

REFLECTIONS ON THE BETHANY PROGRAM

CHURCH HISTORY
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INTRODUCTION

This paper is somewhat of a sequel to an earlier composition on the same topic written by Kenneth Engdahl, who is presently the pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Valley City, North Dakota. His paper, which was written in 1986, gives a very thorough history of the Bethany Program of Special Pre-Seminary Ministerial Training. It was the first paper on the topic, and therefore most of the information in it was a result of personal interviews of those people who were most closely associated with the Bethany Program. There is also a great deal of information for anyone who is interested in the history of pre-seminary training, especially in the area of alternative pre-seminary training in the WELS.

Due to the fact that the early history of the Bethany Program has already been quite thoroughly covered, it is therefore not the chief purpose of this paper to do so again. There is brief history for the purpose of background, but the main objective of this paper is to answer a question posed by Pastor Engdahl in his paper: what about the future of the Bethany Program? Or more specifically: what were the reasons that the program was transferred to Northwestern College? Since the Bethany Program, as such, is no more. The present program, which began in 1988 is a comparable program, but (just) to state the obvious) a program that is at Northwestern can hardly be called the Bethany Program anymore. Even aside from the change in name there perhaps are more differences in the programs than what initially may meet the eye.

This paper will explore the reasons behind why the program transferred, and what effects that it may have on the WELS. It will

II.

probe the question: what about the new alternative worker training program? What are its strengths and its weaknesses? Furthermore, how does it compare to the Bethany Program?

In its early beginnings, the Wisconsin Synod suffered from a lack of manpower. Do to the the shortage the Wisconsin Synod did not grow to the size it perhaps would have if it would have had pastors to meet the needs of so many. The main problem, of course, was simple: lack of trained men who were qualified and capable of the pastoral office. On this issue Prof. Carl Lawrenz writes:

WELS thinking was reluctant to see its thorough-theological seminary training watered down by the enrollment of students at its seminary who did not measure up to the pre-seminary training that WELS was officially maintaining: its three preparatory schools or academies at Watertown, New Ulm, and Saginaw, and its four-year liberal arts college. With its emphasis on basic biblical knowledge, on Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and German, and English language skills, and on a broad knowledge of world history the WELS worker training program aimed to give its seminary students the tools for thorough theological study and at the same time equip them for acquiring all the practical skills essential for the pastoral ministry.

He continues:

Loyal support of our own institutions calls not only for our financial contributions but also for the sending of our children there for training. It should be our policy to train our future pastors and teachers in our own institutions.

Unfortunately, the WELS did not always have the high enrollment of young men that it would like to have had. What is even more unfortunate was the fact that WELS was not set up to train anyone other than young men who were fresh out of high school, or in that general age group. It was not at all prepared to take on any older student who might have decided later in life to enter the pastoral ministry. As far as the WELS went, there was no alternative training program for pre-seminary training.

Due to shortage of men, however, the WELS could not meet its needs to fill all of the pastoral positions which were open. From time to time, therefore, the Assignment Committee assigned calls from WELS parishes to WELS members who had chosen to take their ministerial training at Springfield Seminary in Springfield, Illinois. This seminary was affiliated with the LC-MS. The seminary, which was called Concordia (a very original name for a LC-MS institution), offered courses of study which covered both pre-seminary and full seminary studies, involving at least five years in residence, a one year of supervised internship. Admission required a high school education and a minimum entrance age of twenty. The course was meant to offer an opportunity to men who sought to train for the pastoral ministry at a more mature age. Occasionally there were also WELS members who had started out their training at one of the WELS preparatory schools, but for one reason or another were not satisfied, ^{and} transferred to Concordia, Springfield. At first, the seminary there did not offer New Testament ^{Greek} or Hebrew. Eventually, however, it did adopt a New Testament Greek program, the latter never actually became a part of its curriculum.

Concordia Springfield was not the only other option for pre-seminary training either. The option to Northwestern College were the Concordia High School/Colleges of Milwaukee and the Twin Cities. This was a six year training program (as opposed to the full four year college training course at Northwestern with a liberal arts course of study). It offered many men, both young and old another avenue which, in many cases, was much closer to their homes. When this course of study was completed, these men were allowed admittance into the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This only continued

until 1935, however, when the WELS resolved at its synodical convention that it "should be the rule of the WLS to admit only student who have completed a four-year college course of study such as our NWC offers, to make exceptions only by unanimous consent of the faculty and approval of the Board (Report of Entrance Requirements for Our Theological Seminary, WELS proceedings of 1935, p 54.

Report of Board of Regents for Our Theological Seminary, Thiensville, Wisconsin, p 53--same proceedings: paragraph 1)."

The chief problems with these alternative training programs were that , first of all, many of the students who entered these LC-MS institutions opted to go into the Missouri Synod along with the bulk of their graduating class. Second, the 1950's became a controversial time in the history of WELS/LC-MS relationships. There were doctrinal issues which cropped up between the two synods, especially centering around the Doctrine of Fellowship and also controversies about the inspiration of Scripture. Third was the problem concerning the language deficiencies. Those students who had gone through the Concordia system at Springfield, with the exception of only a few, did not have training in Hebrew. For this reason they were unable to carry on Old Testament exegesis from the original languages and so did not qualify for a WELS academic degree. They were, nonetheless, received into the WELS ministry.

In 1961 fellowship between the WELS and the LC-MS was terminated. This episode in the history of the WELS had now cut off any alternative in the training of pastoral candidates who decided to enter the ministry at a more mature age, or were married at the time when they had begun their training. The problem concerning

the lack of manpower was now intensified. Solutions such as MLS being quickly closed and then reopened as WELS' practical seminary were suggested, but then quickly voted down.

To complicate the issue, there was the problem of the aftermath of World War II and the Korean conflict. Many inquiries came from GIs who during war-times had become more aware of the need for the spread of the Gospel. It was also at this time when the WELS had begun to expand its borders into foreign fields. The WELS, however had nothing to offer those men who were now ready to serve, and were prime candidates for the ministry. NWC felt that two major considerations limited the kind of special training that was required for these older students:

1. WELS had so far not authorized NWC to enroll married men. Very strict rules in this area applied to the WLS as well (cf. 1961 catalog, pp 14-15).
2. NWC was reluctant to accept students who were twenty-one or older at the time of their enrollment.

