, especially when one is already going against the grain in considering the pastor track at MLC, but that does not mean that it would necessarily be a deciding factor for or against enrolling.<sup>66</sup> In my assessment, this social influence has likely had a positive but relatively minor impact on recruitment to the pastor track.<sup>67</sup>

After amalgamation, there also was an increased effort toward recruitment efforts once the schools were unified. What had started out mostly under Baumler, Braun, Brokmeier, Hirsch, and Sebald, now had developed into a larger division of recruiters at MLC with a stronger emphasis across the synod. Kurbis noted the increased efforts and the apparent blessings of God towards recruitment efforts:

Pastor Earle Treptow was called in 1997 to pick-up where Pastor Hirsch left off, recruiting candidates for ministry, particularly pastors. He soon experienced the Lord blessing the labor of those past and present as the enrollment reached record highs by the summer of 2000. It was that summer that Prof. Sebald accepted a call out of MLC and

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<sup>66</sup> Wylie, Julain. "The 7 Things Students Think About When Choosing a College" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 13 February 2018. 30 January 2019. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-7-Things-Students-Think/242544>. The seven major categories listed are affordability, availability of a desired program, reputation/academic quality, career outcomes/job opportunities, value of education for cost, feeling of fit, and proximity to home. Having friends who are enrolling could play a role in the "feeling of fit" category.

<sup>67</sup> Nathanael Jensen, "A Divided Decision Blessed by the Lord: The Impact of the Amalgamation on the WELS Pre-seminary Program," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, February 2019, 29-30.

three others came onto the admissions/recruitment staff. Ron Brutlag, Pastor John Dolan, and Stephanie Hopf joined Pastor Treptow to formulate the largest recruiting staff any of our synodical schools had seen. This certainly was a key mark in a time of expansion. Professor Treptow described this time period as a “ride.” It was a time when there was positive recognition and encouragement for recruitment beyond those typically involved. In his words, “Recruitment was the fair-haired child of the synod.” There was general support of the efforts from the college and synodical administration to the churches and schools. They recruiters experienced this support in the resources placed at their disposal. They were able to put out more publications and new displays to name a few. They also experience a good degree of support from the churches and schools. Professor Treptow recalled a general, overall improvement in the area of Lutheran high schools. Called workers both directly encouraged quality candidates and indirectly exemplified public ministry by their faithfulness and joy in service. It was at this time that the Lord blessed MLC with record enrollment reaching over 1,000 (2001-2002). In his mind, Pastor Treptow sensed a more consistent recognition for recruitment from the college and synodical administration.<sup>68</sup>

While it can be said that the decisions made, the results that came about, and the work and efforts of the countless men and women at work behind the scenes played an instrumental part in this, God was always in control. It was God keeping true on his promise of his grace and proclamation of his Holy Word through long hours, careful studies, and faithful people who knew the truth of his promise. Really, whether large numbers of students enrolled or not, God always kept true to his Word in using his people to raise up pastoral candidates. It was God’s Word at work in the hearts of recruiters, professors, teachers, and supporters of ministerial education. Kowalke expressed this attitude in the unchanging force behind all the educational decisions:

The determining force in the shaping and preservation of our basic educational policy is the Gospel of Christ, which our school is to represent both in our church and before the whole world. That Gospel is not going to change in the lifetime of our school. Customs, morals, living conditions will change, governments will come and go, but the Way to Life will not change, nor will the Gospel that records that Way of Life. There is not a new Gospel for each new age. There was a vast difference between the conditions of life in Corinth where Paul preached and in Wittenberg where Luther taught, yet both men preached the same Gospel and knew but the one great truth of Christ and Him crucified. Likewise, the difference between what is being called our space age and the age of Luther

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<sup>68</sup> Kurbis, “First-Hand Historical Perspectives of Recruitment for Our Ministerial Education System Spanning the Last 30 Years,” 9.

is just as vast as was the difference between Wittenberg and Corinth, and yet the same Gospel applies to people who streak across the sky in jet planes as to those who used to trudge through the mud behind a yoke of oxen. If we but remain faithful to that Gospel and continue to make that Gospel the purpose of our existence as an educational institution, then our educational policy will take care of itself, and we can enter our second century with complete confidence.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Kowalke, *Centennial Story: Northwestern College, 1865-1965*, 274-275.

### PART III: CONTRASTING SECULAR AND SANCTIFIED RECRUITMENT

While this thesis has portrayed the biblical background of recruiting candidates for the pastoral ministry and how that blessing of the Lord has been displayed through the hands of WELS doing the gospel ministry of the Lord, so it is also vital to understand the world's influence upon recruitment practice. Specifically, it is important to understand how secular recruitment has played a significant role in developing sacred recruitment at MLC.

The intention of the writer is not to critique anything done in the past or that is currently being done in sacred recruitment. Rather, the objective is this: How does one understand how God's people spread the unique task of raising up pastoral candidates through the tools society has crafted for recruitment practices? Secular recruitment can be defined as having its goal and drive pointed toward worldly goals. Sacred recruitment can be defined in a similar way because it uses the secular world's model for prepping and educating. However, sacred recruitment can be defined differently because of God. He has given his people his divine promise to do that work, through the means and manner the people deem necessary in sharing and training others in his Holy Word. As said before, it just so happens that those ways of sacred recruitment follow many of the methods of secular recruitment acts and works because the institutions are nearly identical in appearance.

