

A HISTORY OF THE WELS' MISSION
TO THE POOR IN THE
UNITED STATES

SENIOR CHURCH HISTORY

PROFESSOR BRENNER

MAY 1, 1996

KEVIN WATTLES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. THE NEED

2. THE NAME

3. THE HISTORY

EARLY EFFORTS TO THE POOR...THE APACHE

MILWAUKEE...THE ST. MARCUS STORY

AN ADVENTURE IN NEW YORK CITY...PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

MILWAUKEE...THE NORTHSIDE STORY

***LA LADRILLERA, MEXICO--
A UNITED STATES' BASED MISSION TO THE POOR***

NORTHERN WISCONSIN...THE ST. PAUL'S OF CRANDON STORY

MISSION IN MIAMI...CORDERO DE DIOS

NORTHERN WISCONSIN...THE ASCENSION OF ANTIGO STORY

"PROJECT SHARE"...AT TRINITY OF BAY CITY, MICHIGAN

MILWAUKEE...THE SOUTHSIDE STORY

4. SUMMARY

APPENDICES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A HISTORY OF THE WELS' MISSION TO THE POOR
IN THE UNITED STATES

In his book, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, J.P. Koehler writes the following about the compassionate personality of the founder of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), Pastor Johannes Muelhaeuser.

Muelhaeuser's personal example, however, engendered a spirit of mutual helpfulness that is great to behold and warms the heart...Muelhaeuser's parsonage in Milwaukee was a regular hospice for the newcomers from Europe and the east, naturally so in those pioneer times and in view of the man's personal make-up. Whenever there was an overflow, that overtaxed the accommodations of the parsonage and his wife's unflagging efforts, he did not hesitate to quarter the extra guests with his parishioners of means. Thus a relationship sprang up between many of the pastors and individual Milwaukee families, especially thru the women, that became the vehicle of much help that flowed from the two Milwaukee congregations out into the country without any publicity....Such attention to the needs of others was practiced in all the congregations....¹

Consider also Koehler's complimentary words regarding Muelhaeuser's benevolent spirit during the cholera epidemic that swept Milwaukee in 1854-1855.

In this trying period Muelhaeuser, Synod's founder, had nobly acquitted himself in not, like many, fleeing the city but fearlessly and with untiring devotion taking care of the sick and dying and ministering to their bodily as well as spiritual needs. The whole city at that time tendered him its grateful recognition and long after kept his memory green.²

It is clear from the above historical accounts that the Wisconsin Synod, in its infant years, had a gospel-empowered, active concern for both the spiritually and economically poor of society. But what about the years that followed? What about the present era of the Wisconsin

¹ J.P. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod* (Sauk Rapids: Sentinel, 1981), p. 66-67.

² Koehler, p. 48-49.

Synod? Is the WELS a church body that is actively concerned about those in society who are economically disadvantaged as well as spiritually poor? Some will say that while the Wisconsin Synod at the time of Muelhaeuser may have been actively concerned about the economically deprived, it is not accurate to make that same claim about the WELS today. Therefore, by God's grace, this document intends to examine the history of the WELS' mission to the poor in the United States.

As the reader is analyzing the subsequent information, I invite you to ask yourself the following questions:

- Has the WELS' mission to the poor increased or decreased throughout history?
- Does the WELS currently have an active mission to the poor?
- What does the future hold for the WELS' mission to the poor?

In order to help the reader come to a more complete understanding of the WELS' mission to the poor, I have interviewed eleven WELS' pastors and one layperson who are currently involved in, or have been involved in, some aspect of an active mission to the poor. During the course of the interviews, the pastors and layperson were asked to comment on some or all of the following questions:

- What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?
- When did this aspect of ministry begin at your congregation?
- What methodology has been used in the past?
- What methodology is being used at present?

- What do you see the future of this aspect of ministry to be at your congregation?

But before the reader examines the pastoral interviews, please first consider the following three aspects of this ministry:

A. THE NEED

The need for a ministry to those who are spiritually and economically poor is very clear on the pages of Holy Scripture. Jesus himself said he was sent “to preach good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). The wider context of this section of Luke informs us of the broad scope of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus did not come to preach God’s gracious good news of the forgiveness of sins through faith in him only to the rich, physically healthy, or people of high social and/or political regard. Jesus came to preach his message of salvation to all people! Jesus Christ is the Savior of all the spiritually poor! As far as Jesus is concerned, earthly wealth is not a factor when the eternal welfare of lost souls is at stake.

The Bible also tells us that Jesus encouraged his listeners to offer material and financial help to the poor. In Luke 14 Jesus prompts a Pharisee, at whose house he was dining, to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind of society to his home for a meal (13). In Matthew 19 Jesus commanded a rich young man to sell all his dearly loved earthly possessions and give the proceeds of the sale to the poor (21).

The Book of Acts says the early Christians knew and remembered Jesus’ message concerning a ministry to those who were both spiritually and economically poor. Acts 9:36 specifically mentions a Christian woman from Joppa named Tabitha (in Aramaic, or Dorcas, in Greek) who “was always doing good and helping the poor.” Acts 10 speaks of a God-fearing

Roman centurion from Caesarea named Cornelius who “gave generously to those in need” (2) and gave “gifts to the poor” to honor God. Acts 24:17 tells of the Apostle Paul’s collection for impoverished Christians in famine stricken Jerusalem.

The previous words of encouragement from Scripture, which are intended for our spiritual growth and empowerment for living lives pleasing to God, are as valid today as when originally penned by the inspired authors. Jesus’ prophecy to the disciples that they will always have the poor with them (Mt 14:7; 26:11; Jn 12:8) certainly has come true. As one looks around the cities, towns, and neighborhoods of our WELS’ congregations, one notices that those who are both spiritually and economically poor are indeed among us. What are we to do?

Jesus’ message concerning those who are both spiritually and economically poor is a serious message. Jesus has not given us the option of making a mission to the economically poor a part of our ministry if we “feel” like it or if we are “able” to do so. Rather, Jesus states that those who are both spiritually and economically poor are to be a part of our gospel mission to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). Jesus encourages us, as his redeemed children, to show love to the economically poor because he has loved and continues to love us (Jn 13:34). Moreover, Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to remember the economically poor with the abundance of material blessings our gracious God has given us.

B. THE NAME

In a study of the history of the WELS’ mission to the poor in the United States, one of the items of the account that may seem initially to be quite trivial is the name of such a mission effort. However, when one looks back over the last eleven years of this kind of ministry in our

church body (1985 - 1996), one finds the name of this mission effort changing at least three times. It was initially called "The WELS Outreach to the Poor."³ Now this kind of ministry is termed either "Mission to the Economically Deprived,"⁴ or the "Evangelization of the Economically Disadvantaged."⁵

Why did the name of this mission effort change three times? Why is a fair amount of emphasis being placed on the name of this mission effort? Is the name of this ministry really that big of a deal? These are three examples of the kinds of questions a person may ask regarding the name of the WELS' ministry to the poor. Nonetheless, a closer look at the reasons for the different names of the WELS' ministry to the poor reveals two very good reasons for such careful selection of a name for this kind of ministry.

The perceived necessity of political correctness implied by the media, minority groups, and legal authorities has compelled those in the WELS with deep convictions about ministry to the poor to search for a name that is received by the general public in a non-insulting way. Pastor Harold Hagedorn, WELS' Administrator of the Board for Home Missions, tells of the difficulty of this challenge in our present era.⁶ He says that the challenge to keep up with what is currently politically correct can be confusing and frustrating. However, he also encourages Christians, especially pastors, to show Christian love and consideration for the poor when referring to them in public speaking.

³ Rolfe Westendorf, "Ministry to the Poor - A New Frontier" (WLS Library Essay File, 1985), p.1. See Appendix 1.

⁴ Harold Hagedorn, "A Report on the Mission to the Economically Deprived," *WELS' Board for Home Missions Meeting Minutes* (September 1990), p. 1. See Appendix 2.

⁵ Comments by Pastor Thompson on this point are taken from a phone interview conducted on April 15, 1996.

⁶ Comments by Pastor Hagedorn on this point are taken from a phone interview conducted on April 11, 1996.

The second need for the careful selection for a name for the ministry to the poor arises out of a Christian concern for the poor person as an individual. Pastor Glenn Thompson, chairman of the WELS' Committee for the Evangelization of the Economically Disadvantaged, speaks of how one has to know the audience he/she is addressing when speaking about the poor.⁷ He says that two Christians may be able to speak to one another about "the poor" while using the term "poor" in a way that is not intentionally insulting or demeaning to poor people. Yet, he warns that a person needs to be careful when he/she is addressing "a poor person". The poor person, Thompson says, may be insulted and feel degraded by the use of the term "poor".

Pastor Rolfe Westendorf, a member of the WELS' Committee for the Evangelization of the Economically Disadvantaged and the director of Northside Lutheran Ministries in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, agrees with Thompson's philosophy.⁸ In fact, history shows that it was Westendorf who first spoke publicly in the WELS of this idea.

In a 1985 document authored by Westendorf, "Ministry to the Poor -- A New Frontier," he states that "A ministry to the poor requires a change of attitudes...[because] Close examination reveals that there are many reasons for poverty".⁹ He continues this thought by listing four classifications for what modern American society terms as "poor".

- The Red Factor- Some people are poor because of economic circumstances over which they had no control. World War II made many people poor. "We lost everything." Some are poor because of prolonged illness, or because the plant that needed their skills left town. If the red factor (an arbitrary choice of colors) is the only factor, these poor

⁷ Comments by Pastor Thompson on this point are taken from a phone interview conducted on April 15, 1996.