An alternative training program was now an absolute necessity.

At that point the WELS was able to reach an agreement with the ELS, its sister synod, to offer a special curriculum to students who were married or of a more mature age to study their required courses for entrance into WLS at Bethany Lutheran College. Thus the Bethany Program was born.

1961 is considered the birth date of the program. By 1963 the Proceedings from the synod convention indicate that three men were enrolled in the program at that time. Five more were expected in '63-'64 school year. The program had taken hold.

Since that time nearly 200 students have entered the Bethany

Program and, up to this point, more than 120 have graduated from WLS. Pastors who have gone through the Bethany program number about 120, which constitutes about ten percent of the WELS. This would have left quite a gap in the synod if these men had not been allowed to take up this special training at Bethany.

Throughout the 1970's the enrollment numbers of those men entering the program continued to increase. The 1971 synod convention was assigned to the task studying the Bethany Program and to bring an evaluation report on their findings. It was agreed at that time that the program was successful and should be allowed to continue.

The 1980's, however, were a different story. Enrollment into the Bethany program began to taper off, as did enrollment into Northwestern and Seminary. Due to the decline in enrollment, NWC became much less rigid concerning its policies against older and married students. Although, even as late as 1983 NWC was still referring students who were 21 or older to Bethany. At that point, however, the flexibility which NWC had begun to adopt gave older and married students the alternative to choose to go to NWC if they so desired, and many students opted for it. By 1985 the Bethany Program was down to seven students (of which the author of this paper was one).

In 1986 the Board for Worker Training Ad Hoc Committee met to review the Bethany program and to discuss moving the program elsewhere. There were four main options:

1. Leave the program at Bethany.
2. Move the program to NWC
3. " " " " Prairie Du Chien
4. " " " " Wisconsin Lutheran College

The outcome was that the committee unanimously recommended moving the program to NWC for the following reasons:

1. "The program is moving toward that direction of itself already. enrollment in the Bethany Program has been decreasing. From 1978 the number of students who enrolled has dropped from 30 students to only 8 in 1985." Incidentally, out of those 8, only one was married.
2. "Students are expressing a desire to stay in the synodical mainstream or to become a part of it sooner. Enrolling at NWC provides an opportunity for them to come to know their peers with whom they will share the work of the ministry in the future, the professors at NWC, and the synodical structure. We feel that these factors are important in any decision.
3. NWC can handle the program at this time. The faculty of NWC has expressed its willingness to accept the program and solve whatever problems its implementation will create. Since NWC is already serving married students, it has demonstrated its readiness and ability to assimilate older married students into task of preparing men for the ministry.
4. The marriage restrictions at NWC have relaxed significantly. The presence of married students is not an element which is as disruptive as it was once deemed to be. When the Bethany Program started, there was no other place for these students to go. The situation has changed.
5. Although Bethany Lutheran College has made an effort to cut costs, the committee felt that moving the program to NWC would help the students save money through lower fees and moving expenses. We consider that market for married students would be

better in Watertown and the surrounding area than in the Mankato area.

6. Moving the program to NWC will eventually save the Synod money too. We are not recommending complete and immediate transfer of the program to NWC but are suggesting that the current students at Bethany continue their training there. New inquiries will be directed to NWC. When there are no more students at Bethany, the Synod will realize the saving.
7. All other alternatives, with the exception of discontinuing the program, created additional logistic and fiscal problems. The discontinuation of the program would seem to indicate that the Synod no longer needs or wants candidates for the ministry who are older and married and would have a negative effect on what the Spirit is doing in the hearts of those who need a program like the Bethany Program (BWT Ad Hoc Committee Review of the Bethany Program, pp 3-4; February 28, 1986. cf. Appendix)."

These then, are the main reasons for the moving of the Bethany Program to the Northwestern campus, as given by the Ad Hoc Committee in their report to the Board for Worker Training in 1986. Along with these, however, are also a number of other reasons, which are dealt with in a more complete report which discussed the pros and cons of moving the program to another location. Although most of those in charge of the move are reluctant to state it flatly, one reason for removing the program from the Bethany campus and placing it on the NWC campus was due to the fact that many of the students who had gone the Bethany route have difficulty adjusting to seminary life with their new classmates who went through the Northwestern system. The reasons are not in doctrinal disagree-

ment, but rather it is due to the difference in age and background. Bethany students are sometimes made to feel unwelcome at hte seminary. This is probably not something that is done intentionally, but it often happens.

Students from NWC have initiation rites which they practice beginning even in their freshman year of college. Bethany has none, nor do any of the LC-MS colleges or seminaries from what I underatand in talking with the students from those institutions. Therefore the practice of G.A. is looked upon as something good to the NWC students, but for most BLC graduates, even those from the 1970's, G.A. is not spoken of favorably. To those who went to large secular institutions, G.A. is no different from the initiation which they went through there, even though G.A., supposedly is not initiation. There is hazing which takes place, which is against Wisconsin State law since hazing is defined as any action which may cause physical or mental pain on another individual. Also, there is deception which takes place over a period of time which lasts a week or more which often causes students from both BLC and NWC as well, to become frustrated, angry and hateful toward their brothers in the upper classes. Even after G.A. is revealed as a "practical joke," there are still bitter feelings which may be harbored for years to come. For these reasons many of the BLC men do not like the G.A. ritual.

On the other side of the fence are those who believe that G.A. is a means to build comradery withⁱⁿ the seminary. The deception aspect of G.A. they look upon as the type of thing Luther spoke of when he referred to a "lie in love." What G.A. teaches the student is h^{at} what they've gone through in G.A. is what will never

be done to them by their brothers at seminary again. It is an almost sacred tradition which is a main part of seminary life. It gives pastors common ground and something to talk about for years to come. Secrecy is imperative to pull the prank off effectively. G.A. therefore may become much rougher on those who are suspected of knowing about it before hand to make it look more realistic to them. When all is said and done, however, even the hard-core G.A. fans will admit that G.A. is nothing but a practical joke, and to some extent it does promote comradery.

The point is simply that this may be a point of friction between the NWC and BLC men at seminary. Because of their dislike for the the G.A. ritual some BLC men may be termed as pietists, although reports indicate that BLC students have had no more tendencies toward pietism than did NWC men.

