

The WELS Parsonage:
Its Changing Form And Function

by

Michael J. Zuberbier

Senior Church History B
Prof. Fredrich
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Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11031 W. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

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What ever would prompt a person to write a paper about parsonages? That is a good question, and I believe I have a good answer to it. At the beginning of the 1990-1991 school year at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary I was walking through the dormitories observing everybody as they unloaded their belongings and moved into the places which they would call home for the next year. Since I have been married since before my seminary training began, it had been a few years since I lived in a dormitory. The things that I saw people unloading into their sections astounded me. Most of the things that they had I did not remember moving into the dorms when I was at preparatory school and college. There was a wealth of belongings, and it kept coming: televisions, VCRs, stereos, compact disc players and hundreds, maybe even thousands, of discs, albums and tapes to go along with them, typewriters, computers, couches, easy-chairs, bars, carpeting, etc. Then I went out into the parking lot and took a look at the vehicles parked there. In college, most of the cars parked in the Northwestern parking lot were old rust-buckets, but here at the seminary there are very few cars that even resemble a rust-bucket. Most of the cars were less than six years old, and some of them were even 1990 models. Many of the seminary students, especially the married men, but not excluding singles, own more than one car.

I am certain that at least some of the reason that things changed so much between college and seminary is that the men are a little older and less dependent upon their families for support. However, I do not think that ~~it~~ ^{this} can account for all of the ~~e~~ drastic change over the years, for one walk through Northwestern College's dormitories

will show you that the situation is changing over there as well. These observations led me to think about the ministers of our congregations. If material standards have changed so much for the pre-ministerial student, have they changed proportionately for the minister as well? And if they have, what is the reason? Have the materialism and self-centeredness with which Satan has plagued our country affected our ministerium?

My original thought was to write my Church History paper on the subject of materialism and how it has affected our pastors' spirituality, if indeed it has at all. Yet, it is obvious that such a topic would be next to impossible to research, for it is too subjective, and it would delve into the reading of hearts, which is a task that only the Lord has the authority to do. In addition to that, pastors would have the "right" scriptural and evangelical answers to questions like, "Do you think that your time spent in the Word has been hindered by the lures of a materialistic society?"

Since it would be impossible to gauge such a topic and do it justice, I abandoned that idea. Yet the subject of how the Lord has so richly blessed us as students and pastors in the WELS is still a subject which I thought would be a worthwhile study. That is why I shifted my focus from the pastors and the effect materialism may or may not have on them, to the homes in which they reside. Thus my topic was conceived, "The WELS Parsonage: Its Changing Form and Function." The interest and curiosity in this subject is not isolated to myself alone. This is evident by the huge response which I received ~~from~~ pastors throughout the twelve districts of our synod who filled out my surveys. I sent out ninety-seven surveys, and I was astounded to receive a whopping seventy-six in return.

That is a seventy-eight percent response rate. The seventy-six surveys which were returned to me represent, for the most part, the attitudes of our pastors scattered throughout the twelve districts of our synod. Due to the number of responses I received, ~~I~~ believe we can safely assume that this is a subject that is on the minds of most of the pastors of our synod.

In this paper I will mainly present the facts without putting forth much interpretation of these facts, although personal opinions will no doubt shine through once in awhile. I will also offer the insights and opinions of our pastors living throughout the country which I find useful, interesting, or extra-ordinarily observant. As is evidenced by the title, I will focus in on the changes which have been observed in connection with two aspects of the parsonage: its form and its function. By form I mean the physical make-up of the house itself, along with its contents and its inhabitants. By function I mean the role which it ~~plays~~ plays in the congregation and how that role has changed over the years.

In order to present the results of my findings about the changing form of the WELS parsonage over the decades, I will attempt to paint a word picture which will perhaps reflect how a parsonage would have looked at different times during the past seventy years. Before I begin, there is one other important and encouraging factor I would like to share with you. The forms of the parsonages did not change significantly from one district to the next. Since this is the case, a pastor can be certain that he will be equally provided for by the Lord no matter where the Lord may decide to give him the privilege to work in his kingdom.