⁸ Comments by Pastor Westendorf on this point are taken from a personal interview conducted on March 14, 1996.

⁹ Rolfe Westendorf, "Ministry to the Poor - A New Frontier" (WLS Library Essay File, 1985), p. 2-3. See Appendix 1.

will need only temporary help. They will soon find a way of attaining an acceptable standard of living again.

- The Blue Factor-

Some people are poor because of physical and mental deficiency. The physical handicaps are obvious and often overcome. A physical handicap can become an incentive rather than a liability, and with help the physically handicapped often leave the ranks of the poor. The mentally handicapped are not so blessed, especially in the age of the computer. Mental weakness is shunned by employers, and the ability to earn is limited. Still society has made a place for the mentally handicapped. They may always be poor, but their need is obvious, and so is the response.

- The Yellow Factor-

Some people are poor because they have been damaged emotionally and socially. These people had the misfortune of being born into a family, a neighborhood, and environment that did not nurture self-esteem. This one could be the child of a teen-age mother who went back to playing jacks after she had her baby. This one could be the child of parents who were too busy making money to implant self-esteem in their child. This one could be the one who was shot to pieces by the pre-divorce warfare that raged in his home. And this one might be the child of stable Christian parents, who married a clod who wanted attention, and sex, but no responsibility.

These people are for the most part physically able to work for a living. But they quit their jobs for petty reasons. They waste good earning opportunities because they don't feel like going to work. They seek to escape from reality and spend what little they have on drugs and alcohol. And they struggle to conjure up a little self-esteem in a brief love affair that produces another child, who has less chance of escaping poverty than its parents had.

These are the "undeserving poor", who are poor through nobody's fault but their own. And yet it is not their "fault". They did not choose their parents, their neighborhood, their environment. They could not predict the failures that would show up after marriage. Only with the body are they able to work. Their spirit feels neither the desire nor the possibility for earning a living.

- The Gray Factor-

And this factor is added only because people never cooperate with categories. You are not likely to find any poverty that is all red, or

blue, or yellow. The pigments are generally mixed in such a way that it is not possible to discover the primary cause or the probable solution. The result is an ugly gray, some with a decided yellow tinge, some with more blue or red, but hardly ever a problem that has one single solution.¹⁰

As Westendorf has shown, there are many varied causes for an individual's poverty. Because of this premise, Westendorf submits that to label an individual as "poor" in the present era, considering how society understands the term "poor", actually robs a person of his or her dignity. In a personal interview with this writer, Westendorf stated that "poor" used to be a respectable term. He commented that at the time of the Great Depression or World War II, people were "poor" through no fault of their own (Red Factor). "But now," Westendorf said, "Poor is defined as lazy, unwilling to work or control resources,...a failure."

Therefore, out of a genuine Christian love for the economically poor, who often are also spiritually poor, Westendorf began to use the term "economically deprived" to refer to "the poor" (Yellow and Gray Factor). This term was first officially used in the October 1, 1988, edition of the WELS' publication, *The Northwestern Lutheran*.¹¹ Westendorf also said that the term "economically deprived" is expressly related to Northside Lutheran Ministries.

Philosophically speaking, Thompson's term for this kind of ministry, "evangelization of the economically disadvantaged," is essentially identical with Westendorf's thinking. However, Thompson states that because the term "economically deprived" is so closely related with Northside Lutheran Ministries, the term "economically disadvantaged" is used solely for the sake of clarification of other kinds of this ministry apart from Northside Lutheran Ministries. In fact,

¹⁰ Westendorf, p. 3-4.

¹¹ "A New Mission in Milwaukee," *The Northwestern Lutheran*, 75, (1988), p. 333. See Appendix 3.

this paper will later demonstrate how the term “economically disadvantaged” is peculiar to a mission outreach to the poor in Bay City, Michigan.

It is also interesting to see that many of the pastors interviewed for this paper, while being in very different cultural and societal surroundings than Westendorf or Thompson, agree with their philosophy on terminology. Pastors Hartzell,¹² Jeske,¹³ Spaude,¹⁴ and Stellick¹⁵ all feel that it is dangerous to group all poor people under one term “the poor”. They feel that the terms used by both Westendorf and Thompson are appropriate because they address the specific group of people being evangelized with the gospel.

So what does one call the WELS’ mission to the poor? This writer believes that in using terminology referring to the poor, one needs to keep in mind both points brought out by the interviewees for this paper. One needs to be aware of how society views certain terms that we may use in our ministries to the poor. Within reason, where appropriate, and with the understanding not to change what Scripture says, one will do well to be aware of politically correct as well as publicly insulting terminology.

It is also important to remember the thoughts of Westendorf and Thompson in speaking with an economically poor person. These men have spent several years in this kind of a ministry and know well how certain words, phrases, and statements are understood by the economically poor. Therefore, empowered by a Christ-like love for those who do not know Jesus Christ as

¹² This comment by Pastor Hartzell is taken from a phone interview conducted on March 26, 1996.

¹³ This comment by Pastor Jeske is taken from a phone interview conducted on March 7, 1996.

¹⁴ This comment by Pastor Spaude is taken from a phone interview conducted on March 16, 1996.

¹⁵ This comment by Pastor Stellick is taken from a phone interview conducted on April 11, 1996.

their Lord and Savior, we will choose our words and terminology carefully when speaking with the economically poor.

So what am I going to call “the poor” for the remainder of this paper? Realizing the tediousness of choosing a name for this kind of ministry and considering all the interviewees’ viewpoints in their terminology for “the poor,” I am going to choose what I consider to be a “neutral” term for this paper. That is, I am going to refer to the economically poor as just that, the poor, with the understanding and realization of all that has been written to this point. If my choice of terminology is insulting or degrading to any readers of this paper, I sincerely apologize.

C. THE HISTORY

“You’re writing a history of the WELS’ mission to the poor. That’s going to be a short paper!” This statement has been the comment of several of the interviewees when I made the initial contact with them about being a resource person for this paper. Honestly speaking, their comments say a great deal.

The WELS’ history of outreach to the poor has been, if not minimal in essence, at least minimally documented. But as was stated at the beginning of this writing, our church body’s outreach to the economically needy of society does stretch back to our earliest days. Moreover, the WELS is currently reaching out to the economically deprived. However, problems enter into this kind of research when one attempts to locate and document ministry to the poor between these two periods in time. Therefore, having little information about the WELS’ earliest efforts at reaching out to the economically deprived and substantial information about the WELS’

present outreach to the poor, but little information in between, this paper delves into the history of the WELS' mission to the poor in the United States.

On the subsequent pages the reader will find a record of the interviews conducted as primary research for this paper. The disclosure method for the information gained during these interviews follows the question - answer format. To the best of my knowledge, the listed order of the interviews follows the chronological sequence in which the specific missions to the poor began.

EARLY EFFORTS TO THE POOR...THE APACHE

Pastor Eric Hartzell of East Fork, Arizona, relates the WELS' mission to the poor on the Apache Indian Reservation.¹⁶

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

Pastor Hartzell agrees with the philosophy behind Westendorf and Thompson's terminology for the poor. He stresses that these terms group people into a specific class of the poor, the economically poor. He says these terms talk about money. They refer to doing mission work among people who are economically poor. This dimension of the poor does not have the financial ability to support full-time pastors and teachers of the gospel.

At East Fork this is the case. Money plays a large part in the WELS' outreach effort to the Apaches. Because of the past and present cultural environment of the Apaches, a large

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Pastor Hartzell conducted on March 26, 1996.

financial subsidy is necessary to keep the Lutheran elementary schools on the reservation operating.

2. When did this aspect of ministry begin at East Fork?

Pastor Hartzell says that more than one hundred years ago, in 1893, the WELS began its mission outreach to the poor among the Apaches. Professor Emeritus Edward C. Fredrich states the date and place specifically as “October 1893...at Peridot on a tract of land near the San Carlos River.”¹⁷

Pastor Hartzell says one of the names most often referred to in discussions about the WELS’ outreach to the poor among the Apaches is Pastor J. Plocher. Pastor Hartzell relates what the early days of mission work to the Apaches were like for a Wisconsin pastor. He tells of how Pastor Plocher had to live in tents and “lean-to’s” when he first began working among the Apaches. History says that Pastor Plocher often denied himself food in order to give the Apaches a noon meal.

Pastor Hartzell says that Pastor Plocher began a program of gathering “mission boxes” from the Midwest. These boxes were filled with clothes and blankets for the Apache adults and their children. The “mission boxes” were gifts of Christians in the mid-United States who were compelled by the love of Christ to help those in need. The fact that these Lutherans gave gifts to the Apaches is amazing when one considers the attitude most Americans had toward the natives at this time in our country’s history. During this era of the United States, American society

¹⁷ Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* (Milwaukee, Northwestern, 1992). p. 99.

considered the Apaches to be savage enemies! But the gospel of Jesus Christ empowered our forefathers to move beyond society's boundaries and help those who were in need.

3. What methodology has been used in the past?

Pastor Hartzell began answering this question by discussing the collection of moneys from the congregation. He said that it was not until sometime in the 1920's that the pastor at East Fork (Pastor Behn - spelling?) began to collect offerings from the congregation. He said the pastors, until this time, were hesitant to take a collection because they were afraid the Apaches would perceive the missionaries were trying to take what little money they had.

History teaches one that at this time the Apaches were very, very poor. Traditionally, they had been a robbing and raiding nomadic tribe. But because they were defeated by the United States Army they were forced to live on a reservation. They were also forced to live in a "white man's world." This was a very different way of life for the Apaches. Therefore, out of Christian love for the souls of the Apaches, and with an understanding of their cultural background, the early missionaries to the Apaches did not collect offerings from the Apaches for about the first thirty years of the mission's existence.