In order to grasp this concept, one has to understand first that the system in place for recruiting and training pastoral candidates is based on the platform of American education. It is

not a new concept or a surprise that candidates have been trained in WELS on a system started already from early colonial times. Universities like Harvard, Yale, and others were instituted to train ministers as many colonial groups sought religious freedom. These organizations followed many of the university styles from Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>70</sup>

Pastor Micah Plocher also acknowledged the roots of WELS ministerial education taking the form of the higher education platform in America. He noted the similar structure to an American university from the beginning:

At the synod convention in 1864, Moldehnke reported on the situation in Watertown. Already at that time, the delegates were looking for an opportunity to add an institution to provide better qualified candidates to the seminary, and he spoke to their intentions. He recounted several conversations he had had with prominent Watertown citizens who thought that a college based on the German Gymnasium model (in which many of the most educated Wisconsin Synod men studied in Europe) would not succeed in their city. According to the people of Watertown, if an institution of higher education were going to fit in their community, it would have to follow the American model exemplified by the prominent east-coast universities like Harvard and Yale.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps what played an even bigger role than the school names name “Northwestern University,” is that it was not just modeled outwardly after American universities. It was also presented inwardly to some degree to be like an American institution by President Adam Martin in 1865. He laid out his plan for the school:

A college in the American sense of the word is an institution for a so-called higher education. It is neither a European university nor a German Gymnasium, but a peculiarly American scholastic institution that partakes somewhat of both of them but concerns itself with the needs of practical life, in that it aims at a higher education that is closely fitted to the local conditions in our land, including all that which this requires, and excluding all that which is foreign to it.... The church has always had the say in

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<sup>70</sup> Peter D. Eckel and Jacqueline King, “An Overview of Higher Education in the United States: Diversity and the Role of the Marketplace,” in *American Council on Education: The Unifying Voice for High Education*, 15 November 2018, <https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Overview-of-Higher-Education-in-the-United-States-Diversity-Access-and-the-Role-of-the-Marketplace-2004.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> Micah J. Plocher, “Pre-Seminary Curriculum Re-Evaluation: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Non-Biblical Language Requirement,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, February 2018, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4344>.



educational matters, and in this country, too, that denomination of the church will become best known, and put its peculiar stamp on the life of the people, that does most in the way of educating the prominent men of the land.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to being modeled like an American institution, what played an even bigger role toward recruitment efforts was the heightened value of higher education in America. This was in response to the government's continual expansion and backing of higher education with financial resources. The government played a minor role for about a hundred years through the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, Smith-Hughes Acts of 1917, and the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill).<sup>73</sup> The the United States' government also played a major role. It enacted the National Defense Education Act to fuel not just the space race, but also the minds and lives of American teenagers across the country with resources and funds toward higher education. President Dwight Eisenhower switched his thought about supporting the government's involvement in education in 1958. In turn, this opened the doors for colleges and universities to receive more students interested in college careers with support and funding from the government. Today, this has evolved into the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).<sup>74</sup>

Now, it is hard to draw parallels between the influxes of students in American education with the abundance of candidates WELS had in the 1960s. President Panning made this remark about the Seminary enrollment, "in the 1960s there was a marked increase in the size of the student body, the synod in the seminary's centennial year (1963) added two sections to the

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<sup>72</sup> Proceedings of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1866, 22.

<sup>73</sup> Hans Thomford, "Fighting for American Education: The National Defense Education Act," Dec 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Peter D. Eckel and Jacqueline King, "An Overview of Higher Education in the United States: Diversity and the Role of the Marketplace."

dormitory.”<sup>75</sup> It is hard to draw parallels because at the time, NWC was not accredited so the increase in funding for students would not have mattered toward a life at NWC. NWC also did not have much of a recruitment department to attract prospective students at this time.

Perhaps the rise in enrollment at NWC and WLS was not due directly to the increased financial support, but to the overall feeling of pursuing a higher education. A recent article in comparing higher educational systems now and then in the 1960s provides support for this idea. Richard Vedder noted that “In the 1950s and 1960s, universities had widespread political and financial support, today, public support is more tepid and general skepticism towards higher education is greater.” Vedder also noted that “in the mid-60s, as had been true for the previous 20 years, higher education enrollments were rising dramatically, new universities were opening, and the environment was one of expansion, of rampant academic entrepreneurship.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, since NWC was on the platform of a higher education institution, perhaps students did see this as a viable option for their career.