In 1920, a WELS parsonage was a rather humle abode. For this

period I had to rely on the description I received from one old pastor. At that time the (perhaps) typical parsonage had three bedrooms--one for mom and dad, one for the boys and one for the girls. If you had to get up in the middle of the night to answer nature's call and it was the middle of the winter, you may have opted to wait until morning, for there was no indoor plumbing in these earlier parsonages.

However, this does not mean that there were no luxuries whatsoever at this time. If mom was making breakfast and discovered that she did not have flour, she could call up the next door neighbor down the road (that is, of course, if the neighbor had a telephone as well) to ask if she could borrow some. If the neighbor was kind-hearted enough to open her sack of flour for the pastor's family, mom could wait until dad came down from the bedroom dressed in one of his four suits and ask him to go pick it up. If the neighbor lived a mile down the road, it was no problem, because dad could get into his old Model T and drive down to get it. And he would be happy to do it, for he knew there would be no left-overs for breakfast because mom did not have a refrigerator in which to keep them.

After breakfast the pastor could keep himself current on world events and what was going on in his community by warming up the old tube-type radio, which would bring the world right into his living room. The pastor would listen intently, for he knew that this information would allow him to keep his finger on the pulse of his congregation, enabling him to write sermons which would touch the people where they were at. Because mom knew this was so

important, she would not dare start cleaning the living room, for at this time she no longer had to take the rugs outside to beat them. She had a new and noisy Hoover vacuum-cleaner to beat them for her.

Yes, the WELS parsonage in 1920 was rather modest. Besides the car, the radio, the telephone and vacuum-cleaner, there were not many luxuries available. Mom even had to do the laundry on an old wash-board, for there were no washers or dryers in this house. However, there is no doubt in my mind that those who inhabited a parsonage at that time were quite happy and content.

By the end of the decade, things started to improve, inspite of the fact that for ~~some~~ reason the parsonage was a little more cramped with only two bedrooms. Perhaps this happened as a result of the beautiful blessing of indoor plumbing. Maybe they decided they would rather be cramped than to ^awalk out to the outdoor facilities in the middle of the night. In the morning, dad may not be as happy with breakfast, for if mom was running late, ~~she~~ could pull some left-overs out of her brand new refrigerator. If, in fact, she were running behind, it probably would have been dad's fault, for during the prosperity of the 1920s he had acquired seven suits and it now took him longer to decide which one to wear. When he arrived in the kitchen and mom sent him to the neighbor for some bacon, he would not necessarily have to drive his car. If it was a nice day, he may have decided to take one of the new bicycles out of the garage ^sinstead. After breakfast, mom now had a little extra time to sit down with dad and listen to the news because her laundry was easier to clean in her new washing-machine, with rollers and all. However, she would still have to hang that laundry out to dry.

The form of the parsonage did not change much from 1930-1940.

During this time they expanded their houses once again to three bedrooms by adding an addition to the house, making up for the space they took with the indoor plumbing. Evidently the depression must have hit pretty hard in the parsonage, for the pastor was no longer able to choose from seven suits, but he had only two, which he alternated each day. The depression must have also affected the pastor's diet, because for the first time he had a gun in the house. Perhaps some days he or his son had to go out hunting for a rabbit or a squirrel to put on the supper table. From 1940 until 1990 the WELS parsonage has always had at least one firearm in it, but I would suspect that its use has changed.

By 1950 the Second World War was over and things in America were looking up, yet the form of the parsonage did not change much. Yes, people would have a little harder time guessing what the pastor would be wearing because he did add one more suit to his wardrobe; but next to that there were not many significant changes in the parsonage, except one--entertainment. They no longer had to wait for the music hour to come on over the radio after supper-time because they could listen to music anytime they wanted to on their new record player. However, the selection of music was not that great--just eight records, a little more than one for each day of the week. Mom would have a little extra time to steal away with her favorite record because she now had a dryer for her laundry. She no longer had to take the time to go outside and hang it up.