Pastor Hartzell also spoke of the medical aid provided to the Apaches. This aspect of the WELS' mission to the poor among the Apaches was present at the mission's founding. In fact, up until its closing in 1994, the WELS' mission had operated a medical nursery and medicine dispensary from the earliest days of the mission. But due to financial strains and budget cutbacks, the medical nursery had to close. However, it is certainly worth mentioning that over

the one hundred years of the medical nursery's existence, our gracious God allowed the WELS to help thousands of Apache adults and children.

One of the very bright spots in the history of the WELS' outreach to the poor among the Apaches has been the operation of Lutheran elementary schools. Pastor Hartzell mentioned that even though these schools have encountered some very difficult financial situations during the years of their existence, the doors have always remained open.

Concerning this point, he specifically spoke of the Partners in Apache Learning (PAL) Program. The objective of this program is to eventually enable the Apache Lutheran elementary schools to become self-supporting. It does not function as a "free ride" by our synod for the Apaches. Pastor Hartzell says this program is intended to act as a sponsor system that teaches the Apache Christians the financial responsibility of a Christian elementary school. "So far," says Hartzell, "this program is doing pretty well, but money has eased off a little lately."

4. What do you see the future of this aspect of ministry to be among the Apache at East Fork?

Addressing this question, Pastor Hartzell focused on money. Although it may sound to the reader that money is the only thing the mission to the poor among the Apaches is concerned about, one must remember the situation of an outreach to poor people. Very simply, it costs money to take the gospel to poor people. Because the poor have no money, the financial support for an outreach effort like this has to come from somewhere. Pastor Hartzell said the economic situation on the reservation has dramatically improved from what it was one hundred years ago. He commented that the big challenge facing the WELS' mission to the Apaches now is to

) motivate the Native Americans to give their material blessings back to the Lord in loving thanks for all he's done for them.

Pastor Hartzell said he sincerely hopes and prays that the financial backing for the Apache mission continues. He said it would be a great shame if we would have to leave these people because of a lack of financial support. He said he hopes the mission to the Apaches will not get cut off of subsidy because of "somebody's mission standard or mission timetable."

) Along with that point, Pastor Hartzell offers two other interesting thoughts. He said it would be nice if the Apache mission could be moved under the jurisdiction of the WELS' Board for Home Missions. Currently the Apache mission is under the Board for World Missions. He said he certainly understands and agrees with the thinking behind the mission originally being place under World Missions. But he feels that because America has matured as a country in the way it has, it would be better for the Apache mission to be under the direction of the Board for Home Missions.

The second thought Pastor Hartzell shared with me concerning outreach to the poor among the Apaches is the current "success" the mission is experiencing. He mentioned that church and Sunday school attendance are on the rise. He says there are presently twenty-one Apaches in his Bible instruction classes. He prays and hopes the Lord will continue to bless the WELS' efforts to reach out to the spiritually and physically poor among the Apaches.

MILWAUKEE...THE ST. MARCUS STORY

Pastor Mark Jeske of St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Church in Milwaukee relates the history of ministry to the poor at St. Marcus.¹⁸

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

Pastor Jeske says the term “ministry to the economically deprived” is the specific name associated with Northside Lutheran Ministries. He agrees with Pastor Westendorf’s ideology that “a poor person” is not necessarily a “lower person.” He also submits that labeling someone as “economically deprived” does not always mean someone or some circumstance ^{has} taken dignity away from the individual. Jeske says that sometimes the individuals do this action to themselves through drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and family problems. Taking all this into consideration, Pastor Jeske prefers to call “the poor” just that, “the poor.” He says that by using this term a person is not stating how an individual arrived at his/her present situation in life. One is simply relating the fact that the person is economically poor.

Pastor Jeske asserts that both principles, having one’s dignity taken away and taking dignity away from oneself, apply to many of the poor in the area of Milwaukee that St. Marcus is located. He points to the history of Milwaukee, and especially the neighborhood around St. Marcus, to validate this belief.

Pastor Jeske tells how the neighborhood in which St. Marcus resides has been in the midst of a downward economic trend that began about 1930. He says the downward slide hit

¹⁸ Comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Pastor Jeske conducted on March 3, 1996.

bottom in about 1985. However, he feels the economics of the area are improving slowly but surely now. He hopes this trend will continue. He also fears that the upward ^{move?} slide _{in?} of economics in his area will not go nearly as far as it needs to go to adequately improve the area.

The area around St. Marcus is one of the oldest housing areas of Milwaukee and, therefore, the most run-down. Because it is geographically near Milwaukee's original downtown, St. Marcus' neighborhood enjoyed its high point in the 1880's and 1890's. About 1930, because the area was becoming old and neglected, the residents of that neighborhood moved elsewhere in the city. During the 1940's and 1950's Milwaukee enjoyed the glory years of the "Steelbelt" states. It was at this time that the mayor of Milwaukee, Frank Zeidler, had billboards posted in the southern United States offering workers a fair middle-class living if they would come to Milwaukee and work in the foundries and auto factories.¹⁹

Thousands of African-Americans responded to the mayor's offer. Pastor Jeske says that before World War II there were fewer than 10,000 African-Americans living in Milwaukee. At present Jeske estimates there are about 200,000 African-Americans living in Milwaukee. He attributes the great influx of African-Americans to the years of the "Steelbelt" dominance in Milwaukee.

During the 1970's, when the "Steelbelt" became the "Rustbelt" of America, many of the African-Americans found themselves stuck in an impossible situation. They had immigrated to Milwaukee from the South and started at the bottom of the economic classes in Milwaukee. They were poorly educated. They had come to Milwaukee with very little inheritance or

¹⁹ Pastor E. Allen Sorum related this information to the Senior Missiology class during a guest lecture on January 24, 1996.

financial backing from their families in the South. They were kept out of the good jobs at the factories. (Jeske says this was sometimes racially based and sometimes job-performance based.) They had rented or purchased homes in an area of Milwaukee that was already experiencing a downward economic trend (St. Marcus' neighborhood). Now, because the auto plants and related industries closed their doors in Milwaukee, the African-Americans found themselves in a tough situation.

2. When did this aspect of ministry begin at St. Marcus?

Because of the economic situation of the neighborhood surrounding St. Marcus, the congregation found themselves at a very challenging point in their history. Pastor Jeske relates that between 1954 and 1965 St. Marcus lost about half of their congregational membership. He says St. Marcus' membership dropped from about 1,200 souls in 1954 to about 600 souls in 1965. The congregation was deteriorating very quickly. Something had to be done.

During the 1960's St. Marcus looked at their situation and resolved to do one of the following two things. One, remain at their present location in the central city of Milwaukee. Or, a second choice was to move out of the central city of Milwaukee. Pastor Jeske tells how several heated discussions took place before this issue was resolved. The congregation voted to remain at its present location and continue to serve the central city with the gospel of Jesus Christ. (As far as the date of this vote is concerned, Pastor Jeske could not remember for sure.)

The big problem that history now speaks clearly is that St. Marcus did not have a plan for ministry to make this desire a "successful" reality. For that reason, it was not until the arrival of Pastor Jeske in 1980 that a plan for ministry to the poor was enacted at St. Marcus.

3. What methodology is being used at present at St. Marcus?

Presently, Pastor Jeske has two programs in place that concentrate on reaching out to the economically poor. The first program is a very well organized food pantry. Because Pastor Jeske feels a church should be seen by the people of the community as a place of compassion, St. Marcus operates a food pantry that is open three hours per week for anyone to come in and receive food. The program is organized and staffed by volunteers. Pastor Jeske estimates that 600-700 families per month receive a bag of food from St. Marcus. He says St. Marcus has established a very extensive network which has enabled the food pantry ~~to never~~ run out of food. He speaks of the St. Marcus food pantry as the modern equivalent of the Old Testament widow's jar of oil that never ran out.

Closely connected with the food pantry, but not quite as large, is a clothing distribution program St. Marcus has established. Through an arrangement with the "Twice As Nice Thrift Store" in Jefferson, Wisconsin, St. Marcus volunteers are able to keep all kinds of clothing on hand for the poor of Milwaukee.

The second program St. Marcus has instituted especially to reach out to the economically poor was set up by Pastor Jeske himself. He says that he has quite an extensive network of social agencies in the community that are able to assist him with a variety of services to the poor. He knows where to send poor people who are in need of housing and/or employment. He also has found it helpful to know where to send those who come to him wanting help with any kind of chemical dependency.

Through these two programs, the food pantry and the social agency network, Pastor Jeske comes into contact with many people who are in need of spiritual help. By means of these programs many poor people in the neighborhood around St. Marcus have come to view the church as a place they can go for help. Because many of the poor feel “safe” and “unthreatened” around St. Marcus, they have had the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without a special effort to reach out to them, these poor people may never have heard that they have a Savior from all of life’s spiritual and physical problems.

4. What do you see the future of this aspect of ministry to be at St. Marcus?

Pastor Jeske has many hopes for the ministry of Jesus Christ at St. Marcus. In the opinion of this writer, all of Pastor Jeske’s hopes for St. Marcus emanate from one aspiration, that is, to transform St. Marcus into an “urban church”. Pastor Jeske understands an “urban church” to be a congregation that looks like the part of the city in which it dwells. In other words, Pastor Jeske would like to see all races and economic classes of people worshipping the Lord and fellowshiping together at St. Marcus. He feels that in order to carry out a long-term program of ministry to the poor, it is necessary for St. Marcus to understand itself as an “urban church.”