Perhaps one of the more apparent points of friction between the NWC and BLC men is the "Bethany Bomb." The tradition seems to have originated in the early days of the Bethany Program. Whenever a Bethany student gave a wrong answer or asked a question which had what may have seemed to others to have an obvious answer, a whistling sound was made which resembled a bomb being dropped from a W.W.II. airplane. Hence, the Bethany men, to this day are often affectionately referred to as "bombers" (even among themselves in jest). Most BLC men are not offended by the whistle, or by the term "bomber" itself when it is used in jest--it is taken lightly. However, when it is used maliciously it may cause resentment and hostility, much like a racial slur. There are NWC graduates who feel that BLC graduates took the easy way out, and that their education was less than adequate. After having gone

through up to five years at NWC, and meeting up with a BLC graduate who may have gotten through his pre-seminary training in only two often causes some hard feelings among the NWC men.

It is unfortunate that these points of friction may exist between the two groups. It is even more unfortunate that they are even considered as two groups. In the end those students who have gone through the BLC system would like nothing more than what the NWC men would like...to be known as members of the class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. To feel that it is their school and as a result they want to be accepted and made to feel at home regardless of what their views on G.A. or other seminary traditions, which really have no bearing on the spreading of the Gospel, may be.

Pastor Robert Voss, President of NWC, who was formerly an administrator on the Board for Worker Training, was interviewed for this paper. He said that there is an advantage in having all students coming from the same training school. When asked if he saw any disadvantages with might be termed as "closedness" due to the fact that many of these men may have gone to school with one another virtually since Kindergarten, and hence may become cliquish, he responded: "No, I don't, because its a closeness that they're going to enjoy all through their ministry. That is one of the advantages of a small synod, and I still regard our synod as a small synod; that there is an association there, there is a comradery, there is a spirit...a fellowship that I don't know if you can match anywhere else. I don't know of another place that is unique as this system...that offers the same thing that this system does; and I think that the Bethany men sensed it and wanted it. It was they who encouraged this move in order to get into what they termed as the synodical mainstream sooner."

President Voss informed me that the Bethany men were polled from year to year in order to get their input into the success or

failures on the part of the BLC Program. These polls are recorded and kept by the Synod in the files of the Board for Worker Training. They do not, by any means, indicate the opinion of the majority, since there are only a few in the file. Among them, however, were the survey results of Pastors Quinten Buechner and Fredric Piepenbrink, who did seem to reflect this feeling spoken of by President Voss. It should be noted, however, that not all BLC men take this opinion. It would probably be surprising to Pres. Voss and others to discover the bond that has been formed between many of the BLC men that will certainly last a life-time. I can honestly say from personal experience, as one who went through the BLC program, that there is an unmatched spirit of closeness and a sense of belonging at Bethany that I really don't think can be matched anywhere. This is no slam against the NWC system, but perhaps it ought to be realized that BLC students too, have a close bond of fellowship among themselves.

Perhaps one of the problems is that there are two different types of men coming from BLC. Remember, the program was not only set up for men who were already married, but also for those men who were older at the time when they decided to enter pre-seminary training. Those men who lived in the dormitory and were involved with campus life and interaction with other students, other than just those select few who were also entering the pre-seminary program, will generally have a much better outlook on what Bethany had to offer. The biggest complaints that one might hear from one of the married students are the problems with having to move so many times, and lack of jobs to support families. From this standpoint it can be understood why they might want to enter the synodical main-

stream sooner.

Perhaps there are a few other misconceptions about BLC which ought to be cleared up as well. In the appendices of this paper there is list of advantages and disadvantages for keeping the Bethany Program at BLC or moving it elsewhere. While it may be dangerous and even unfair to rail on some of these observations without knowing the context in which they were spoken, we also have to be fair about the fact that if they are taken at face value (which is the way any reader will probably take them if he or she is to look back at them in the future), they may give some false information about Bethany.

Number 8 states : " A different spirit prevails on the Bethany campus; students from other religious bodies start influencing our students." Numbers 9-11 are similar in content, and seem to indicate that there are liberal views coming from Bethany. Such is not the case. There are, it is true, students from other denominations there, but the influence of the pre-seminary students has effected them in a positive way. I don't know of any situations which ^{are} vice-versa. By "another spirit" one might get the impression that there ^{are} is divided doctrinal stands between the ELS and the WELS, much like the difference in the spirit between Luther and Zwingli. This is not so. If the comment is being made about a difference in attitude between the two, perhaps this reveals a bit of ignorance on the part of those who criticize BLC without really knowing what it offers.

Number 12 states : "Bethany encourages students to attend ELS congregations. Our students miss the weekly WELS influence in fellowship and WELS information." First of all, this is not true. The professors at BLC were always careful not to coerce WELS students

into joining the ELS, nor do they try to persuade the WELS students to join the ELS church in Mankato. Actually quite the contrary is true. Prof. Honsey, for example, always encouraged the WELS students to remain in the WELS, and not to switch synods. Of course, if any of them decided to do so, they were welcomed with open arms, but he generally tried to talk them out of it to avoid this very problem of which Bethany is accused.

There are also other misconceptions in the disadvantage column as to why the Bethany Program should be moved. However, in all fairness to those who made these statements, and not knowing the context in which they were said, it should be pointed out that these were not the main reasons, in the end, given by the committee which evaluated the Bethany Program for moving it to the NWC campus. It is easy to misinterpret the observations of such a study simply by taking the findings at their face value. At the same time, it is also unfair to place judgments on BLC, or make accusations which are erroneous.

Incidentally, it is interesting that in point #5 under advantages for keeping the Bethany Program where it was that: "It offers a location where adequate housing seems to have been available." However, point #3 under disadvantages states that there are problems regarding housing. This probably indicates that the points that are written here were more thoroughly discussed when they were suggested, and have aspects which are not spelled out here (cf. Appendix, Where to move the Alternative Worker Training Program: Advantages -vs-Disadvantages).

MOVING THE PROGRAM

The main reasons for moving the alternative worker training program are stated in the report by the BTW Ad Hoc Committee found in the Appendix of this paper. One of the main reasons was financial. The WELS was paying a considerable amount each year to the Bethany Program in order to fund it. In a report a report from the WELS Commission for Higher Learning, the statement is made:

"Since our Synod , in reaching its agreement with the Board of Control of BLC obligated itself to a subsidy which would be the equivalent of salarizing $1\frac{1}{4}$ staff members at BLC, it would seem proper to apply an annual increase of 8% in the projection of the subsidy to take care of the inflationary factor (CHL, WELS Program Statement: Review on the Bethany program: 1979)."