In 1960 a person could see a few more changes in the parsonage than in the decades before. If you were listening to a radio show that you really enjoyed and you wanted to get a drink of water in the restroom, you did not have to worry about missing any of the

show because there was a radio in that room as well. But you would have to be sure to go to the right bathroom, because by the end of the 1950s most parsonages had 1.5 baths. Home entertainment improved in other ways besides the addition of a radio. The average parsonage had twice as many albums to choose from than it had a decade before, offering a greater selection for all of the members of the family. Perhaps the most dramatic change in the parsonage is that by 1960 almost every one had at least one television set in it. Something that in 1950 was a luxury was becoming common stock for every house. It is really too bad that the television kept mom and dad home so much, because dad had a new suit to wear when he went out on the town.

If you wanted to take a shower in a 1970 edition of a parsonage, you would have had to make sure nobody was in the other bathroom doing the same thing or you would have run out of hot water. According to my survey, most parsonages had two full baths by 1970. When you got out of the shower, you would have had to make sure that you were well-covered, even in the summer, because the average parsonage had an air conditioner to keep it cool and comfortable. If the phone rang while you were in the basement, chances are that you would not have had to run upstairs to answer it, because there would have been a phone downstairs as well. After receiving a rather disturbing phonecall, you could sit down and calm yourself with some soothing music, for now it was possible to bring a whole symphony-orchestra right into your living room through the high-fidelity sound of stereo. You would be able to set any mood which you saw fit, because you could select music from a library of twenty-five or more albums.

The form of the parsonage changed dramatically from 1970 to 1980. If you had guests coming to visit, that was no problem because you had four bedrooms, no doubt one of them was a guest-room. If your wife was shopping when the guests arrived at the bus station, that really did not pose a problem because you could just hop into your second car to pick them up. If they arrived an hour or ~~two~~ late for supper you could still serve them a warm meal-- just fix them a plate and pop it in the microwave. While they were eating their dinner in the kitchen, they could still watch their favorite show on the nineteen inch television set on the counter. Yes, almost every parsonage in 1980 had at least ~~two~~ television sets.

That brings us to the 1990 parsonage. It still has four bedrooms and two baths, and if it is a three-level home there is a telephone on each level. Some homes even have four or five telephones. There are two cars parked in the garage and countless radios in the house. Almost all the homes are equipped with two television sets, one VCR, one microwave, a stereo and countless albums and tapes. Mom and dad can clean the house together because, believe it or not, most houses even have two vacuum cleaners. Thirteen of those seventy-six happy homes can even record themselves working and watch it on their VCR later because they have been blessed with a camcorder. There are some parsonages with three cars in the garage, five with pools in the back yard, and three with bars in the basement. One pastor pretty well summed up what our contemporary parsonages are like when he wrote, "Foxes have holes...birds nests... we've got mansions beyond imagining compared even to David and Solomon's palaces: central air, heat, indoor plumbing, wall to wall

carpeting. Let's not worry too much about keeping up with the Jones's."

Now that we have seen what is in most of our parsonages, let us take a look at who is in them. Most of our pastors are married. As a matter of fact, out of the seventy-six I surveyed, only one was single. Our WELS pastors still take the Lord's command seriously when he says to multiply and increase in number. The average parsonage has four children running around in it, over twice the national average of 1.5 children. The pastors with the most children are in the Nebraska district with an average of five. Surprisingly enough, it is the Western Wisconsin district which reproduces the least, with an average of two children. (A survey was not sent to one of their pastors with eighteen children.)

A rather startling statistic to me was the percentage of wives who work outside of the home. Sixty-three percent of our pastors' wives work. However, of this sixty-three percent it cannot be discerned how many work part-time or full-time, or how many still have children at home. (Although most of the men surveyed were middle-aged and probably would have at least a couple at home yet.) The highest number of wives working is in the Michigan district, with nine, this represents one-hundred percent of those surveyed. The Nebraska and the Pacific Northwest districts had the least number of wives employed. Four percent of those surveyed refrained from answering the question.

A big question pastors seem to be asking these days is whether or not they should own their own home. The church-owned parsonage seems to be the route that most churches still take. Eighty percent of our parsonages are still owned by the church. The percentage of pastors' wives who live in a church-owned parsonage and work out-

side the home is sixty percent. That percentage of working wives jumps to seventy-three percent in parsonages which are owned by the pastor. This question of pastoral ownership of a parsonage will be taken up later in this paper.