Along with the idea of having an “urban church” at St. Marcus, Pastor Jeske would also like to see an “all-inclusive” elementary school at St. Marcus. He hopes and prays for an elementary school where children from all cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds can come together to learn about the one thing needful, faith in Jesus as one’s Lord and Savior. In addition

to that, Pastor Jeske says he would also hope they receive a high-quality, well-rounded education.

Pastor Jeske feels that St. Marcus' aspirations to become an "urban church" and "all-inclusive" elementary school will help its present members to mature as Christians. He says that Christian maturity is observed when Christians progress from the "taking mode" to the "giving mode." He observes that through reaching out to the poor, Christians have an opportunity to serve their Lord in a very fulfilling way.

AN ADVENTURE IN NEW YORK CITY...

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Pastor Glenn Thompson, former pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, relates the story of how a WELS' mission congregation reached out to the poor in New York City.²⁰

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

(Considering that Pastor Thompson's viewpoint on these terms has been previously discussed at length in this paper, his thoughts will not be repeated here. The reader is kindly asked to turn to pages 4-10 of this document to review Pastor Thompson's comments.)

2. When did this aspect of ministry begin at Peace?

When one examines the history of the WELS' outreach to the poor in New York City one certainly sees the hand of God at work in enabling this aspect of the ministry to be conducted.

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Pastor Thompson conducted on April 15, 1996.

Pastor Thompson relates that through certain events in the history of Peace Lutheran Church in New York City, a mission outreach to the poor became obvious.

Pastor Thompson had his initial contact with what would eventually become Peace Lutheran Church while he was a doctoral candidate at Columbia University in Manhattan. Thompson had served as a missionary in Africa but returned to the United States for personal reasons. While Thompson was in Manhattan, he assisted Pastor John Paustian of Triune God Lutheran Church in Ramsey, New Jersey. Pastor Paustian was going to Manhattan once-a-month to conduct a service or Bible class with a group of WELS' members in Manhattan. In order that the Manhattan group could gather together more frequently to study God's Word, Pastor Thompson conducted Bible classes in one of the individual's apartments.

In March 1985 the WELS' members rented a Baptist church on 79th and Broadway to conduct public worship. In September of that same year, the North Atlantic District Mission Board extended a Call to Thompson to serve as the first full-time pastor of Peace Lutheran Church. At this time, Pastor Thompson says the congregational composition of Peace consisted of typical, Midwestern middle-class WELS people.

Pastor Thompson vividly recalls the evangelism efforts of this mission congregation. They encouraged one another in friendship evangelism. But Thompson says that eventually, because of the problems of urban living (size of New York City, transportation difficulties, no family nearby), the people "ran out" of friends or family members with whom to share Jesus Christ.

In addition to this challenge, in 1987-1988 the members of Peace had to move out of their second “church building”, a rented dance studio, because the rent was too expensive. The congregation chose to move into a lower-class neighborhood on the upper-west-side of Manhattan. The rent in this area of New York City was more affordable and the members felt they had a vast mission field in the surrounding neighborhood.

3. What methodology was used at Peace?

Because Peace had “run out” of friends to evangelize, and because of their new location, a mission outreach to the homeless of New York City seemed obvious to Pastor Thompson and his congregation. Their “mission of mercy,” as it was called, took on several aspects. On Friday nights the members would gather together to distribute sandwiches, clothing, and blankets to the homeless people. Additionally, Pastor Thompson conducted Bible classes at the welfare hotels in the neighborhood.

Eventually the members of Peace began to see some of the homeless people in church. Pastor Thompson tells that while this was certainly a wonderful thing to see happening, it was also frustrating. It was frustrating because the homeless people had difficulty sticking to a schedule. They would only attend church or Bible class on a whim or when they felt like attending. Therefore, Bible instruction classes and congregational membership were very difficult for the homeless to maintain.

Pastor Thompson says that the other major difficulty with doing outreach work among the homeless comes in the area of finances. The homeless have very little money. This ministry must be subsidized by another source.

The members of Peace were never really able to rectify their financial challenges and difficulties. The WELS' Board for Home Missions closed Peace in 1993.

MILWAUKEE...THE NORTHSIDE STORY

Pastor Rolfe Westendorf is the pastor at Siloah Evangelical Lutheran Church in the central city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He relates the following historical account about Northside Lutheran Ministries.²¹

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

(Considering that Pastor Westendorf's viewpoint on these terms has been previously discussed at length in this paper, his thoughts will not be repeated here. The reader is kindly asked to turn to pages 4-10 of this document to review Pastor Westendorf's comments.)

2. When did this aspect of ministry begin at Siloah?

Pastor Westendorf says Northside Lutheran Ministries (a specific outreach program to the economically deprived) began because of what he calls the "Bonnie Oliver Story." Bonnie Oliver is an African-American woman who illustrates what Westendorf calls "a classic case of poverty."

Westendorf told the following about Bonnie Oliver's "culture of hopelessness." Her living environment was filthy. Westendorf recalls cockroaches running throughout her apartment. He says she would throw clothes away rather than wash them. She has moved six times in the last ten years. "This culture of hopelessness," says Westendorf, "caused Bonnie

²¹ Unless otherwise noted, comments on this point are taken from a personal interview with Pastor Westendorf conducted on March 14, 1996.

Oliver a great deal of anger and frustration.” He then told how she would reflect her anger and hostility towards her situation in life by disciplining her children with her fists rather than with love.

But despite all of Bonnie Oliver’s pent-up anger, frustration, and hopelessness, she came to worship at Siloah. She came to hear about the one thing she needed most, the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ! Westendorf says that a wonderfully surprising thing about Bonnie Oliver is that she would not stop coming to worship at Siloah! He tells how she came to church even though her clothes did not match. She came to church even though people would look at her in a strange way because she was so impoverished. Bonnie Oliver thought learning about Jesus was so important that she sent her children to Sunday school and Siloah Lutheran Elementary School.

“But,” Westendorf says, “the problem with Bonnie Oliver is that her worship life nor her children’s worship lives followed any pattern.” Bonnie Oliver came to church sporadically. Yet, when Westendorf would address this point with her, she kept telling him that she wanted to hear God’s Word and receive Holy Communion at Siloah. So what was Pastor Westendorf to do?

Pastor Westendorf observed that there were many, many people living in the neighborhoods around Siloah who were in a situation very similar to Bonnie Oliver’s. They were the chronically poor of society who were stuck in hopelessness. They were lacking in the ambition and courage to come to church regularly. So what did Pastor Westendorf do about this challenge? He put all these people on a “shut-in list,” so to speak. As he puts it, “I decided that

if they can't come to church we're going to take church to them!" This was the beginning of Northside Lutheran Ministries.

In an article in the October 1, 1988, edition of the *Northwestern Lutheran*, Pastor Westendorf describes the kind of people Northside Lutheran Ministries reaches out to with the gospel.

Experience has taught us that some people will probably never come to church, not because they don't want to, but because they aren't able to. These are people who lack resources - presentable clothing, transportation, something to put in the offering, an alarm clock to get them up in time. Because these people lack certain financial and emotional resources, they are often neglected spiritually. They just don't fit in with our church's way of doing things.²²

A 1990 report to the WELS' Board for Home Missions offers more information about the beginnings of Northside Lutheran Ministries.

A three year pilot project was begun in 1988 to try and share Christ with those normally unreachable by an existing local congregation because of their socio-economic situation.

Funding for the first two years of the pilot project has been provided primarily through the Siebert Lutheran Foundation of Milwaukee which provides funds for Lutheran efforts in Wisconsin. Some supplemental funding has been provided from the Multi Cultural Missions Restricted Fund of the Board for Home Missions. Funding is being sought from Siebert for the third and final pilot year as well. Inquires will be made of the SEW Kingdom Workers and the Milwaukee area WELSMen organization regarding future and ongoing funding of \$20-25,000 per year.²³

3. What methodology has been used in the past at Northside Lutheran Ministries?

²² "A New Mission in Milwaukee," *The Northwestern Lutheran*, 75, (1988), p. 333. See Appendix 3.

²³ Harold Hagedorn, "A Report on the Mission to the Economically Deprived," *WELS' Board for Home Missions Meeting Minutes* (September 1990), p. 1. See Appendix 2.

The initial and presently adhered to goals and objectives of Northside Lutheran Ministries are outlined in a 1990 report to the WELS' Board for Home Missions concerning the mission to the economically deprived.

Our Goal - To bring the Gospel in a meaningful way to the economically deprived who are normally beyond the reach of our existing congregations because of their socio-economic situation.

The Pilot Project -

1. Using students from our near-by Seminary, we will contact persons living in an economically deprived area. We will conduct instruction classes, Bible classes, and children's classes for those who will accept this service.
2. We will provide nominal economic assistance wherever we can do so without harming our spiritual mission, and without overextending our budget. We will concentrate on helping people by putting them in contact with existing agencies designed to aid the poor.
3. We do not expect to form a congregation or erect a building. Yet we recognize the importance of Christian fellowship, and will attempt to develop bonds of friendship and love among those whom we serve.
4. We will maintain an area office to facilitate contact with our parishioners, but at present we do not intend to provide worship facilities until the need for such is clearly demonstrated.
5. Our staff consists of two second-year students from our Seminary and a project director in the person of Pastor R. F. Westendorf. Pastor Westendorf is responsible to a sub-committee of the Multi-Cultural Mission Committee for this project.
7. The pilot project is designed to last for three years. In March of the third year (1991) the Multi-Cultural Mission Committee will decide whether or not our Wisconsin Synod should be doing mission work in this manner.
8. If the decision is negative, the project will terminate as of May 1991 and the parishioners gathered will be referred to existing congregations for further nurture.