The dollar amount to go to Bethany is considerably higher than NWC. In fact, roughly twice as much. The cost per year at this present time is about \$8000. per year. While this seems to pose a real problem, keep in mind the fact that most BLC students attended Bethany for only two or three years, as opposed to NWC four to five year program. Many of the students who were not married when they entered Bethany, because of their age, landed jobs as resident assistants in the dormitories, which provided them with free room and board. This cut the cost almost in half. The problems with finances were much more harsh, as is always the case, on the married men at BLC.

At this time, NWC finds that it is capable of doing what it could not do before. While, before it was not able to accommodate married or older men who would require a specially tailored curric-

ulum, it is now able to do so. It has seemed to have solved the housing problems that once prevented married students from attending, and feels that the Watertown area is able provide jobs for them, all at a much cheaper rate than what it would cost a student to attend BLC. With the amount of money going in to BLC each year, and an annual 8% increase yearly, the WELS saw that it was losing money. The Bethany Program, which was originally designed to accomidate married and older students, by 1985 had only eight students enrolled into the program, and only one of them was married. The rest of them, with the exception of two, were 25 or younger. The age difference between those men and the men in their seminary class when they arrived there was 4 years or less. Not much of an age difference. By this time there were more married students enrolled at NWC than at BLC. The WELS saw that it was time to make the move. NWC was the obvious place, so it seemed.

AT the 1986 meeting of the BWT Ad Hoc Committee on reviewing the Bethany program, the committee voted unanimously to move the program to the NWC campus. The decision was made not to mave it immediately, but to allow the students who were presently there at BLC to continue their studies there, but to refer future students to NWC. After this last group of four men who were enrolled in the program at that time had graduated, the entire program was to be moved to NWC, which is where the program is today.

Presently there are seven men enrolled in the in the Seminary Certification Program, as it is now called at NWC. The course of study is comparable to that at BLC, meeting the language and religion requirements for those who have had previous schooling or

have a degree. They generally are allowed to waive Latin and German and are required only to take the mandatory Greek and Hebrew courses. Students enrolled in the program may be required to undergo two to four years of study, depending on the amount of previous schooling that they have had.

NOT THE SAME PROGRAM

Although there are many similarities in the new Seminary Certification Program and the old Bethany Program, they are really not exactly the same thing. The obvious difference is the location. From this time until who knows when, all students who enroll at WLS will have come from the same school, with exception of the colloquy students who come in from time to time from one of the other synods. While there may be advantages to this perhaps there are disadvantages too. The outstanding advantage would be that all of the students know one another when they reach the seminary. This may alliviate the problem of making those students who have come from the outside feel unwelcome. On the other hand, perhaps a closed system may lead to arrogance on the part of the student body. If all other avenues are closed, anyone who does not attend NWC may be looked down upon by those students. This could prove to be a real problem for colloquy students. It may also breed an attitude which they may carry into the ministry.

Another major factor is that of women on campus at BLC, as opposed to none on the campus at NWC. Some see this as a problem, since it might prove to be a distraction for the students who are studying for the ministry. It may misdirect their thoughts

and prove to be detrimental to good study habits. It might even tempt some to marry while still in school and could prove to be financial burden. On the other hand, however, women on the campus may also prove to have some very positive effects on the men, as is the case at Bethany. The female element promotes better social growth. A common complaint about many of our students at WLS is that they lack social graces. The presence of women might help to eliminate that problem. Also, it is no secret that NWC students make weekly treks to Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota to meet and see girlfriends. This is probably a worse deterrent to good study habits than to have them on campus since it is about a six hour drive one way.

As far as studies go, NWC has had, in the past a Greek program which offered more to the students than did BLC, since one could take an extra year there. On the other hand, BLC offered a third year of Hebrew which was not offered at NWC. This third year of credit counted as credit toward a Master's Degree at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, which several of the BLC students from ELS and WELS received before entering the ministry. All in all, the language programs are still very comparable (except for pronunciation).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I will simply say that the Bethany Program has served us well. However, it is a time in the history of the WELS when, from a practical standpoint, it is time for us move on. So far it appears as if the new program at NWC is working out very well, and we certainly wish them God's blessings on their efforts. It is our prayer that this new program will be even more successful than the old one so that the Lord's work may be done at a time when the harvest is truly great, but the laborers are few.

When asked if Pres. Voss thought that the new seminary certification program would increase enrollment at NWC he said simply: "It's got to! Northwestern in recent decades--post war times, is at an all time low. The difficulty rises from the fact that the pool of students from prep, area Lutheran high schools, and even public schools is considerably lower than it use to be. The normal sources, that is assuming that they are going straight from high school into Northwestern, just isn't going to meet the need. This need will have to be met, then, by one of two different ways: Either by students transferring into Northwestern, or from other colleges or universities. The other alternative is the Seminary Certification Program."

We must honestly ask ourselves whether we really are seeking to tap all of the sources that are available to us. The real strong point of the Bethany Program, as I see it, was not simply that it provided a way for married or older students to study for the ministry, but that it gave an alternative to the NWC setting which might be more appealing to some students. Perhaps there is

a bit of healthy fear in our synodical circle of anything that isn't traditionally WELS. NWC has served the synod for years, and its product has proved to be, for the most part, very good. On the other hand, perhaps our German stubbornness and fear of change has prevented us from expanding and keeps us within our closed little system. It is interesting to note that when Wisconsin Lutheran College was considered as the place for the new alternative worker training program, no disadvantages were listed as to reasons for moving it to that campus. It would be closer to the Seminary, which would mean less moving; there is a good job market; the school was willing in the past to offer pre-seminary courses; and it is a co-ed institution, which would make it much more appealing to many of the students who enroll. Could it be that the competition with NWC might mean lower enrollment there? Perhaps it is the cost factor. Whatever the reason, we must always be conscious of the fact that no matter how well NWC has served us in the past, we can always improve. Perhaps we don't know whether there is a better way because we've never done it any other way. While gambling is not the best policy either, if we really take our 20 year projection in the WELS seriously, and hope to have 70 students graduating from seminary by the year 2000, we are going to have to do something different than we're doing now. Northwestern has done marvelous work up until now, and we pray that it will continue to do so. However, we must also realize that the Bethany Program has had quite an impact on our synod as well. It has also provided us with a close tie with our sister synod, the ELS. While it has been pointed out that there are other points of connection between the two synods,

such as the Evangelical Lutheran Forum, which meets every two years, this can only prove to be a step back in our relationship with them.