However, the large influx for WELS may not have been due to imitating other universities in attracting many students. NWC and DMLC’s goal was not to attract more students for financial reasons or enrollment growth. In the 1960s, NWC was not even accredited like a prestigious college or university, yet still had a large number of students. Toppe noted this in the decision on whether to become accredited:

The college did not need accreditation to attract students enrolled in its ministerial program in gratifying numbers, especially in the late 1960s, despite the lack of accreditation. And despite the lack of accreditation, credits generally transferred to accredited Wisconsin Colleges. From time to time out-of-state colleges, unacquainted with NWC, accepted the credits of our matriculating students only provisionally, but they soon validated them when they observed the competence of our students in their

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<sup>75</sup> Armin Panning, “Our Primary Calling –Providing Pastoral candidates,” 24.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Vedder, “Universities: Then and Now,” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ccap/2017/08/25/universities-then-and-now/#70209c447c19>.

classrooms. For one hundred and ten years Northwestern had not needed accreditation. Why should it give up its independence and seek it in 1975?<sup>77</sup>

In the end, NWC did become accredited, but still with a careful distinction. Perhaps it was just the trends in the rising value of higher education. Toppe noted a different frame of mind than Martin's view as the goal and mission of NWC, "The accreditation process has increased the college's awareness of its uniqueness. Northwestern College is a special kind of college, with a philosophy of education and a special and crucial mission in our church. It must remain its own type of college if it is not to generalize and to contribute less and less to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's training."<sup>78</sup>

NWC became accredited and MLC had maintained accreditation. Toppe noted in 1990 a major underlying reason NWC made that decision, was in helping college students with government grants available to accredited schools.<sup>79</sup> The argument was made in favor for accreditation in regard to the transfer of credits in and out of NWC, the government Pell grants, feedback on teaching methods outside WELS, DMLC's recent accreditation, the accreditation committee did not espouse an official philosophy, and the process did not go against scripture. The arguments against the accreditation process were that the accreditation committee did see education standards only in a secular, academic way. NWC did not need accreditation since most graduates went on to the seminary and into the synod's pastoral ministry. It would be harder to become unaccredited as a college became more dependent on financial aid and assurance of

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<sup>77</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College* 125, 79.

<sup>78</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College* 125, 89.

<sup>79</sup> Toppe, *Holding the Course: Northwestern College* 125, 89.

academic respectability. Finally, there were apprehensions about secular influence on a college like Northwestern.<sup>80</sup>

Looking back at the big picture, it is hard to pin-point the cause-effect relationship at the time. Why the larger numbers in enrollment? Was it the trends toward higher education? It seemed that colleges were driving toward and marketing more to these prospective students. It seemed that accreditation was not only good inwardly, but also outwardly for the integrity of the institution. It seemed that there was a trend in the growing value of higher education. However, perhaps the real value is in seeing the close connection from a sacred institution like NWC to an important secular institution. Perhaps there was unknown value at the time of becoming accredited and maintaining that higher education platform because of the growing amount of external resources from the government and the institutions' stance influencing younger generations toward higher education.

There is value in understanding how the training of public ministry candidates happens through the higher education platform. Since ministerial education was modeled like an institution for higher education, students have seen this as a valid place for growth and advancement like any other college or university. Yet, the secular platform is merely a platform because God has given students a desire for ministry. It is only a platform because God's Word is what NWC, and now MLC, is all about. It is a place to go get a "job," but the job is not about money, comfort, or earthly security. The "job" is doing the work of public ministry. It is serving the Lord, spreading God's Word, and teaching God's people. It is loving his believers and has eternal consequences on the horizon each day through the power of God.

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<sup>80</sup> John A. Beck "NWC Accreditation: Giving In or Moving Up," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1984, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/299>.

As a result, the platform ministerial education has taken means that inevitably, it has a close connection to the secular world. For the sake of this essay then, it has a close relation to the world's stand on recruitment. Furthermore, taking into consideration that MLC has maintained accreditation, how does that accreditation affect the ministerial recruitment at MLC? Whether it was on the table or not when NWC thought about accreditation, is has affected the outward appearance and model of MLC toward encouraging individuals to attend. There is importance in accreditation across the world as stated by one accreditation committee, "One of the first steps any prospective student should take before enrolling in a college or university, is to verify whether or not the school is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency."<sup>81</sup>

In light of the growth and continued pressure on many colleges to promote students to think of all the possibilities of higher education after high school and also taking into consideration how NWC and now MLC has sustained the platform of higher education in appearance and form, it means there inevitably is a connection. It also means that in terms of recruitment, in the same way other college and universities promote their own institution with branding and marketing, NWC and now MLC has followed suit.

In fact, it is really nothing new to the argument. Advertising and promotional growth had always been in the mind of colleges and universities as displayed by NWC when it opened its doors in 1865. President Martin signed his name in an advertisement by the school in the *Watertown Democrat* of September and December in 1865, "The University offers opportunities for a thorough and complete course of Collegiate Education equal to any in the land.... The

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<sup>81</sup> "Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools," <http://www.acics.org/students/content.aspx?id=4320>.

facilities for the education of English scholars shall be second to any in the land.”<sup>82</sup> And what’s even more interesting is Brenner’s explanation about that article Martin took part in:

That was noble language but it must be conceded that it was an exaggerated description of a combined college and high school with three teachers and a total of 66 students, all of high school grades. But perhaps one should not take this inflated language of college advertising too seriously. All of the small colleges were doing and saying the same thing, and no doubt the readers shrugged it off as advertising.<sup>83</sup>

In more recent years, additional evidence from the continual rise of other colleges and universities promoting and advertising is listed by Braun in his booklet from 1987, *The Road Less Traveled*:

Whenever you received promotional materials from many different places about careers, you will find most of them are slick professional publications about the advantages of a particular profession, college or university. Almost all of them will present the positive in order to make a favorable impression on you. Universities photograph their campuses in the best possible way. Pictures show students happy and friendly, and brochures hype future careers as challenging and rewarding. Advertising and marketing demands the positive image.<sup>84</sup>