9. If the decision is positive, the Milwaukee-area project will become a mission station of the Board for Home Missions, administered by the Multi-Cultural Mission Committee. The principles governing the pilot project will be made permanent until a need for change is apparent.²⁴

In order to accomplish Northside Lutheran Ministries' goal of bringing "the Gospel in a meaningful way to the economically deprived who are normally beyond the reach of our existing congregations," Westendorf and his missionaries started walking the streets around Siloah asking if people wanted to do in-home Bible studies. The response was overwhelming. The Lord of the Harvest blessed this outreach effort in such a way that Westendorf says another canvass of the neighborhood has not been required in the last eight years.

4. What present methodology is used at Northside Lutheran Ministries?

In order to accomplish the objective of conducting "instruction classes, Bible classes, and children's classes" in the homes of the economically disadvantaged, Westendorf says his team of missionaries currently conducts about sixty in-home Bible studies per month. Westendorf commented that these Bible studies are often outreach tools because of the number of family members or friends who will look in on the Bible study being conducted.

In order to achieve the objective of providing "nominal economic assistance wherever we can do so without harming our spiritual mission, and without overextending our budget," Westendorf says Northside Lutheran Ministries conducts a rather large food pantry and food voucher program. The food is purchased at a government subsidized discount store called "Second Harvest" in Milwaukee. Because they meet certain requirements established by the

²⁴ Harold Hagedorn, "A Report on the Mission to the Economically Deprived," *WELS' Board for Home Missions Meeting Minutes* (September 1990), p. 2-3. It should be noted that not all of the objectives are listed here. If the reader is interested in viewing all the objectives he is kindly asked to refer to Appendix 2.

government, Northside Lutheran Ministries is able to purchase huge quantities of food at very, very cheap prices. The food voucher program is established with a known grocer in the Siloah area. The vouchers are only redeemable for staple food items.

Northside Lutheran Ministries also has a rather extensive clothing distribution system. Westendorf says the clothes for this program are either donated to Northside Lutheran Ministries or received (purchased?) from the WELS Bargain Center located on the corner of Fon du Lac and Hampton streets in northwest Milwaukee. This operation is sponsored by the WELS Federation of Churches of Milwaukee.

5. What does the future hold for this kind of ministry?

Westendorf says this question can be answered either positively or negatively. On the positive side, Northside Lutheran Ministries did become a mission station of the Board for Home Missions in 1991. It currently receives funding for its gospel outreach efforts from the WELS Kingdom Workers.

Also on the positive side of this question, Westendorf believes the current methodology for doing mission work to the economically deprived is working quite well. He says that in terms of approaches to this kind of ministry that Northside Lutheran Ministries has thought of or attempted, this method seems to work the best. He is very thankful for the missionary teams he has received from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary over the years. He says, "Without this manpower we would be dead in the water."

That comment brings one to the negative answers to this question. Westendorf says Northside Lutherans Ministries will continue to exist under the grace of God as long as there is

financial resources, manpower, and a director to conduct this mission outreach to the economically deprived. He is very thankful for the financial support this ministry has received over the eight years of its existence and hopes and prays it will continue.

Another challenge Northside Lutheran Ministries faces is brought about by the many store-front churches in the area around Siloah. Westendorf says that these store-front churches, often operated by self-appointed Pentecostal ministers, preach a strong message of the Law to their listeners. However, Westendorf adds that these store-front churches are often somewhat “successful” because they have a “cultural connection” with the African-Americans living in that part of Milwaukee. Westendorf also says these churches do very little for the people because they offer no pastoral care to the people.

An additional challenge the missionaries face every day revolves around a common attitude found in the central city. Westendorf says many of the people Northside Lutheran Ministries attempts to serve with the gospel have been hardened with an attitude that professes, “The less I know about your business, and the less you know about my business, the better off things will be.” Westendorf says this is a difficult attitude to break down. However, he adds that nothing is impossible where the Holy Spirit and Word of God are at work.

The final challenge Northside Lutheran Ministries faces exists at the Siloah congregation. On this point Westendorf speaks of some items which need to be addressed. He relates that oftentimes the doctrine of fellowship is challenging with the economically deprived. If they attend worship at Siloah and want to receive Holy Communion, but are not instructed, they can

not attend the Lord's Supper. Westendorf says sometimes the economically deprived have difficulty understanding this teaching.

Westendorf would like to see the members of Siloah assume the responsibility for this mission outreach effort. He says that so far this seems to be something that would be in the quite distant future. But he adds that because Northside Lutheran Ministries has only been in existence for eight years, this is an aspect of congregational understanding and support that may take some time to come to realization.

LA LADRILLERA, MEXICO--

A UNITED STATES' BASED MISSION TO THE POOR

Mr. Gene Durfey, a former WELS' pastor who now works as a court reporter in Tucson, AZ, relates the account of a United States' based mission to the economically deprived in La Ladrillera, Mexico.²⁵

1. When did this outreach effort begin?

In the "Program and Organization Guidelines" document of this outreach ministry, the following historical beginnings of the mission to the poor in La Ladrillera, Mexico, is offered.

When working with a UNICEF-sponsored children's humanitarian organization in 1989, a member [Gene Durfey] of a WELS congregation in Tucson, Arizona was touched by the desperate poverty and tragic suffering of the children of a village called *La Ladrillera* in Northern Sonora, Mexico. After repeated trips with other WELS members to distribute food, clothing, and medicine, the families of the village asked if they would teach stories about Jesus to their children. Thus began a three-year mission of compassion to these precious little children, who struggle each day against poverty, hunger, and disease in a small rural area, just 12 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico Border.

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Mr. Gene Durfey conducted on April 16, 1996.

In 1995, after an interruption of two years [because of a drug war between the U.S. Department of Drug Enforcement and Mexican drug lords], two WELS members revisited *La Ladrillera*, and made a prayerful decision to revive the work of meeting the spiritual and physical needs of the children and families of the village, as well as a number of children and families from neighboring villages. *Mission to the Children* served over 125 souls, including over 60 little children, precious to Jesus. Over half the children came from other nearby villages, where spiritual and physical needs were just as great.²⁶

2. What methodology is used in this mission to the poor?

On the second and fourth Sundays of every month, Gene Durfey and a another volunteer make the trip to La Ladrillera, Mexico, to distribute food to the hungry people of this village. At this time they also teach the people about their Savior, Jesus Christ. Once-a-month a volunteer medical team also accompanies Durfey to the village. The medical team treats the sick and injured. They also distribute medicine to those who are in need of it.

All of the manpower for this mission is volunteer based. All of the food is either donated by local Tucson grocery stores or purchased with offerings designated for this mission to the poor. Clothes and blankets are also distributed to the people of La Ladrillera. These too are donated by individuals and/or churches who desire to help with this mission to the poor.

3. What are your hopes for the future for this mission outreach?

Durfey has several hopes for the mission to the poor at La Ladrillera, Mexico. However, Durfey says that these hopes will only become realities if the financial backing for this mission continues and increases.

²⁶ Gene Durfey, "Mission to the Children: Program and Organization Guidelines," (September 1995), p. 1. See Appendix 4.

Durfey said his number one hope for the people of La Ladrillera is that they would have a full-time minister of the gospel. He believes there is more than enough work for a full-time pastor to do in this village of Mexico. In fact, according to Durfey, the mission at La Ladrillera has a higher average attendance at Bible class than all the other WELS' missions in Mexico combined! Durfey backs this statement up with a listing of 43 total families (86 adults and 91 children)²⁷ being served by the mission! That's 177 souls that the Lord has brought into contact with his saving gospel through this outreach effort to the poor!

Durfey's second major hope for this mission is that God would open the hearts of WELS' members throughout the world to offer help for this mission. Durfey said the number one thing he asks of people is that they pray for the Lord's continued guidance and blessings on this mission effort. He believes WELS' people are very compassionate. He feels that this is a mission effort they would be more than willing to support with their prayers, time, and offerings.

This aspect of Durfey's hopes can already be seen as coming to fulfillment. After reading Pastor Glenn Thompson's article in the May, 1994 issue of the *Northwestern Lutheran* regarding the WELS' mission to the poor, Durfey wrote Thompson regarding the outreach efforts at La Ladrillera. Pastor Thompson and Pastor Lawrence Retberg, chairman of the Executive Committee for Latin America of the WELS' Board for World Missions, traveled to La Ladrillera to see the ministry taking place there. Durfey says they were so touched and moved by what they saw going on at La Ladrillera that Thompson and Retberg met with area Tucson WELS' pastors and congregations to ask them for their support of this mission effort. Durfey

²⁷ Gene Durfey, "The Children of La Ladrillera, Sonora, Mexico: Children's List," (February 1996), p.4. See Appendix 5.

says the response was wonderful. He comments that the financial backing for this mission is continually improving. For that, he and the people of La Ladrillera give thanks to the Lord!

Durfey says that the most pressing need of the people of La Ladrillera, in addition to food and medicine, is a constant, fresh supply of pure water. He offers the following stirring account about the present condition of the water in this Mexican village.

Water for the village is delivered by tank truck, but the people never know when (or *if*) the truck will be coming, so they must use their water very sparingly. The water is stored in old rusty barrels or in open cisterns built of adobe brick. The barrels and cisterns are open on top, and the water grows stagnant, becoming the breeding ground for disease.

One day, while we were visiting one of the homes, we watched as the father washed his hands in a bowl of water after returning from the outhouse, and then drew a cup of water for the baby to drink. We shuddered. We decided that, if possible, we must work to bring fresh, clean water to the children, not only for drinking, cooking, and washing, but also so that the families can start small vegetable gardens to supplement their diets. In addition, a good supply of clean water will vastly improve sanitary conditions among the children, resulting in less disease and sickness.