How do the pastors' living conditions line up with those of the congregations'? I think most of us usually assume that the pastor's living conditions are below, but my survey revealed something surprisingly, and perhaps reassuringly, different. Seventy-five percent of our WELS pastors say that they live under conditions which are in line with their congregations'. Five percent even say that they live above their congregation's level. Twenty percent say that they have to endure sub-par living conditions. The Michigan and Dakota-Montana districts would seem to be the "worst" in this category. In the Dakota-Montana district four out of seven said they lived below the average standards of their congregations, and in Michigan that number is four out of nine. I think it is quite a blessing that at least eighty percent of our congregations still understand how important it is to maintain their pastors in a God'-pleasing manner. I find it even more edifying that eighty percent of our pastors are content with their living conditions. One side note: There is not much discrepancy in this area between missions and established congregations. In fact, out in the Arizona-California district, where there are many younger churches, ten out of eleven said they lived in line with or above the level of their members.

Having looked at the form of our WELS parsonages, we can definitely conclude that it has changed drastically over the years.

Our parsonages are filled with more gadgets and conveniences than anyone could have ever imagined seventy years ago. We must look upon these as blessings from the Lord and pray to him that we will always keep these things in perspective. We are here to give what we can to our Lord, not to see what we can get from his people.

Let us now take a look at what role the parsonage plays in the life of a congregation. The first question I asked our WELS pastors was, "Do any activities related to the church, either directly or indirectly, take place at your house?" I was surprised to find that forty-one percent said flat out, "No!" That means that thirty-one out of seventy-six parsonages never have anything going on inside of them which relates to the church. It goes without saying that none of those who replied negatively to this question was in a mission. The highest percentage of negative replies came from the Arizona-California district with five out of eleven, or forty-five percent.

However, in the fifty-nine percent of parsonages that do have activities going on in them, the house seems to function like a fellowship hall. One house had Bible Class being conducted in the basement, Sunday School in the kitchen, and Choir in the living room, all at the same time. Many parsonages are the places for the staff and council Christmas parties. One pastor even has an open house every year at Christmas time for the whole congregation. Many churches have their different meetings around the kitchen table, meetings such as: council, Ladies Aid, Evangelism, Youth Group, school, and vicar meetings. Various classes ^{are} taught in our parsonages: youth Bible class, adult instruction, ladies Bible class, etc.

There are also counseling and private meetings carried out in the parsonage. Many of them still have the church office in them. Perhaps the least glamorous of all functions a parsonage carries out is that of storage. A few congregations have made their parsonage a warehouse. In spite of all of the church-related activities that go on in a parsonage, I would assume that in years gone by the percentage of parsonages which did not have anything happening in them was much lower.

The second question which I asked on the survey was, "What role do you think a parsonage should have in the life of a congregation?" I was astonished that fifty-five percent of our pastors replied that the parsonage should either play no role in the life of a congregation at all or it should only be a private place for the pastor and his family. They felt, some more strongly than others, that the pastor's house was to be a safe "haven" for him and his family. One pastor stated that the parsonage should be as far away from the church as possible. Another pastor who was in a mission said that its role should be "as small as economically possible." In other words, as the church grows in numbers, and space becomes available, fewer and fewer activities should take place in the pastor's home. One pastor summed up his feelings as follows, "The parsonage should not be an office, meeting room, church social hall, drop-off point, church storage, publishing house, etc. But in reality it is often all of the above and more." Another made a valid point when he wrote, "If there are not church facilities, why not use laypeople's houses?" There was also the feeling by a few pastors that the parsonage was a tradition that could be replaced with a pastor-owned home and they indicated that the church

"should get out of the real estate business."

Many pastors felt that the parsonage should be a place that is approachable and always open to its members. It should be a place to build up friendships with the people of the church, as one pastor observed, "People who have friends at church tend to stay at church." Others went further than that and said the parsonage should be opened to whomever has a need, be it spiritual or physical.