Dr. Daniel Schmeling also included some of his views upon the recruitment and advertising others colleges were doing toward area Lutheran high school prospects in 1992. He highlighted the growing concern for MLC to properly meet the demands to match what other colleges were doing:

Students in the area Lutheran high schools received an abundance of recruitment materials from interested colleges. Many colleges enlist students and alumni to make personal telephone calls to prospective students. Recruitment practices of our colleges need to be aggressively proactive if they are to compete for these students. Consultations with administrators and counselors in the area Lutheran high schools and a study of

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<sup>82</sup> J. Brenner, W. Bodamer, E.E. Guenther, K.F. Krauss etc., *Continuing In His Word: The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States*, 155.

<sup>83</sup> J. Brenner, W. Bodamer, E.E. Guenther, K.F. Krauss etc., *Continuing In His Word: The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States*, 155.

<sup>84</sup> John Braun, *The Road Less Traveled: A Pastor’s Thoughts for Someone Wondering About the Ministry*, 19.

successful recruitment practices of other colleges will help identity strategies that will be more effective among our high school students.<sup>85</sup>

### **Insights from a World Perspective**

Although the goal of this thesis is not to make a comprehensive list of different secular recruitment strategies that will aid the side of sacred recruitment, there needs to be some recognition of the world's approach to recruitment. For example, in a research study by the Chronicle of Higher Education, the insight put forward through careful research was that teenage minds “did not attribute as much importance to early stage conversation (at college fairs or high-school visits) as admissions did.” The article also pointed out how meaningful the rank of the college was in terms of prestige and value not so much in applicants enrolling, but to the final decision. One of the most notable quotes from the article stated, “there are view books, pamphlets, and mailings – you know, all that stuff your college probably spends a ton of money on. ‘Teens regard print as a vital source of information about college.’ Nearly all (91 percent) admissions officers said the print materials students pick up at college fairs influence teenagers’ decisions about where to apply.”<sup>86</sup>

Even greater in scope, was a research done by Hanover in 2014 which looked specifically at how marketing, recruitment, and technology all played a vital role together in encouraging students to attend. Without going into too much detail, the first item under “Key findings” said, “One of the most notable trends in higher education branding and marketing is that institutions are dedicating far more attention to these functions than in previous years. Many universities

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<sup>85</sup> Daniel M. Schmeling, “The Role of Area Lutheran High Schools in Worker Training,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1992, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/2544>.

<sup>86</sup> Eric Hoover, “The Chronicle of Higher Education,” 15 November 2018, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/TeenagersColleges-Are-of/231703>

have hired marketing professionals from the corporate world, including CMO's, and have invested time and money to create strong institutional brands.”<sup>87</sup>

In addition to the two research articles noted above, Barbara G. Wheeler also completed a comprehensive study on the student's path toward seminary. While her understanding and definitions of the doctrinal points made at the beginning of this paper may not match WELS's understandings and correct views upon ministry, it would be foolish to think that a survey like this would not be beneficial. Wheeler pointed out great insights:

In a culture in which church and ministry are no longer as salient as once were, it becomes increasingly unlikely that the decisions to go to seminary will be made casually, without prior experiences that provide images of the roles to which it might lead. To attract more good students, religious communities and theological institutions need to know more about the backgrounds of the persons they hope to attract and the influences that orient prospective students to ministry.<sup>88</sup>

Wheeler also studied how students arrived at seminary. She looked at their influences and the impact the student's culture and family life had in their decision, “The decisions to go to seminary and consider ministry were the result of extended formation in religious value systems and enculturation in church life. None of them fell into seminary by accident or chose ministry casually.”<sup>89</sup> Finally, Wheeler also noted the most influential person to ministry candidates:

Two categories top the list of person whose influence and encouragement steered the students in this study toward seminary and ministry. One is persons in ministerial roles – often ordained clergy – but sometimes youth pastors and other lay ministers. Two-thirds of all survey respondents said that a pastor, youth minister, chaplain, or other clergy person encouraged their choice of profession. Virtually all interviewees reported that seeing ministry done well played a central role in their vocational decision making even if they were not explicitly guided or encouraged by a religious professional. Reviewing

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<sup>87</sup> Hanover Research, “Trends in Higher Education Marketing, Recruitment, and Technology,” <https://www.hanoverresearch.com/media/Trends-in-Higher-Education-Marketing-Recruitment-and-Technology-2.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> Barbara G. Wheeler, “On our Way, A study of Students' Paths to Seminary,” <https://auburnseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/OnOurWay-FinalDoc.pdf>, 4

<sup>89</sup> Barbara G. Wheeler, “On our Way, A study of Students' Paths to Seminary,” 7.



the interview team concluded that “First you have to see it.” Almost no one enters ministry who has not personally witnessed it and benefited personally from its practice.<sup>90</sup>

It is highly encouraged that the links to these articles be read and viewed if one is interested in more insights from the world’s view in recruitment with branding, marketing, and pastoral ministry. As was stated by the Recruitment Strategy Review Committee Report in 1999, “WE ARE COMPARED TO OUR COMPETITION. Like it or not, we are not an island. Our prospects are not planning to go to MLC or no college at all (See Appendix).”<sup>91</sup> There is a comparison since sacred recruitment is trying to give and show pastoral candidates a life of service through the higher education platform.