Many of us are sorry to see the Bethany Program leave Bethany. We've come to love the people there, to appreciate our sister synod more; we've met ⁱⁿnew friends and ⁱⁿthe case of some of us, including yours truly, we've met the women who have become our wives. With a touch of sorrow we bid farewell to the old, but also, despite ourselves, welcome the new, and pray for the success of our new program. May it provide its students with the same joy that the rest of us who went through the former program did as we were prepared by it to enter into the Lord's work.

APPENDICIES

Mission money at work

Recently Pastor Ron Freier of Grace, St. Joseph, Mich., received a letter from David Pesko, one of his members in the Marines, stationed on Okinawa. We would like to share it with our readers.

"I got a letter from Missionary Roger Falk (in Japan) a few days ago. He plans on conducting a church service here on Okinawa on June 25. According to the list he sent me, there are 12 other individuals or families here on this small rock in the middle of the ocean.

"He mentioned that you sent my name to him — Thankx.

"This will be my first Wisconsin Synod service in nine months. The last time was when I was home on leave. It's nice to know that there is family anywhere you go in the world. For those people in our congregation who don't think that 'mission money' works, I want to tell them that they are wrong.

"Thanks again."

WITH THE LORD

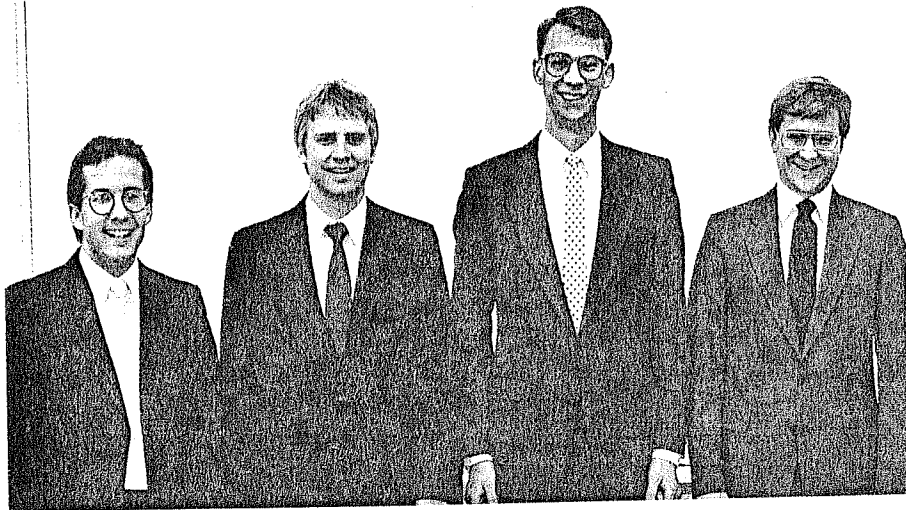
Clarke E. Sievert
1944 — 1988

Pastor Clarke E. Sievert was born March 19, 1944 in Neillville, Wis. He died July 22, 1988 in Libertyville, Ill.

A 1970 seminary graduate, he served congregations in Yuma, Ariz.; Prairie du Chien, Wis.; and Round Lake, Ill.

In 1969 he married Kathryn Pielmeier. He is survived by his wife; son, Andrew; daughters, Renata and Shantell; parents, Prof. and Mrs. Erich Sievert; brother, Pastor Louis; and sisters, Kathleen (Thomas) West and Lois (Glenn) Bode.

Funeral services were held July 25, 1988 at St. Paul, Round Lake, Ill.



The last four graduates of the Bethany Program are (left to right): Curt Golm, Hopkins, Mich.; Don Patterson, Garland, Tex.; Phil Enderle, Theresa, Wis.; and Paul Waldek, Clifton Park, N.Y.

The WELS-ELS connection

Last June four young men left the halls of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota on their way to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon. These four have a special significance to the Wisconsin Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. They are the last class of a program in which future WELS pastors received part of their education at Bethany College.

Do you recognize names like Soukup, Weimar, Kaiser and Lehninger? Since 1962 when this "Bethany Program" began, these men were among nearly 200 who enrolled. Since these men were older or married, they were asked to do their pre-seminary studies at Bethany. Today there are between 100 and 120 pastors in WELS (about ten percent of the WELS clergy) who had this ELS connection. In every district of WELS there are pastors who remember their ties with the ELS.

Bethany also remembers them. Prof. Honsey, who helped set up the program, said recently about his WELS students, "I have had many fine, capable and committed

young men in my Hebrew classes." They came from all walks of life. Some had previous careers in law, theater, agriculture, teaching, etc., but they decided to prepare for full-time work in the kingdom.

Their impact on Bethany was significant. Some served as dorm counselors; some participated in the drama and music programs; others tutored or actually taught at the college. All were good models of Christian living and had a commitment which enriched the student body. They conducted Bible classes at nearby churches, led youth groups, taught Sunday school and did evangelism work of many types.

Although the training program for these older (or married) students has now moved to Northwestern College, the faculty and administration of Bethany are glad to have served their sister synod. They are glad for the opportunity to train such bright and committed people and grateful for the many ways in which these WELS students blessed the college.

— Richard Wiechmann

WISCONSIN Evangelical Lutheran SYNOD



2929 North Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53222
(414) 771-9357

Memo to: Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Bethany Program

from: Robert J. Voss

re: Secretary Braun's Report and Minutes of February 28, 1986

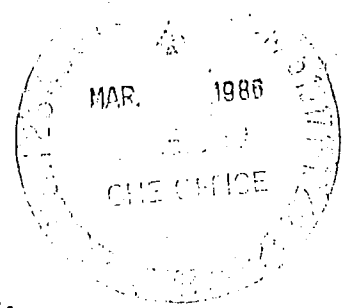
date: March 11, 1986

Enclosed are John Braun's minutes of 2/28/86 and the report of the committee to be submitted to the Board for Worker Training.

We had agreed that the report would be submitted to all members of the committee and that they all would suggest revisions directly to John Braun. Please do so at your earliest convenience so that this report may be revised accordingly on John's computer and then forwarded to our office for distribution to the schools involved and to the Board for Worker Training. Please take care of this pronto.