The parsonage is also to be an example, not only in the congregation, but also in the community. A retired minister said the activities in the pastor's ~~home~~ should stand out as a beacon of light, a sterling pattern of a Christian family for others in the church and community to follow. Some felt that the parsonage should be away from the church and in the community for a couple of reasons. If it is in the community the members may perceive it as being more accessible. They may find it less threatening going to the parsonage in a neighborhood than to one situated next to a church. It may take the fear away of people seeing them and wondering what their problem is. Another reason that was given for the parsonage being away from the church grounds was for the benefit of ~~the~~ wife and children. The children would have other peers with whom to play and the wife would encounter people who are not members of ~~the~~ church whom she could befriend. This could lead to a friendship evangelism opportunity. Others indicated they liked being separated from the church so that they don't have to feel like the watchdog and lookout for the church. It generally seems to be a positive experience for a pastor and his family to live off of the church grounds, as is indicated by this statement, "After

being in an on-site parsonage for sixteen years, I thoroughly enjoy an off-site parsonage."

The parsonage also serves as a reminder to the congregation of its responsibilities toward its pastor. It serves as an extension and reflection of how they feel about the Gospel and its messenger. For this reason it is to be a building in which the congregation can take pride. It is not to be an eye-sore, a house which is allowed to be run down and neglected. Many pastors are concerned about how congregations fail in the upkeep and repair of the parsonage. They wonder how they can get their congregation to view the parsonage as their own, a "place that can be a showplace for new members and veterans alike."

The third question that was asked on the survey concerning the function of the parsonage was, "Have you perceived any changes in the function of the parsonage over the decades?" Fifty-four percent answered "no." Of those who answered yes, the major change was that the parsonage is becoming more and more private. The congregation's perception of the parsonage has shifted from it being their house to the pastor's home. Their answers reflected some positives and some negatives as a result of this. There are less meetings and other things going on within the walls of the parsonage that disrupt normal family life. This is a positive. Pastors feel that they are becoming more family-oriented. (I doubt if all of their wives agree with that.) The main positive shift that was reflected time and again in the pastors' answers is that they were glad that people were starting to respect their privacy more.

One of the negatives of the congregation's shift of focus is that at times the church thinks that the pastor should take care

of maintenance out of his own time and money. This tends to defeat the purpose of a parsonage, which was intended to free the pastor from such responsibilities. One pastor from the Northern Wisconsin district wrote, "If its my house, put the deed in my name and I'll take care of it." Another negative, or perceived abuse of the parsonage on the pastor's part, was articulated as follows, "Some pastors abuse the parsonage by home-schooling in it and by operating businesses for personal gain in it." I am sure if this statement was presented to a group of WELS pastors it would prompt quite a discussion.

One change in the parsonage which seemed to come up time and again is not so much in the function of it, but in the family life inside of it. This is obviously related to the function of the parsonage, for the pastor's family life does serve as an example. One point that came up a number of times is the trend, which is compatible with the trend of our society in general, of wives working. As was mentioned before, sixty-three percent of all WELS pastors' wives work outside the home. I am not going to draw any conclusions from this percentage, but I will share the thoughts of one of our pastors from the Nebraska district. He writes, "I think the parsonage in many places has changed considerably. The main reason for this is that many a pastor's wife has left her role in the parsonage and has sought other employment outside of the house. the main reason for this is the financial problems that we face. It still needs to be proven to me that this is the best solution to the financial problems of the pastor and his family. I strongly believe that much is lost for the pastor, for his family, for his wife, and for the members of the congregation when she works outside

the parsonage. Perhaps this is the reason or a contributing factor for the break-up of so many marriages in the parsonage. When we consider the extra expenses of the working wife of the pastor I do believe that we loose far more than we can ever gain. Perhaps we ought to look at what we really need and what we can afford. At some time ago it was an exception for a pastor's wife to be working outside of the parsonage, but today it is an exception for the pastor's wife to be in the parsonage. Are we permitting the world to influence us more than we ought?" Good question.

So has the function of the WELS parsonage changed? It would seem that there are less activities going on in them than there used to be. The parsonage used to be more of a social hub, but that role is changing. There may be many reasons for this: the changes in society, time constraints, there are many other activities going on in the world in which our members may participate, there are more opportunities for our children to take advantage of, etc.