### **The Point of Intersection**

While sacred recruitment principles can generally be said to follow in a similar fashion to secular recruitment principles, there is also something more for WELS. As WELS institutions have outwardly taken the form of secular institutions historically and practically, there also has to be a distinction that separates the two as far apart as night and day. There is a point of intersection as far as form and structure, but an entirely different feeling and outcome because of the one who has promised the results of sacred recruitment. Baumler made this distinction in stating not just the power behind sacred recruitment, but the need to look at the secular recruitment ideas, “Jesus produces the pastors for his church. We can leave it in the Lord’s hand whenever we think a young many ought to pursue the ministry but doesn’t....We can also gain

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<sup>90</sup> Barbara G. Wheeler, “On our Way, A study of Students’ Paths to Seminary,” 19.

<sup>91</sup> Paul Prange, “Recruitment Strategy Review Committee Final Report,” (1999), 17.

insights for when things don't go smoothly be remembering that Jesus doesn't get his workers by sprinkling magic moon dust on them to draw them irresistibly to the task."<sup>92</sup>

Simply said, the purpose of sacred recruitment is to continue in the mission and promise the Lord made to his church in taking his gospel to the ends of the earth. It is similar in form to secular recruitment, there is also a difference. Pastor Brokmeier made this distinction clear when he wrote:

“So is there room for MLC to intersect with the secular? Perhaps but I would be very cautious before I would make drastic changes to our current system of having "quality control" over candidates for ministry. Also my wife has been teaching at a university and the bottom line for them is how many students they can enroll in their program to generate income for the department and their college and, ultimately, the university. I guess I think the outcomes of these two institutions are drastically different. The University teaches you to promote yourself to get the position. The Ministerial Education system of WELS teaches us to say, ‘Here am I Send Me!’”<sup>93</sup>

Baumler also added insight to this distinction when actively going out and encouraging men toward ministry. He wrote about a word of caution, “remember always that your recruitment efforts are for the ministry, not for Northwestern College. Northwestern comes into the picture because it's the primary means we have available to prepare for the Seminary, but the goal of the ministry should always supersede every thought about the school.”<sup>94</sup>

So what exactly is the relationship between secular and sacred recruitment? Yes, there is overlap, but only in structure and not the motive. In other words, the institutions in the sacred and secular realm mirror each other, yet God's Word stands as the supreme trump card. The same is said for recruitment principles. That is a point of intersection, yet one recruitment and

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<sup>92</sup> Baumler, “Providing the Next Generation of Pastors in the WELS: An Essay on the Role of Pastors in Recruiting More Pastors,” 2.

<sup>93</sup> Kenneth Brokmeier, Google Survey, November 2018.

<sup>94</sup> Gary P. Baumler, “The Pastor as Recruiter for the Preaching Ministry (In Search of Timothy),” *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 2000 <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/294>, 6.

institution is in a line pointed toward eternal life while the secular line is pointed toward earthly life. Chartrand identifies the relationship well:

Ministry recruitment, much like running a church or a school, needs a balance between secular strategies and reliance on God's Word. For example, a pastor can preach the best sermons in the world, but failure to use secular strategies could result in him preaching to an empty church. If he's not inviting people to services, advertising his church, and communicating with his members and community, there won't be a lot of people showing up to worship. Having systems in place to track prospective students, communicate to large groups through various publications, maintain a strong online presence, strategize effective times to visit schools, preach for chapel or church services, etc., is just good common sense. It's not saying, "God's Word is ineffective." Using secular strategies gives God's Word more opportunities to work. In the end, God's Word is the best ministry recruitment tool. Secular recruitment strategies play second fiddle to the Word, but can help open doors for the Word to get to work.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Evan Chartrand, Google Survey, November 2018.

## PART IV: CHALLENGES OF RECRUITMENT PHILOSOPHY TODAY

This writer has never served in a called recruitment position for WELS. However, in looking at publications in the synod archives, reading different reports that recruiters have put out, and being very close to the time when he was recruited, perhaps the writer's opinion would be of some benefit to individuals reading this paper. Therefore, some opinions are shared in this section.

### **Changing Strategies in an Ever Changing World**

When I started researching this topic, looking at the trends of recruitment and marketing as well as everything that draws students to an institution, it made me wonder what we can do, humanly speaking, in terms of recruitment. As I spent time as a vicar in College Station, Texas where Texas A&M University is located, it made me think hard about recruitment. After researching how that institution started from the Morrill Land Grant Act in 1876 to a university now of 67,000 students, it made me wonder what that institution was doing. Looking at their recruitment, advertising, degrees and programs, amenities to offer, their core values, state funding, and quite frankly the "whole package," it made me think. Even to me who had graduated from MLC, it was really a wonderful place, that in my mind, ended up being something pretty desirable that would be hard to say "no" to.

It made me start to look at MLC and I was even a little consumed with what we at MLC can do better to grow our numbers. However, I realized I did not see MLC for everything it really had to offer. Yes, our numbers have been wave-like and tend to swing like a pendulum.