Again, thanks for your help.

BWT Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Bethany Program
WELS Administration Building
February 28, 1986

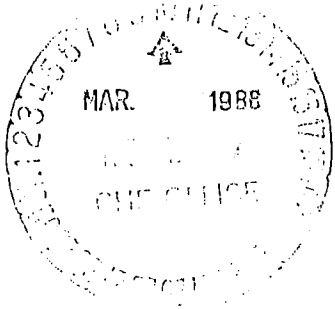


1. The meeting was opened with prayer by Chairman R. Voss at 9:15 a.m.
2. The agenda for the meeting included two objectives: a review of the material generated since our last meeting and the formation of some recommendations. R. Voss suggested that any recommendations which we formulate should be reviewed by the schools involved first.
3. The minutes of the June 14, 1985 meeting were read and approved as read.
4. The committee reviewed the responses of former Bethany Program students. Twenty (20) men were polled, and sixteen (16) responded to the questionnaire. Discussion of various points developed during the review. Two questions arose which must be addressed by the committee in its recommendations: 1) Should the program continue to keep a low profile in recruitment wherever it may be conducted in the future? and 2) Should more financial aids be made available to older students?
5. The committee reviewed the responses of Bethany Lutheran College, the Commission on Inter-Church Relations, Northwestern College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and the Conference of Presidents. Discussion followed each response. The committee decided it needed to address the impact upon fellowship ties with the ELS its decision would create should the program be moved. The WLS report emphasized that there is no dissatisfaction with the quality of the students coming through the Bethany Program.
6. Recess was declared for lunch.
7. Chairman R. Voss called the meeting to order after lunch and asked whether the committee had sufficient information at this time or it needed to seek additional information. The consensus was that the committee had sufficient information and no additional material should be sought. The committee was faced with five alternatives: 1) retain the program at Bethany as it is, 2) discontinue it altogether, 3) move it to Northwestern College, 4) move the program to Wisconsin Lutheran College, and 5) move it to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Each individual member of the committee was given an opportunity to express his individual preference with the result that the members unanimously agreed that the program should be moved to Northwestern College.
8. The committee then discussed the report it would file with the BWT. The Secretary was given the task of drafting the report which would be sent to committee members for their reaction before it was finalized and presented to the BWT. Time was spent reviewing the points to be included in the report.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m. with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

J. A. Braun, Secretary

Members Present: R. Balge (WLS), G. Birkholz (COP), J. Braun (NWC), M. Janke (CI-CR), and R. Voss (BWT)



REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE REVIEWING THE
BETHANY PROGRAM OF SPECIAL PRE-SEMINARY TRAINING

1986

The 1979 Review Committee recommended "that the Bethany Program should be reviewed on a regular basis." In keeping with that recommendation the BWT adopted a Curriculum Committee recommendation to appoint a special review committee consisting of Prof. Richard Balge (WLS), Prof. John Braun (NWC), District President Gerhard Birkholz (COP), Pastor Martin Janke (CI-CR) and Executive Secretary Robert Voss (BWT). The committee met on June 14, 1985 and on February 28, 1986.

The committee sought information and responses from Northwestern College, Bethany Lutheran College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, the Conference of Presidents, and the Commission on Inter-Church Relations. Since the committee desired to keep Bethany Lutheran College informed of its work, it invited the faculty to submit their comments. Northwestern was asked what problems would be encountered in moving the program to its campus. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary was asked to comment on how the Bethany students fit into the student body. Prof. R. Balge presented an update of the statistics (1975-1984) for the Bethany Program. Since the COP must assign candidates for the ministry and deal with them in the field, their comments were sought. The CI-CR was asked to evaluate the potential impact of changes in the program on fellowship ties with the ELS. The committee studied and discussed previous Program Statements and the 1979 Review Committee's report, and in addition it selected 20 Bethany Program graduates from the more recent classes and solicited their comments through an open-ended letter. (16 of those polled responded.) All who were asked for information were asked to list advantages and disadvantages of the program. The second meeting, February 28, 1986, was spent reviewing the information gathered and discussing the content of this report.

The committee reminds the Board for Worker Training and the Synod of the positive effects of the Bethany Program. Through May of 1985, 195 students entered the Bethany Program, 119 enrolled at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and 96 were assigned to parishes in the Synod. It is self-evident that these pastors have had a significant positive effect on the Lord's work in the Synod. While they represent a minority in our ministerium, we rejoice that an opportunity has been maintained over the years which allowed them to enter the ministry at ages and circumstances significantly different from students enrolling at WLS from NWC.

The faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is not dissatisfied with the quality of the students who have entered through the Bethany Program. Although there have been some environmental and social differences, they can be traced to age and circumstances and the differences evaporate over the four years of their training at the seminary. The faculty at Bethany Lutheran College is to be commended for its efforts in preparing young men for our seminary. The men serving our parishes who have come through the Bethany Program are testimony to the dedication and faithfulness of the Bethany faculty.

The Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod's fellowship ties with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod are precious and highly prized by both synods. The Bethany Program has been a practical application of that fellowship. While we cannot speak for the ELS in evaluating its significance, from our perspective it has been a healthy and beneficial exercise of our unity in the Lord. We hope it has been viewed in the same way by the ELS. As important as the Bethany Program has been to the fellowship of the two synods, we recognize that our fellowship ties are not based upon one program or joint effort but are based upon our common faith in the truths of the Scriptures. There are other avenues open for the expression of our unity besides the Bethany Program (e.g. the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum).

After carefully evaluating all the responses and information the committee

unanimously recommends moving the Bethany Program to Northwestern College at the present time. The committee adopted its recommendation after considering the following alternatives: 1) retain the program at Bethany as it is, 2) discontinue it altogether, 3) move it to Northwestern College, 4) move the program to Wisconsin Lutheran College, and 5) move it to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. We recommend moving the program to Northwestern College for the following reasons:

1. The program is moving in that direction of itself already. Enrollment in the Bethany Program has been decreasing. In 1978 the Bethany Program had a high of 30 students enrolled. In 1985 the number decreased to 8 students. In addition married students are enrolling at Northwestern College; 8 married students are currently enrolled on the Northwestern campus.
2. Students are expressing a desire to stay in the Synodical mainstream or to become a part of it sooner. Enrolling at Northwestern provides an opportunity for them to come to know their peers with whom they will share the work of the ministry in the future, the professors at Northwestern and the synodical structure. We feel that these advantages are an important factor in any decision.
3. Northwestern College can handle the program at this time. The faculty of NWC has expressed its willingness to accept the program and solve whatever problems its implementation will create. Since Northwestern is already serving married students, it has demonstrated its readiness and ability to assimilate older married students into its task of preparing men for the ministry.
4. The marriage restrictions at Northwestern have been relaxed significantly. The presence of married students is not an element which is as disruptive as it once was deemed to be. When the Bethany Program was started, there was no other place for these students to go. The situation has changed.