The survey which I sent out ended with ten statements with which to agree or disagree. They all relate to the parsonage in one way or another. Many of them solicited comments from the survey group. We will now take a look at the reactions to and some of the comments concerning these statements.

The first statement is, "The parsonage is my family's own private living quarters." With the information which was given before concerning how pastors have perceived that the parsonage is offering more and more privacy, it is not surprising that ninety-two percent of our pastors agreed with this statement. Five percent disagreed and three percent withheld comment. It is interesting to note that for one of the pastors who disagreed, he felt that it was

necessary to reveal that his wife had a different opinion than he. She agreed that the parsonage is her family's own private living quarters. One pastor wrote concerning privacy, "Sometimes being in a parsonage can be a real fishbowl, especially if it is in the middle of the CDS playground."

The next statement was added to see just how private the pastors thought the parsonage should be. It reads, "The church president should have a key to the parsonage." Sixty-two percent disagreed and felt that there is no reason for the president to have a key to the parsonage. Thirty-four percent agreed that he should. Four percent withheld an answer. I would assume that those who agreed felt that since the church (probably) owns the parsonage, someone of authority should have the key for it.

The reactions to the next statement may surprise you. To the proposition, "It is better to live in a parsonage than to own my own home," only forty-nine percent agreed. Thirty-six percent disagreed, and fifteen percent did not know. Of those who agreed, here are some of the comments. "Even though at the present I am living in our privately owned home, I do not think this is best under most circumstances. I am semi-retired." Another writes, "While I realize there are financial advantages to owning your own home, there is an advantage to not having to worry about the purchase, resale, property taxes, and even maintenance of a church-owned parsonage. I feel more unencumbered to concentrate on my calling. It also makes deliberation of a call easier when I don't have to be concerned about having details on either end." One noted that for the congregation it is an advantage to not have to continually give out housing allowance. The parsonage can be paid

for in a couple of years. An older pastor agreed that it is better to live in a church owned home, but he thought that the synod should also help in getting monies for a pastor to buy a retirement home, "I believe the synod out to have a congregation place in an escrow a given amount per year to be made available for a pastor at the time of retirement so he can purchase a house or condo."

There is a great difference of opinion in this area. A large percentage of pastors feel it is better to own your own home. Here is what some say. "Parsonages are a financial benefit primarily to the congregation. We receive parsonage rights in lieu of salary and the equity a privately bought home should earn. That means pastors buy parsonages with their rightful wages and give them and their equity to the church as a gift upon receiving and accepting another call. The WELS has been built on this premise the past thirty years. You live with it and joyfully give God forty percent of your rightful wage." One pastor figured out that if a congregation buys a \$100,000 house (including interest and all expenses) in thirty years, and it lasts for sixty years, the congregation is providing housing for the pastor for a "paltry" \$1750 per year. He adds, "Pretty cheap! The savings or small cost should easily enable a congregation to 'share the wealth' with its pastors over the years with a home equity allowance." Most of those who felt it was better to own thir own home felt it was best for their retirement.

The next statement once again reflects the privacy issue. "Members should feel free to stop by at any time for any reason." Fifty-three percent of our pastors would not object to us knocking at their door at three o'clock in the morning. I believe that is

a positive reflection on our pastors. Forty-one percent did not feel as free to open their doors. One wrote, "Tramps, bums and beggars can be a problem." Another qualified the statement saying, "Unless the pastor or his wife encourages constant interruptions, I don't think members misuse the privilege of stopping in for things. I've heard of members feeling so free that they walk right in and help themselves to the refrigerator items and I have never experienced any of our members, in any of our congregations, where I have served, taking such liberties. I have always found that our members respect our privacy in the parsonage."

Whether members should feel free to come by any time and whether they actually do are two completely different questions. Sixty-two percent agree with the statement, "My members feel free to stop by at any time for any reason." Twenty-two percent disagree and sixteen percent do not know. This may indicate that about nine percent of our pastors surveyed may feel that their privacy has been intruded on in the past.