We do not boast top amenities, degrees, programs, or athletics. However, all of those things are not the reason MLC exists. All the amenities, college life options, choices in class programs, and athletics were and still are wonderful things, but they are additional blessings.

I would never downplay the role and benefit they gave to me and to students today. However, I think about them as secondary blessings at MLC. The best thing in a wonderful and unique school is having the opportunity to serve. To be able to serve not just for an earthly good, but for the spiritual well-being of others is a blessing that the Lord has given to the church and God-willing, it is a blessing that many people will continue to see and cherish as so many people have before them. It is a blessing to be able to ponder that choice in one's head, to walk the halls and attend the classes that WELS has instituted to raise up pastoral candidates. It is an incredible blessing to have MLC for the benefit of God's people and His kingdom. No matter what the strategies are in a changing world, it is always centered on a gospel ministry focus as we continue to train and raise up pastoral candidates for the public ministry.

All the challenges and difficulties in navigating the different options available for God's younger generations are beneficial for all people to see and realize. It is beneficial for God's people to realize and to help others maneuver through what they want to do and what they are seeing in their higher education choices. It is God's people who know that they have all been given a wonderful blessing because, "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." They can pray, and "ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:38). Braun wrote in a recent article for *Forward in Christ*, "Remember that you are all recruiters for public ministry. Never underestimate the impact you can have by simply pulling a young person aside who you think has the gifts and telling him that and encouraging him to

give public ministry some thought. Remember that our young people see the respect you show toward the office of the public ministry, which leaves an impression on them.”<sup>96</sup>

All people can go out and remember two things: the impact the Word of God has on God’s people both for personal and public ministry and the impact they have in that ministry both in private and in the public. This point is reiterated well in the “Recruitment Strategy Review Committee’s Report: “We also have the Word, which powerfully works on the hearts and creates within the willingness and desire to prepare for service in full-time gospel ministry. Though the Word alone creates the willingness to serve, that willingness can be destroyed by a negative impression of the work involved in the public ministry.”<sup>97</sup>

Will there be challenges? Will there be different ways to go about encouraging and recruiting? Absolutely, yes. As our world keeps changing so will the very students raised in that world. Braun also noted what Professor Ross Stelljes, who served as a recruiter at MLC, said in an interview about his past recruitment work, “A difficult part for me is helping some see students see that their perceived barriers are just that: perceived.”<sup>98</sup> Stelljes also included some important things to remember in recruitment. Please see Appendix 3 for a summary of key points to remember.

Perhaps, the pastors already in service to the potential ministry candidates have an even bigger task to consider because of the position and influence which comes along with the pastoral office at the church. In 1983, Pastor Philip Spaude tracked specific factors in congregations which led to WLS graduates. He found that there was a significant connection

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<sup>96</sup> John A. Braun, “A Step Toward Future Ministry: Jesus says the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few,” *Forward in Christ* (October 2018): 28-29.

<sup>97</sup> Paul Prange, “Recruitment Strategy Review Committee Final Report,” (1999), 17.

<sup>98</sup> John A. Braun, “A Step Toward Future Ministry: Jesus says the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.”

between the graduates and the emphasis the pastor and congregation put on recruitment efforts.<sup>99</sup> Recently, Professor David Scharf made a similar connection to the oversight and job a pastor has both in leading his congregation and also gently guiding his flock in ministry and into ministry for the benefit of all of God's people. He stated in his essay at the 2018 WLS Symposium:

The Good Shepherd cries out, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go!" Thy hymn writer [Christian Worship 573 "Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying] asks, "Who will go and work today?" Will you gently guide those in your congregations who have gifts for ministry? Will I? I am not saying this from a "We need pastors because we have over 100 vacancies" perspective. I am not worried that the Lord of the Church will not fill the needs of his Church. But what a privilege to encourage others for this "noble task!" What if every pastor in this room made it a point to take one under his wing and guide him? What if we made a point of speaking about the privilege in our sermons, catechism instruction, and Bible classes – regularly? Truth be told, sometimes the child is willing but the parents are against the idea. What if we made it a point to encourage the parents, as well?<sup>100</sup>

Even greater than pastors giving encouragement and taking an initiative in ministry recruitment is the way God's people handle and treat the ministry themselves. It is the impression they give off as younger individuals look up to them. It is not just about encouraging for a life of service and a valid career choice but showing that career choice in a positive light. One does not need to paint an unrealistic picture of ministry work for another person, but be authentic about the importance and blessing that service to God is. It is interesting to note that in a study done by the LCMS in 1999 about recruitment and retention, a large factor in diminished numbers was pastoral burnout and the impression the burned-out pastors were giving to future ministry candidates. Klaas stated, "We set out to study recruitment and retention, and it turned out that how people treat each other is 60-70 percent of the problem." Dr. Alan Klass also made

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<sup>99</sup> Philip Spaude, "And How Can They Hear Without Someone Preaching to Them," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 1983, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/3819>, 12.