5. Although Bethany Lutheran College has made an effort to cut costs, the committee felt that moving the program to NWC would help the students save money through lower fees and moving expenses. We considered that the job market for married students would be better in Watertown and the surrounding area than in the Mankato area.
6. Moving the program to NWC will eventually save the Synod money too. We are not recommending complete and immediate transfer of the program to NWC but are suggesting that the current students at Bethany continue their training there. New inquiries will be directed to Northwestern. When there are no students at Bethany, the Synod will realize the saving.
7. All other alternatives, with the exception of discontinuing the program, created additional logistic and fiscal problems. The discontinuation of the program would seem to indicate that the Synod no longer needs or wants candidates for the ministry who are older and married and would have a negative effect on what the Spirit is doing in the hearts of those who need a program like the Bethany Program.

We respectfully request the Board for Worker Training to consider two other recommendations:

1. We recommend that the BWT take under advisement the visibility of such a program at NWC. While there has been good reason for giving the Bethany Program a low profile in the past, perhaps now is the time to give it higher visibility and added attention in our recruitment efforts.
2. We recommend that the BWT find more financial aids for students whom the Lord moves later in their lives to prepare for the ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Voss, Chairman

J. Braun, Secretary

R. Balge

G. Birkholz

M. Janke

reflections of the Committee on Special Admissions as it considered questions addressed to it by the Executive Secretary of CHE, relative to the Bethany Program and for consideration by the Committee reviewing that program, November 3, 1979.

Question: Does a pietistic vein run through those who are products of the Bethany Program?

Answer: No. We do not believe that such a vein is developed at Bethany. Some men who enter that school may be pietistic and not lose all their pietism while they are there. This is also true of men who receive pre-Seminary training at Northwestern. It is not possible or fair to generalize with regard to enrollees from either school. Attitudes cover a broad spectrum in both groups.

We suggest that at times there may be some confusion among students as to what constitutes Christian piety (sanctification) and what constitutes pietism. Also the reluctance of some mature men (married, veterans, with advanced degrees, achievers in the business and professional world) to participate in some of the activities of younger students might be misconstrued.

The related question of whether the Bethany men are responsible for the division in the student body over the issue of GA may be answered from experience and knowledge in this way: There are men from both schools on both sides of the issue and it cuts across the entire student body.

Question: Has the accusation or characterization of pietism been leveled against Bethany men in their vicar reports?

Answer: We do not recall any such pattern or even any individual instances. We assume that the supervising pastors of our synod would be alert for and sensitive to such traits.

Although vicar reports are confidential we can make the information available through Professor Lawrenz, a member of the Review Committee; and Professor Kuske is willing to research past reports to determine whether such examples exist if the Review Committee desires him to do so.

Question: Does the Committee on Special Admissions detect a "different spirit" in the Bethany Faculty or in the men who enter the Seminary from Bethany?

Answer: No. With regard to the faculty, we meet annually with those Bethany professors who are most intimately involved with these students. We conduct open and brotherly discussions of curriculum and students and then meet for a social hour in which we exchange information and insights on the academic and theological worlds. With regard to the students, while they are at Bethany, they are conscious of being "Mequon men." When they enter Seminary they are part of a new group which enters the Seminary, adding to the blend and requiring molding--as do their Northwestern classmates. They are not more or less doctrinally sound than the Northwestern graduates--they are all beginners.

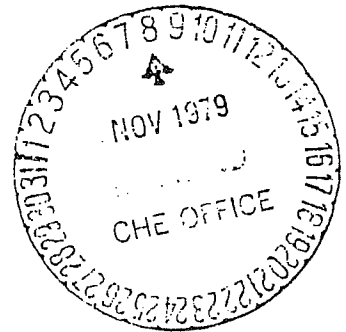
For years, Northwestern classes have been characterized by Northwestern's faculty as to their peculiar spirits--good and bad. That does not mean that Northwestern has a "different spirit" from year to year, but that every amalgam of young men has a certain spirit that really defies analysis as to its source and its essence.

Furthermore, we have the impression that as pastors Bethany men do not have a "different spirit" and are not distinguishable from others in the field.

Question: What are the "pros" and "cons" of the Bethany Program?

Answer: Pro - Bethany's capable staff which is able and willing and experienced in flexible programming, individual scheduling, personal attention to needs of students. Small classes, helping to make the above possible. A knowledgeable and conscientious selection process which eliminates about one student in four from the program in a way that does not reflect on our schools or our synod. The difficulty of getting men who have left the worker training system of our synod to enroll or reenroll at Northwestern in order to prepare for work at the Seminary. An opportunity to practice fellowship in a positive and useful way with confessional brethren. The performance of Bethany men who have graduated from our Seminary and are working in the Synod.

Con - The location in a university town makes jobs more scarce, housing more costly, prices generally higher. The location necessitates a second long move for families which have made one such move and now must relocate in the area of the Seminary. Tuition and fees are higher at Bethany than they are at Northwestern College.



The next five pages contain the list of Advantages-vs- Disadvantages for moving the program to either Prarie Du Chein, NWC, WLC, or leaving it at BLC.