We prayed. A rancher 3 km. away offered water from his well for the village. We rejoiced. The Sonoran government offered to provide labor and heavy equipment to lay the pipe if we could raise the money to purchase the pipe and pump. We rejoiced again. A local AAL branch donated \$1,600 for our water project. And we rejoiced again! A Sonoran health official told us that he thought the Governor of Sonora would match any funds we would raise. And again we rejoiced!

We went out to get estimates, and found that the total cost might rise to \$8,000! We prayed. And now we are waiting for the Lord to act again.²⁸

Durfey said that since the time of the publication of the above cited newsletter, the estimated cost of the well has risen to \$12-18,000. The sharp increase in the cost is due to

²⁸ Gene Durfey, "Mission to the Children," (Newsletter), (November 1995), p. 5-6. See Appendix 6.

several new variables. However, Durfey also mentioned that the well fund has received a large gift of \$6,000 from the WELS' Committee on Relief. Again, for this blessing of the Lord, he and the people of La Ladrillera are very thankful!

NORTHERN WISCONSIN...

THE ST. PAUL'S OF CRANDON STORY

Pastor Oscar Stellick, the pastor at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Crandon, Wisconsin, tells the history of the WELS' mission to the poor at this congregation.²⁹

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

Pastor Stellick says that, according to his way of thinking, these terms all mean something very similar. He feels that no matter what a person terms this aspect of ministry, it still comes down to one thing. He feels that the one thing this kind ministry must deal with is finding ways to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of the economically poor being able to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Stellick suggests that one of the obstacles may be a sense of shame the poor carry with them as a result of their impoverished state. He says they do not feel like they live up to society's standards. This kind of thinking on the part of Stellick is very similar to the philosophies of Westendorf and Thompson.³⁰ Stellick submits that because the poor do not live

²⁹ Unless otherwise noted, the comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Pastor Stellick conducted on April 11, 1996.

³⁰ The reader may wish to consult the discussion of this philosophy on pages 4-10 of this document.

up to society's standards, they have a very difficult time feeling comfortable in the traditional church setting.

2. When did this aspect of ministry begin at St. Paul's?

Pastor Stellick says that the thinking which eventually engendered the necessity for this aspect of ministry at St. Paul's of Crandon, Wisconsin, has its roots in the heritage of the people living in this county. He says these people came from the mountains of Kentucky where education was not highly valued. Because a lack of appreciation for higher education is so ingrained in the mindset of the people of Crandon, Pastor Stellick says the people actually take pride in their poor economic state. He comments that they speak with pride about living in the poorest county in the state of Wisconsin, Forest County. Yet, Pastor Stellick says that even though they are the poorest county in the state, and therefore apply for welfare subsidies, they never see the aid.

It is this writer's impression, from speaking with Pastor Stellick, that the outreach ministry to the poor in Crandon has its beginnings with Stellick's ministry.

3. What methodology do you use in this aspect of ministry?

Stellick says that because of the lack of education of the people of Crandon and because of their apparent desire not to improve that condition, he makes a conscious effort to address the people in very simple language. He feels this is a necessity for this kind of ministry, especially with regards to sermonizing and teaching. He also stated that because many of the poor in Crandon do not know how to read well, many do not like to read aloud. Therefore, Stellick says he does most of the reading in Bible class and instruction classes.

To help the people improve their reading skills and desire to read the Bible, Stellick says he prints out the Scripture lessons for each service from the 1988 edition of the NET Bible translation. He believes the English vocabulary and grammar of this translation of the Bible are simple enough for his people to read, understand, and enjoy. He also mentioned that this edition of the NET is fairly faithful to the original languages as compared to the more recent edition of the NET.

Another thing Stellick does in regards to making the poor of Crandon feel comfortable in worship has to do with the liturgy. He has taught the people of his congregation all four liturgies for Sunday worship which are found in *Christian Worship*. He taught these liturgies to the people by repetition. Stellick said that at first the people had some difficulty catching on to the new liturgies. "But now," says Stellick, "they love it!" He feels that the people's ability to learn different liturgies has not only improved their interest in corporate worship, but it has also increased their confidence in themselves. He said he can sense the people have a feeling of accomplishment because they were able to learn something new.

4. What hopes do you have for the future of this ministry at St. Paul's?

In his answer to this question, Stellick addressed four areas he hopes to be able to concentrate in and improve on in the mission to the poor of Crandon.

Stellick said that in his preaching and teaching he tries to de-emphasize financial issues. He feels the Synod sometimes seems to overemphasize the money aspect of the church. He comments that the people of Crandon have a mindset that the church or the Synod is always

asking for money. Therefore, Stellick tries to choose his words wisely when discussing offerings and/or stewardship principles.

Another area Stellick gives emphasis to in preaching and teaching the poor lies in the realm of sanctification. He says many of the people have a fairly good understanding of the Bible's teachings. He feels that the challenge facing him at St. Paul's lies in helping the people understand that what the Bible teaches is meant to be applied in their lives. In his sermons and Bible classes Stellick stresses living and applying God's Word in all areas of life.

A third area of ministry to the poor Stellick would like to improve on centers around evangelism of the Native Americans. Stellick notes that the town of Crandon rests between two Indian reservations. He feels this is a mission field that is ripe for harvesting. However, Stellick also realizes that his congregation's attitudes towards the Native Americans need some adjusting. He says the people of his congregation have some rather harsh views about the Native Americans. He feels this may stem from the stereotypical attitudes about the Native Americans professed by many whites in that region of Wisconsin.

The fourth area that Stellick considers his congregation to be challenged in concerning outreach to the economically poor, is in regards to the increasing number of casinos and lotteries being operated in the area of Crandon. He says that the "get rich quick" attitudes fostered by the casinos and lotteries does not help to improve his peoples' views on stewardship or education. He feels he must continually warn his people about the dangers of these things and emphasize the God-pleasing uses of one's money.

MISSION IN MIAMI...

CORDERO DE DIOS

Pastor Ralph Martens is the pastor at *Cordero de Dios* Evangelical Lutheran Church in Miami, Florida. He relates the following historical account of the WELS' mission to the poor in Miami, Florida.³¹

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

Pastor Martens did not comment much on the choice of one's terminology regarding this aspect of ministry. However, he did say that regardless of which term a person chooses to label this ministry, two key elements must be part of the outreach to the poor.

The first key element Martens discussed was the spiritual aspect of a ministry to the poor. He says that it is very important to reach out to this group of people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, Martens points out that a particular challenge arises in this ministry because this type of poor people have difficulty adapting to the traditional worship setting. This is even true in Martens' congregation. *Cordero de Dios* is a multi-cultural congregation which reaches out primarily to Hispanics. He submits that those who are extremely impoverished have difficulty committing themselves to congregational membership because of their economic situation.

³¹ Unless otherwise noted, the comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Pastor Martens conducted on April 12, 1996.

The second key element Martens pointed out was the physical aspect of ministry to the poor. He said it is very important that a church in an economically deprived area take action to help the poor. Martens commented how it is very difficult for a person to concentrate on hearing the message of God's Word if that individual is cold and hungry. He said *Cordero de Dios* has a special fund established within their church treasury to handle emergency situations with the economically deprived.

2. When did this aspect of ministry begin at *Cordero de Dios*?

Martens said that ministry to the poor has been going on for "a few years" at *Cordero de Dios*. He said the concern for reaching out to the poor really started with the members of the congregation. He also mentioned that this congregation did some fairly extensive outreach to help the victims of Hurricane Andrew in 1992. He added that the mission to the hurricane survivors took on a spiritual and physical aspect.

3. What methodology have you used in the past?

Pastor Martens said that in the past at *Cordero de Dios* the congregation offered loans to the poor to help them financially. The idea behind this program was that if the poor could get a good start they may be able to get themselves on the right track and stay there. However this did not turn out to be the reality. The sad outcome of the program was that none of the loans that *Cordero de Dios* made were ever repaid.

The congregation also attempted to establish a food pantry to help the economically deprived in the community. Martens said there were several problems with this program. First, he stated that *Cordero de Dios* is not situated directly within the poorest part of Miami. The

congregation is located in an area where the people make an annual income of \$20-40,000 per household. As a result of this, it was very difficult to reach out to the people in most impoverished parts of Miami. Thus, food distribution was very difficult.

Another problem Martens encountered with this program was the stocking of the food pantry. He said it was very difficult to keep the food pantry stocked adequately on the small budget he was using. Mainly because of the difficulty in distributing the food and keeping an adequate supply on hand, the food pantry was discontinued.

4. What methodology is currently being used?

At present Martens says *Cordero de Dios* has about ten families that attend worship regularly. He estimates that five of these families are economically burdened. *Cordero de Dios* offers these members help by distributing clothes to them. The church council also has an emergency fund established to help these members if a major financial crisis should arise in their lives.

Martens is also currently working to establish a reliable network of agencies in Miami to whom he could refer people who come to him looking for employment or housing. He says that the ELCA churches in Miami have a fairly good social ministry. However, he is working to do more in this area of ministry to the poor.

5. What are your hopes for the future for this ministry at *Cordero de Dios*?

Martens said he and the members of the congregation would like to establish some kind of food aid to the poor of Miami. Considering that the food pantry program did not work out, the congregation is looking into setting up a food voucher program. Martens feels that the

greatest challenge in this area of ministry in Miami is distinguishing the legitimate from the illegitimate. Said another way, Martens commented that on more than one occasion he has been approached by individuals looking for a food handout even though they really did not need it. Consequently, Martens feels this is something that will have to be addressed before an efficient food voucher program can operate successfully.