<sup>100</sup> David Scharf, "St Paul and Martin Luther: Paradigms of Shepherd-Leaders," *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Online Essay File*, 14 September 2018, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4403>, 12.

the comment when they set out for their study, “We found that recruiting is about relationships, not mechanics . . . and that the best recruiters of future pastors are local pastors. But we also discovered that depressed, burned-out pastors are not effective role models for recruiting future pastors.”<sup>101</sup>

### **Never Changing Blessing in a Sinful World**

As recruitment efforts look to the future, as the Lord’s blessings come in so many shapes and sizes, people and experiences, pastoral candidates or not, there is always an eternal blessing seen every day. Recruitment efforts at MLC’s campus in New Ulm may never match larger institutions. The campus may never offer the world’s standard of excellence in sports, infrastructures, new amenities, celebrity professors, or cutting-edge technology. But, the goal and the Lord’s promise remains the same: to preach the gospel to a world in need of hearing that gospel message.

With that promise, God’s people can see how they will continue to evaluate the world’s approach in raising up pastoral candidates. The world’s standard of recruitment will not last. It changes and takes different forms. However, it does not mean we need to exclude everything the world offers in the area of recruitment. It is true that we do not know how long football fields, state-of-the-art buildings, and way of life on a college campus will last. We could be training pastoral candidates totally different in 200 years. However, right now it means that we keep God’s promise and our role of encouraging and raising up pastoral candidates in close connection. We carefully listen to God’s plan, and reason how that best interacts to a world that

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<sup>101</sup> Dr. Alan C. Klaas and Ms. Cheryl D. Klaas, “Clergy Shortage Study: Conducted for – Board for High Education the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod,” director Dr. William F. Meyer, (Smithville, MO: Mission Growth Ministries, 1999), 71.



we love because our Lord first loved us. Maybe that means new infrastructures on campus. Maybe it means new amenities. Maybe it means different ways of communicating God's great privilege on display for so many people. What we do know is the Lord works a blessing through sinful people to give pastors and shepherds to lead us day-by-day.

All the dedication in understanding the secular academic world and all the dedication, prayers, and support to listen and keep in mind what the Lord says to encourage and gain those recruits and pastoral candidates assigned for ministry, shows that what truly is meaningful. It is our Savior caring for his people with his Holy Word by his people through private and blessed public ministry. No matter what, as believers train up pastoral candidates with God's Word, God's people are renewed and comforted through the power of Christ in his forgiveness of sins that gives true meaning to a person's life. Professor Brenner and Pastor Prange identified this same idea looking back on 150 years of pastoral training and the true hope for years to come:

While the people of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary have come and gone since 1863, it is difficult for us in 2013 to imagine that the venerable brick structure that houses Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon will likely become dust itself if the world lasts another 1,000 years. But like the men who have taught and learned within its walls, the buildings and perhaps even the institution itself may not last until the Last. Even now our seminary is outwardly wasting away, like the rest of us, and some historian 500 years from now may read these very lines and be moved to grab a map and search out where our dear seminary once stood. Yes, outwardly our seminary, our synod, and we ourselves are wasting away, not unlike the Apostle Paul and his work two millennia ago. There is no longer a Christian congregation in Corinth that serves as a direct testament to apostle's faithful work there. But also like him, through faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal God, "we are being renewed day-by-day" (2 Co 4:16), built on his eternal promises and work, certain of an eternal reward in Christ. What we are and what we accomplish in this world is indeed passing away, but his work in us and through us, we pray, will never pass away for Jesus' sake. To him alone be the glory now and forever.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> John M. Brenner and Peter M. Prange, "Chapter Eleven (2000-2013): Being Renewed Day by Day" in *Jars of Clay: A History of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (1863-2013)*, 281.

## CONCLUSION

Careful listening and careful reasoning of the Lord's Holy Word guides our hearts and lives to live being part of ministry, doing ministry, encouraging others to serve their Lord both in a personal and perhaps in a public way. It allows us to see the wonderful task at hand in sharing that Gospel message, the one thing that will matter for eternity. We have a blessing and a task at hand when we sing, "God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever." We go to work in our lives knowing how the Lord works and has made a promise regardless of what we do, but also how he uses us both for private and public ministries. Baumler noted, "Be prepared to do your part in negotiating a new course and a smoother ride. Be prepared to help provide the next generation of pastors in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We have a responsibility under Christ. He leads the way for us, entrusts potential workers to us, gives us the means to influence them and expects us to give them proper training."<sup>103</sup>

Who will go? "Here am I send me," says your son. "I like what Pastor Caleb today," says your grandson. "I love learning about Jesus," says the little boy in your Sunday school class or perhaps the one who you thought was one of the most unlikely candidate. Someday, they might be sent by the Lord and carry out a ministry as pastor. For that, we can praise the Lord and keep doing his work. For it is an eternal blessing to have men sent by the Lord as the Lord's own people helped those young boys see a wonderful privilege in serving Him with a powerful lifesaving message.

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<sup>103</sup> Baumler, "Providing the Next Generation of Pastors in the WELS: An Essay on the Role of Pastors in Recruiting More Pastors."

## APPENDIX 1. SAMPLE

### Recruitment Strategy Review Committee

#### Final Report

The Recruitment Strategy Review Committee presented a preliminary report to the Board for Ministerial Education this past winter outlining the strengths and weaknesses of our current recruitment efforts and listing some specific opportunities and threats currently presenting themselves. The committee also suggested a number of preliminary recommendations. This final report contains detailed recommendations with cost estimates. This report must be read in the light of the observations and conclusions of the preliminary report.