"What goes on in a parsonage is important for the spiritual life of the congregation" was endorsed as a statement of truth by eighty-four percent of our ministers. Eight percent disagreed and eight percent did not know. This high approval rate is supported by the many statements that express the belief that the parsonage should set the example of Christian family life for the congregation and also that the congregation is reminded of its responsibilities toward the pastor by the parsonage.

"I think for some pastors, the parsonage has a measurable impact on the deliberation of a call." Surprising as it may seem, seventy-six percent agreed with this one. Sixteen percent disagreed and

eight percent either did not know or refused to answer. A forty-three year old man from the Northern Wisconsin district wrote, "I think it is difficult for pastors who own their own homes to accept a call to another location. Selling a house can be a big problem--buying one on the other end another problem." One pastor thought this statement was out of line because it was "asking me to put the worst construction on others' thoughts. I will not do that." But then later on he goes on to write, "When a pastor owns his own home, that can be a factor that carries more weight than it should when considering a call." If owning one's own home really does have a measurable impact on considering a call, maybe it is best not to own one. However, if one does own his own home and there is an impact on the deliberation of a call he has received, I hope it is a God-pleasing impact.

I was surprised at some of the replies this statement received, "If the size of my family causes the parsonage to become cramped, the congregation should do something about it." Synod wide this statement was accepted eighty-six percent of the time. This percentage dropped to fifty in the Western Wisconsin district. Of those who disagreed in this district, one of them said that "the parsonage should become part of family planning." Another pastor wrote that instead of having the congregation do something about the size of the parsonage, "the pastor should do something about the size of his family." Perhaps these attitudes are reflected in the statistic that those surveyed in the Western Wisconsin district have the smallest average families in the synod. Nine percent disagreed with the statement, and five percent withheld an answer.

Since the attitude toward a pastor owning his own home seems to be changing, I thought it would be interesting to know what our

ministers' attitudes are about a mission congregation buying a parsonage. The reaction to this statement was pretty divided, "A parsonage should be one of the first purchases of a mission congregation." Forty-six percent agreed. This seems to be at variance with the forty-nine percent who say it is better to live in a parsonage than to own their own home. Thirty-six percent did not feel it was necessary for a mission to buy a parsonage right away, and twenty-four percent did not feel that they could answer the question. The Board for Home Missions still thinks it is better for a congregation to buy a parsonage, for they do not allow a missionary to buy his own home. Thirteen percent of our pastors thought it was best that a mission never buy a parsonage, while sixty-six percent thought that at some time it would be in a church's best interest to invest in one.

It is evident that the opinions of our pastors concerning the form and function of the parsonage greatly vary. It appears that the main question is whether or not a pastor should own his own home. Maybe this question should be further considered by the WELS to see if it can make a recommendation to our congregations as to which is the best route to follow. I do not think that it is a good idea to allow all of our churches to "do their own thing" in this matter, because if half of our churches provides a parsonage for their pastors and the other half does not own a parsonage, this will result in many headaches when it comes time for our pastors to move from one church to another. As long as our society keeps changing, these opinions will keep changing as well. I personally think it is best for the church to own the parsonage. This frees up the pastor from having to worry about maintenance and upkeep.

It also prevents the worries concerning ~~your~~^a house from entering into the deliberation over one's call. It is evident that the pastors who want to own their own homes are concerned about retirement, and this is a valid concern. Yet, if a minister is careful with his money and wise in the manner in which he handles it, there are other and perhaps better ways to prepare for retirement than buying a house.

One of the benefits I received through my research for this paper is witnessing how richly our Lord has blessed the WELS ministerium. We have a higher standard of living than any pastors ever had before in the history of our synod. Our homes are comfortable, and there are plenty of things with which to fill them. Our families are provided for and most of us have enough left over to spend on luxury items and entertainment. Overall, eighty percent of our pastors feel that they are adequately provided for. This is reassuring to me, and should be to all those who are entering the public ministry or ^{who} are currently serving in it. None of us is going to get rich being a minister, but none of us will have to worry about being taken care of either. Indeed, the Lord has blessed us with ever-increasing wealth. May we always be sure to thank him for it and to use it to the glory of his Name.