Martens has also thought about establishing a day care of the children and youth of the neighborhood. Because *Cordero de Dios* is a store-front church, this may work out quite well. Martens feels the area is certainly in need of something like this. However, the biggest challenge to overcome in taking on a program such as this would be financial. Martens does not know at present where the financial support for a day care program would come from.

NORTHERN WISCONSIN...

THE ASCENSION OF ANTIGO STORY

Pastor Mike Spaude, the pastor at Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church of Antigo, Wisconsin, relates the following history of the WELS' mission to the poor in Antigo.³²

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

Pastor Spaude did not specifically state which one of these terms for this aspect of the ministry he prefers. However, he said that since he has been the pastor at Antigo he believes he has a more complete understanding of the poor. He believes many people are economically poor

³² Unless otherwise noted, the comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Pastor Spaude conducted on March 16, 1996.

because of their own doing. He offered the community of Antigo as a prime example to prove his belief.

Like the people of Crandon, Wisconsin, many of the residents of Antigo are able to trace their heritage to Kentucky. Pastor Spaude said that from the time these people arrived in Antigo there has been little stress on education. As a direct result of this way of thinking, Pastor Spaude points out that the people are left with no other option in life other than to take low paying jobs in Antigo. Many of the residents of Antigo work on the potato farms in that region of Wisconsin. Spaude said the average hourly wage for potato farming is about \$5 per hour. He commented that the workers who are considered to be earning the “big money” in Antigo earn about \$7 per hour. Consequently, the people of Antigo are considered “poor” by modern American standards. But Spaude believes much of the blame for Antigo’s low income status lies on the shoulders of the community itself.

2. What methodology do you use in your mission to the poor of Antigo?

Like Pastor Stellick of Crandon, Wisconsin, Pastor Spaude focuses his mission to the poor on preaching and teaching them the truths of God’s Word. However, he says that before he was able to make a genuine connection with the people of Antigo, he had to gain their trust. He stresses that the “trust factor” is a reference point that has to be established with the people before they will truly listen to what you are attempting to preach and teach to them. Spaude believes he has gained the people’s trust. But emphasizes that this is an aspect of preaching and teaching he must continually remember.

In addition to gaining the trust of the congregation, Spaude said he has noticed other things which have proved helpful in his mission to the poor in Antigo. Like Stellick, Spaude says it is important to preach with a level of vocabulary the people can understand. Also along the lines of Stellick's thinking, Spaude finds it necessary for him to do most of the outloud reading in Bible class or instruction class. Spaude attributes the people's lack of good reading skills to the low education standards of Antigo. Consequently, because the people were not taught to read well, they do not enjoy reading in public.

Stewardship is another biblical teaching to which Spaude gives emphasis. He says the people do not presently have a good understanding of what the Bible teaches about God-pleasing uses for money. He says he works especially hard at trying to get the members "on board" in regards to stewardship.

3. What are your hopes for this aspect of ministry in Antigo?

In answering this question Pastor Spaude focused on the educational needs of his people. First he commented on how he must continue to urge the people to grow spiritually through their study of the Word of God. He believes this aspect of his mission to the poor in Antigo is vitally important to the spiritual lives of the individual members as well as the whole congregation.

Spaude said that the congregation is notably zealous in their attempts to reach out to others with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He hopes and prays that these positive evangelism efforts continue. He also prays that the Lord of the Harvest continues to add sheep to his flock at Antigo.

One principal reason Spaude hopes to see the church at Antigo grow numerically has to do with the congregation's desire to start a Lutheran elementary school. Spaude says that because the public school system in Antigo is so shoddy, the members of Ascension are looking forward to the day they can have a school of their own. Spaude believes the school would do well numerically, again as a result of the public school system. Spaude also feels an elementary school would make a wonderful evangelism tool for his congregation.

"PROJECT SHARE"...

AT TRINITY OF BAY CITY, MICHIGAN

Pastor Mark Schultz, pastor at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bay City, Michigan, relates the history of the WELS' mission to the poor in Bay City.³³

1. When did this aspect of ministry begin at Trinity?

Pastor Schultz said the mission to the poor at Trinity began through institutional ministries. He stated that through his chaplaincy at a prison in Bay City, he had the opportunity to communicate with many economically and spiritually poor people. He commented that the officials at the prison were always very helpful and accommodating towards his efforts to carry out this ministry. Because of this, Pastor Schultz said he has never had any problems making appointments to see prisoners. Nor has he encountered difficulty when requesting chapel services at the prison. As a result of this blessing, Pastor Schultz stated that he feels it has been easier for him to develop relationships with the prisoners and *vice versa*.

³³ Unless otherwise noted, the comments on this point are taken from a phone interview with Pastor Schultz conducted on April 17, 1996.

In addition to the prison ministry, Pastor Schultz also ministered to those at the local rescue mission. He said that he considers this to be an essential founding component of Trinity's mission to the poor. Again, as was the situation at the local prison, Pastor Schultz found the officials of the rescue mission very open to his offering of Bible studies to the people of the rescue mission. Through this outreach effort, Pastor Schultz had the opportunity to tell many people about the good news of the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ.

However, Pastor Schultz found that he was encountering a "problem" with his institutional ministries' program. There was a significant amount of work to do in this ministry! The Lord was greatly blessing Pastor Schultz's efforts to the imprisoned and poor of society! But the program was consuming huge portions of Pastor Schultz's time. He was beginning to become concerned about this "problem" when the Lord answered his prayers.

The WELS' Special Ministries' Board was looking for a place to do mission work among the economically disadvantaged of society. They wished to set up a pilot program for ministry to the poor at an established congregation. They were looking for a congregation that would be very enthusiastic about this aspect of ministry. Pastor Schultz and the Special Ministries' Board both agreed that Trinity of Bay City, Michigan, would be the place!

In May of 1995 a layperson named Duane Andersen accepted a staff-ministry Call to carry out the mission to the poor at Bay City. This pilot program is called "Project Share." Its purpose is to evangelize the economically disadvantaged of society.³⁴

³⁴Notice the terminology in this program differs from that of Northside Lutheran Ministries. The terminology difference is intentional although the philosophy behind the phraseology is not contradictory. The different terminology attempts to keep these two programs distinguished. The reader may find it helpful to refer once again to pages 4-10 of this document for a discussion of terms used.

2. What methodology is used in “Project Share”?

When Pastor Schultz spoke of the current methodology used in “Project Share,” he divided the program into two realms, the spiritual and the physical.

As a result of the bountiful blessings the Lord of the Harvest has showered upon the institutional ministry at Trinity, Andersen has been kept very busy with the spiritual aspects of “Project Share.” Schultz listed the spiritual duties of this staff-minister. He said Anderson makes about fifteen visits per week at the local prison. He conducts the Bible studies at the rescue mission. Andersen offers “counseling time” on Monday evenings. During this time people may stop by his office and talk about any difficulties they may be encountering. He also does counseling in a “rent free” office at a local substance abuse clinic.

In the physical realm of “Project Share,” Andersen helps the poor of society in a variety of ways. He oversees a \$5,000 segment of the “Project Share” budget which is designated to help the homeless find shelter and receive food. Andersen also helps the unemployed find jobs. In fact, Schultz says that oftentimes Andersen even writes resumes for those seeking employment.

3. What are your hopes for the future of “Project Share”?

Schultz stated that he would like to see the four following goals achieved for “Project Share”:

1. Train the homeless people to do evangelism. Schultz believes it would be very beneficial to have homeless people involved in the prison ministry and rescue mission outreach.
2. Purchase or rent a facility close to Trinity that would offer spiritual and physical help for the poor.

3. Establish a simple business that would employ prison inmates immediately following their release from prison. Schultz submits this would greatly enhance the inmates return to employment.

4. Attempt to start a version of "Project Share" in the economically depressed region of Saginaw, Michigan.

Overall, Schultz testifies that a ministry to the poor of society is a very gratifying type of ministry. He commented that to be able to give the imprisoned and homeless "the one thing needful" is a very powerful spiritual experience. He also stated that the outreach potential in this kind of ministry is staggering! However, he did comment that in examining this ministry from a negative viewpoint, he often feels frustrated because he sees those who appear to be on the right track in life regress to their old sinful habits.

MILWAUKEE...

THE SOUTHSIDE STORY

Pastor James Getka, pastor at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, relates the history of the WELS' mission to the poor on the southside of Milwaukee.³⁵

1. What is your understanding of the following terms: ministry to the poor/ministry to the economically deprived/ministry to the economically disadvantaged?

Pastor Getka said he sees no essential difference in the definitions of any of these terms. He feels they all communicate the same basic understanding of a "poor person," that is, that the person is economically burdened.

³⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the comments on this point are taken from a personal interview conducted with Pastor Getka on March 21, 1996.

However, Pastor Getka did make an interesting statement about the use of these terms. He said that these terms, which refer to the poor people themselves, also make implications about those who minister to them. Getka commented how he cannot avoid becoming a part of the “poor culture” around St. Peter’s. He said, “When you live in the same neighborhood that they do, you can’t help but feel the effects of their poverty.”

2. When did this aspect of ministry begin at St. Peter’s?

Pastor Getka began addressing this question by pointing out that he has only been the pastor at St. Peter’s since August of 1995. According to Getka, there appears to have been only very minimal efforts at reaching the poor before he arrived. Therefore, the history of outreach to the poor at St. Peter’s really begins with Pastor Getka.

3. What methodology do you use in your mission to the poor?

Pastor Getka’s mission to the poor through St. Peter’s proceeds in two directions. One way Pastor Getka reaches out to the poor is through St. Peter’s congregation itself. The other way Getka conducts ministry to the poor is through his position as the director of Lutheran Southside Ministries.