We have made our recommendations at three levels. Level 1 recommendations are urgently needed right now. Level 2 recommendations are desirable right now (where we really need to be in light of our mission, goals, and objectives). Level 3 recommendations would be ideal right now. It is our conviction that increased manpower is essential to implementing any of these recommendations. Because Martin Luther College is the cornerstone of our ministerial education system, recruitment efforts at this school are most critical. We will therefore be including a thorough study of recruitment needs at Martin Luther College as an addendum to this report.

We have also attached a summary of our report and an outline of the costs for quick reference.

#### **1. Promoting a positive image of the public ministry.**

Why don't more young men and women commit themselves to preparing for the public ministry of the gospel? Is it simply a function of synodical demographics? We have a limited pool of candidates. That's true. But we also have the Word, which powerfully works on hearts and creates within them the willingness and desire to prepare for service in full-time gospel ministry. Though the Word alone creates the willingness to serve, that willingness can be destroyed by a negative impression of the work involved in the public ministry. We would be wise to promote the joy of preaching and teaching in as many ways as possible, so that more and more men and women will consider preparing to serve the Lord and his Church in the gospel ministry.

We have several existing organs through which we can speak about the joys of serving in the gospel ministry and the Lord's grace in allowing jars of clay to carry his message to the world.

**1.1** We recommend that the *Northwestern Lutheran* be asked to commission a series of articles that positively portray the different ways men and women are used in gospel ministry. Include in those articles an encouragement to the readers to identify potential candidates for ministry and practical ways to speak with those individuals about it.

#### **Level 1: Minimal cost.**

The *Lutheran Leader* could also be used as a tool for recruitment, especially if we are convinced that congregational leaders can and should be involved in recruitment. Since this magazine is intended to provide helpful ideas for lay leaders in congregations, have a section in each issue dealing with recruitment. Because our best second-career candidates will be actively serving as leaders in congregations and will likely be reading the *Lutheran*

## APPENDIX 2.

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Analysis of Amalgamation in Regard to Recruitment		
Strengths	Threats	New Opportunites
Pastor/teacher better	Water down both curriculum focused--pastor/teacher	Revert to one campus on both levels
No waste of money in Prairie du Chien	Other ALHSs spring up--money, energy	United recruitment effort
Married students in New Ulm	System in upheaval when pastor track at risk	Team recruitment for both levels
More crossover of teachers	WLC--recruit from ALHS, not New Ulm; worker training temptations; no accountability; money	New image marketing for both
More communication between two tracks (faculty-students)	SMO--train staff folks	Internal recruitment that says buddies can go to school together
Better men's athletics performance	Non-unified church division	New technologies
Better performing extra and co-curriculars	Transition stage--2 years is too long and too short--enrollment numbers uncertain	Two track prep school
Streamlined administration	Distance between prep schools and destination college	More choices to recruit for
Broader base than WI alone	Distance between pastor track and Seminary	To teach church and ministry
Broader base than only NWC or DMLC experience--more real worldliness	Second career pastor track in MN, then WI	Teach differneces between attacks on bad decision and brothers
Unified prep system	MLS questions?	ALHS commitment?? TALK!!

Analysis of Amalgamation in Regard to Recruitment		
Strengths	Threats	New Opportunitites
Decision's done	Size of prep school--too big; less student involvement; student discipline; student enrollment standards	ALHS and prep schools working together
Home missions gets money	Student supervision in Watertown; no college; RAs or big brother atmosphere	
Enhanced facility at Watertown	Watertown's prima donna image of NPS even more	
Change--it did happen	Larger crossover more to shorter track	
Prep kids alone without college	Pastor track is now minority track	
Improved faculty at prep level--turnover is good	New everything!	
Expanded curriculum opportunities on college level	Transitional struggles--anger!!	
Money freed for new technologies	Too many choices on college level	
Small town college and prep school	Pastor camaraderie	
Synod school in Minnesota	Loss of experience in individual tracks during transition	
Synod school in Wisconsin		
Seminary's awareness that they have to review procedures, etc.	Perception that it's status quo both in New Ulm and Watertown	

Analysis of Amalgamation in Regard to Recruitment		
Strengths	Threats	New Opportunitites
More flexible education with less focused applications	Emphasis on pastoral ministry	
More "professional" staff	Talk about change, not ministry	
Better competition vs. WLC	Hybrid schools for pastoral track	
NWC's dead		
New everything		
No more of same pastor camaraderie		
Commitment to integrity of pastor and teacher track		
Heritage of doctrinal purity		
Reevaluation of call to serve by all involved		
Have to recruit to the ministry not school		
Refocus on God's gifts to church-- present and future		
Fewer choices from out in the sticks		
Better stewardship perception		

## APPENDIX 3.

*Thesis 1 – Recruitment is always important*

*Thesis 2 – Recruitment is gospel ministry*

*Thesis 3 – Recruitment is an intentional activity of gospel ministry*

*Thesis 4 – Recruitment is a natural fruit of gospel ministry*

*Thesis 5 – Recruitment is a public ministers privilege*

*Thesis 6 – Recruitment is a congregational activity*

*Thesis 7 – Recruitment is a Synodical Activity*

*Thesis 8 – Recruitment is directed at people with different gifts and different backgrounds*

*Thesis 9 – Recruitment is God's Work*

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