BETHANY, MANKATO

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

1. Bethany faculty is able to maintain flexibility in tailoring programs to meet individual needs. Some of the electives were most appropriate; others could have been improved upon.
2. Level of instruction at Bethany is reported to be of high caliber. Dedicated instructors, well versed in their subject matter.
3. Provides adequate education for admittance to WLS.
4. An advantage to WLS in having men from somewhat different background.
5. Offers a location where adequate housing seems to have been available.
6. Offers a location where there are job opportunities (a college town, accustomed to hiring students in various capacities).
7. Costs higher, but those classified as undergraduate students are eligible for BEOG, SEOG, student loans, and work-study; graduate students eligible for student loans and work-study.
8. Provides a bridge into preparation for the ministry, the transition to specialized schooling, and also develops in a low pressure atmosphere a sense of what the ministry is all about.
9. WELS students have contributed to the quality of Bethany's academic endeavor with their maturity and seriousness of purpose and have contributed greatly to the quality of choir, drama productions, and spiritual life on campus.
10. Diverse backgrounds of WELS students has been beneficial to the academic life on Bethany campus; their presence in the classroom provides incentive to Bethany faculty to strive toward greater excellence.
11. Has saved the WELS many dollars (no need to revamp our structured system).

1. Concern about capabilities of some of the Bethany teachers. Suggestion: offer to place a man on the Bethany staff who could serve as counselor to program enrollees, and as liaison with our Seminary.
2. WELS currently has no direct control over the instructors and their "aptness to teach" a given course.
3. Problems re housing.
4. Problems re jobs - low wages.
5. Problem of moving expenses.
6. Cost differential at Bethany.
7. Because of their maturity and age and somewhat different outlook on life from that of the typical college freshman and sophomore, the students in the program occasionally cause problems and some dissatisfaction--never too serious.
8. A different spirit prevails on Bethany campus; students from other religious bodies start influencing our students.
9. The ELS pre-seminary students go to U. of Minn. or Mankato State and return with worldly philosophy; they come in contact with our pre-seminary students and influence them.
10. The Bethany approach to evangelism has influenced some of our students in an unhealthy way.
11. Our students miss being in the mainstream of our worker training program. They could have a tendency to create cliques when at our Seminary. With smaller classes coming from NWC and larger class from Bethany, we could have a divided Seminary student body with two different spirits in the near future.
12. Bethany encourages students to attend EL congregations. Our students miss the weekly WELS influence in fellowship and WELS information.

ADVANTAGES

12. Offers wholesome evidence of our WELS fellowship with the ELS.
13. Provides contact between our WELS students and members of the ELS.
14. Fosters a better understanding of the ELS and its heritage.
15. Fosters a greater understanding of WELS on the part of ELS faculty and students.
16. Provides a significant amount of tuition income for Bethany.

DISADVANTAGES

13. Lack of pre-seminary contact with Seminary colleagues.
14. Separation from the mainstream of synodical life.
15. The pre-seminary student at Bethany may feel, especially at the beginning, that he isn't really wanted in the WELS or at Bethany.
16. Students need close contact with our own faculties and churches so we may be assured that they bring with them not only academic skills but also stable marriages, family life, and financial responsibility.
17. Concern about the "hint of pietism" reportedly found in almost all who come from Bethany.
18. Attitude of some of our pastors and officials about the program.
19. Difficulties re marriage and family.
20. The Bethany program students are becoming a substantial percentage of entering Seminary classes; this in itself should cause us to place the program totally under our own called workers and under direct doctrinal supervision and discipline of WELS. When the special program was begun at Bethany, the number of students involved was so small that a program of our own was not practical; this is no longer the case.
21. Program viewed as a way around Northwestern or some of its rules.
22. Concern over ELS fellowship principles and practices.
23. Versus the argument that we can help the ELS and establish a stronger fellowship; help the struggling pre-seminary student.
24. Concern over ELS doctrine of Church and Ministry.

BETHANY, MANKATO

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

25. Difficulties arising from different attitudes and doctrinal concerns between the Bethany seminary students and the WELS students.
26. The WELS doctrinal stand in area of Church and Ministry and Fellowship were soft-pedaled because of non-Lutherans and other Lutheran students in religion classes.
27. Article IV of WELS Constitution:
The object and purpose of the Synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: (b) By establishing and maintaining theological seminaries, colleges, schools, and other institutions of learning.
28. A stronger fellowship could be maintained in our Synod by assuming responsibility for training all of our workers.

ELSEWHERE

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

Milwaukee

1. Faculty similar to present one at Bethany.
2. Would allow for the individual course of study for these students.
3. Would save on moving expenses.
4. Provide greater opportunity for employment.
5. Would boost enrollment at WLC.

Milwaukee

Prairie du Chien

1. Program could have its own autonomy.
2. Synod-owned; classroom and other facilities that will not be used to their maximum for some years to come; buildings would receive greater use and therefore greater per-student efficiency.
3. Students in program could provide campus and dorm supervision as houseparents.
4. Special program students would feel more a part of our Synod and not the "stepchildren" sent to some "foster parents" in the ELS.

Prairie du Chien

1. Lack of job opportunities.

NORTHWESTERN, WATERTOWN

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

1. Establishment of the program at NWC would involve considerable costs, changes in schedules, and restructuring of courses. Viewed positively: opportunities for growth and improvement.
2. Putting the students into Northwestern would make their assimilation that much easier later on.
3. Positive effect on a campus where some changes in the attitude and approach toward preparing men for entrance to our Seminary are long overdue.
4. NWC remedial program could be adapted as necessary to meet the varying needs of any student.
5. Program could be transferred to NWC if some changes were made to make the system flexible enough to meet individual needs of each student and perhaps also the needs of married students.
6. Better overall control.
7. Being part of a student body oriented toward entering our Seminary would be wholesome.
8. Practical benefits for family men in finding housing and in employment. Then moving to the Seminary would probably be made easier.

1. Establishment of the program at NWC would involve considerable costs, change in schedules and restructuring of course. Viewed negatively: poses a threat to a system the Lord has blessed greatly through the years.
2. Bethany students have to prove themselves somewhat to Northwesterners before assimilation at WLS. If the program were moved to Northwestern, full assimilation as brothers would not occur.
3. Difference in age and circumstances would present difficulties. Since there are no married students at Northwestern, the married students would form a coterie that would never be broken down.
4. Threaten the standards at Northwestern, particularly in the area of languages.

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795002 Kupke, Rev. Paul, (79) DECEASED 1984
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560245 Litke, Ronald, (68) LOST
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650250 Mertin, Helmut, (67) LOST
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851730 Naumann, Rev. Thomas, (85) LOST 4/88
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740390 Neuens, Mr. Thomas, (77) LOST 1979
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760550 Spreeman, Rev. Edward, (76) 391 Phoenix Cr., Orleans, Ont., LOST 10/88, 99999
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