Getka stated that St. Peter’s does several things to try to help the poor physically. He said St. Peter’s has operated a food pantry since September of 1995. However, at present the food pantry is not running as smoothly as Getka would like. He attributes the present challenges to the food pantry program at St. Peter’s to three things: lack of money, lack of adequate facilities, and lack of workers.

Because St. Peter's is a financially struggling congregation, there is not a great amount of money in their budget to operate the food pantry.³⁶ Yet, Getka considers St. Peter's involvement in a food pantry a very essential part of their outreach to the poor. He tells of three economically burdened people who live next to the church who make use of the food pantry. He also said there is one man who walks over one mile to receive food at St. Peter's!

Besides a food pantry program, St. Peter's also offers food to the poor through two other methods. Getka says that on occasion some of St. Peter's members will get together to hand out sandwiches to the poor. Additionally, St. Peter's offers a free meal along with their Wednesday night Bible class. Getka said that both the sandwich distribution program and Wednesday night meal program receive prepared food for free from the Boulevard Inn, a local restaurant. St. Peter's is very appreciative and thankful for this generous donation.

Getka said the food pantry program at St. Peter's would be greatly improved if the congregation could be received into membership by Second Harvest of Milwaukee. This government subsidized organization offers huge quantities of food to food pantries for very low prices. The only thing holding St. Peter's back from membership is their lack of an adequate facility to store the food. Second Harvest has certain requirements for food pantries to meet before they can be served by them. At present St. Peter's lacks the appropriate refrigeration and shelving to be a part of Second Harvest's program. However, Getka said this situation is being addressed.

³⁶The reader may want to consult the "Church News" and "Statistical Look at St. Peter's Stewardship" articles in their church newsletter (Appendix 7).

The third challenge to St. Peter's food pantry is a lack of workers. Again, because of the financial condition of the congregation, the food pantry would have to be staffed by volunteers. Currently, Getka says it is difficult to find volunteers to offer their services for the food pantry. As a result, Getka commented that the food pantry has no regular hours of operation. In other words, if someone comes to St. Peter's looking for the food pantry, the only way they will be helped is if Getka or the elementary school teacher is present.

The other opportunity Getka has to conduct a ministry to the poor is through his position as the director of Lutheran Southside Ministries. St. Peter's, and therefore Pastor Getka, inherited Lutheran Southside Ministries (started in September of 1993) from Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church on Greenfield Avenue in September of 1994. At that time it was determined that St. Peter's might offer a better base for this ministry because of its cultural and economic setting on the southside of Milwaukee.

Getka says Lutheran Southside Ministries is operated very similar to Northside Lutheran Ministries. The missionaries are from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. But because they are working in an area of Milwaukee that is 40% Hispanic, Getka says it is essential for the missionaries to know Spanish. All three present missionaries (Michael Roth, Stephen Mueller, and Andrew Schroer) have received fairly extensive Spanish language training.

One difference between Lutheran Southside Ministries and Northside Lutheran Ministries is the primary method of ministry each uses. At Lutheran Southside Ministries Getka said the main thing they try to accomplish is two major canvassing programs per year. However, at Northside Lutheran Ministries Westendorf said the primary area of focus is on in-home Bible

studies.³⁷ Nevertheless, Getka stated that Lutheran Southside Ministries presently conducts about twelve in-home Bible studies per month. In addition to that, the missionaries are also responsible for preparing the Spanish service conducted at St. Peter's each week.

Lutheran Southside Ministries is funded through the WELS' Kingdom Workers.

4. What hopes do you have for the mission to the poor at St. Peter's?

Pastor Getka listed several hopes he has for the mission to the poor at St. Peter's.

The first hope Getka has addresses the spiritual growth of the present members of St. Peter's. Getka maintains that only as the congregation grows in its love for Jesus Christ will they be truly moved to reach out to the poor of the neighborhoods around St. Peter's. He said that through faith in Jesus as their Savior, the people at St. Peter's know they have a purpose in life. He added that through a continued study of God's Word, the members will be led to carry out that purpose with evangelism and community involvement.

Another area in which Getka expressed his hopes concerns a membership at Second Harvest. He stressed that St. Peter's needs to be involved in Second Harvest if it wishes to conduct a successful food pantry program.

Getka also hopes St. Peter's could start an ESL (English as a Second Language) class for the Hispanic people around St. Peter's. This may seem like it would be mainly a multi-cultural outreach tool. However, Getka adds that many of the Hispanics living around St. Peter's are economically burdened. He feels this would be an excellent way to make evangelism contacts among the poor.

³⁷ This comment is taken from a personal interview with Pastor Westendorf conducted on March 14, 1996.

Along this same line of thinking, Pastor Getka feels St. Peter's needs to become more involved with the neighborhood it serves. In this regard, his philosophy is very similar to Pastor Jeske's idea of an "urban church."³⁸ Getka believes St. Peter's should be a portrait of the type of people who live in the area the congregation serves.

In order to achieve this hope, Getka is encouraging St. Peter's to become involved in some community activities that will offer their congregation positive exposure to the community. He would like to see St. Peter's take part in "Near Southside Residents for Change." This group concerns itself with neighborhood renovation. Getka believes this association would provide the members of St. Peter's with an arena to show their Christian faith in action. In connection with this program, he would also like to have St. Peter's involved in a "Block Watch" crime program.

Pastor Getka has many hopes for St. Peter's congregation. However, he realizes that all things rest in the Lord's hands. Therefore, he places the outcome of St. Peter's efforts in the Lord's hands. He also stresses that whatever kind of ministry St. Peter's conducts among the poor, it is absolutely essential that the motivating force behind all their efforts and hopes is a loving desire to serve their Savior.

4. SUMMARY

Please read and consider the following portions of Scripture:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Mt 28:19).

"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit

³⁸ For a definition of Jeske's terminology, please see page 20 of this document.

you?” The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:38-40).

Now, please read and ask yourself the following questions which were stated at the beginning of this document:

- Has the WELS’ mission to the poor increased or decreased throughout history?
- Does the WELS currently have an active mission to the poor?
- What does the future hold for the WELS’ mission to the poor?

How would you answer these questions?

God’s Word commands us to make a ministry to the economically poor a part of our mission efforts to the world. Jesus wants us to not only *know* his love in our own hearts, but also to *share* his love with the world. Additionally, Jesus asks us to *demonstrate* his love with our actions.

History tells us that the WELS has accomplished these things in its past. But has the WELS increased or decreased its efforts to carry out a ministry to the poor? History answers this question by telling us that the WELS’ mission to the poor has *increased* over time. Several decades ago, a history of the WELS’ mission to the poor would have revealed a thriving ministry among the economically burdened Apaches in Arizona. But other than a few grocery handouts to needy congregational members over the years, history does not attribute much attention to the mission to the poor in the WELS up until about 1960.

However, as is shown in this document, the WELS does have a current mission to the poor. Maybe our mission to the poor is not as organized or extensive as some in our circles

would like it to be, but nevertheless, the ministry is there. Recent history tells us we are headed in the right direction as far as our outreach to the poor is concerned. Our outreach to the poor is *increasing*.

What does the future hold for the WELS' mission to the poor? This writer believes it is obvious from this paper that those involved in ministry to the poor hope this aspect of ministry *increases*. Additionally, this writer submits that all the interviewees for this paper hope the ministry to the poor *increases* in a *wholistic* fashion. The *wholistic approach* to ministry to the poor suggests the necessity of conducting a *spiritual* and *physical* ministry to the poor.³⁹ Scripture does not allow us to conduct the *spiritual aspect* of this ministry without demonstrating an active concern for the *physical aspect*. One interviewee stated it this way, "A hungry man can't hear the gospel very well."⁴⁰ Another said, "Empty bellies have no ears."⁴¹

However, all the interviewees also expressed the warning that our ministry to the poor can never become a "social gospel" ministry. They spoke of the challenges to fellowship and the watering down of God's Word that this aspect of ministry brings with it. I believe Pastor Hagedorn gave some wise words of advice when he said, "We certainly can't let the ministry to the poor die out, but we can't let it become the end all either."⁴²

This paper closes with an introspective and encouraging quotation taken from the *Mission and Ministry Across Cultures In Urban America* handbook of the Board for Home Missions of the WELS.

³⁹ This term was used by Thompson and Durfey. However, in one way or another, this same thought was suggested by all the interviewees.

⁴⁰ This comment is taken from a phone interview with Pastor Thompson conducted on April 15, 1996.

⁴¹ Gene Durfey, "Mission to the Children," (Newsletter), (November 1995), p. 4. See Appendix 6.

⁴² This comments by Pastor Hagedorn is taken from a phone interview conducted on April 11, 1996.

The danger is that we lose sight of this simple fact, that God made the whole wide world the target of his free love in Christ and that he has commissioned us to be bearers of that message of love in Christ to the whole wide world. We may not close our eyes prejudicially to any group living in any area. We may not prejudicially justify insensitivity to the eternal and spiritual needs of any group living in any area. To do so is an affront to the God of universal grace, who in his magnificent mercy included us in that grace.

We must work in the city not only because God has commanded us to do so. We must work in the city to open up our own eyes to God's grace to us. As we include ourselves in the class of poor sinners, outsiders due to our unrighteousness, a caste of wicked, impure, and immoral degenerates, we then begin to understand and appreciate how marvelous God's grace is to us and for us. Then we will truly understand what Paul was talking about when he said, "Christ's love compels us...So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view" (2 Corinthians 5:14, 16).⁴³

⁴³ E. Allen Sorum, *Mission and Ministry Across Cultures In Urban America* (handbook), (April 1996), p. 58-59.