

CAMPUS MINISTRY AFFECTS THE CULTURE OF A CONGREGATION

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ABSTRACT

The problem this thesis addresses is how campus ministry affects a congregation and its mindset toward ministry. This research aims to analyze the reasons for a congregation engaging in campus ministry and how that ministry affects the culture of a congregation. Much of the study done for this thesis is qualitative, using surveys and interviews. The thesis shows the effectiveness of campus ministry by highlighting the need for campus ministry in a college student's spiritual life. The research in this thesis shows that campus ministry is helpful as a leadership training ministry, that the students in campus ministry are also great candidates for discipleship ministry, and that campus ministry affects change in a congregation through the benefits it provides.

CAMPUS MINISTRY AFFECTS THE CULTURE OF A CONGREGATION

It is the mission of the church to educate. This mission is done primarily in sharing the gospel message, the good news that opens our lives to service to God. The education of the faithful then continues in their private devotional lives and by attending church. It is also the church's mission to continue this education of its members and to build up the body of believers until God's kingdom comes. How does the congregation react when college students leave their church community to attend school elsewhere? The natural reaction of the church is to reach out to the students to ensure they are in God's Word and connected to a congregation in fellowship. Those leaving for school are often at a formative time in their faith. Just out of high school, they have been working through questions about their faith and life with their parents or pastor, but now they are going to an unknown place. This place can be challenging for their faith to survive, much less thrive.

When congregations think about reasons to conduct a campus ministry, helping students in this formative time is often a primary concern. This concern is especially true if the church is near a college campus. It is undoubtedly a reasonable concern and an excellent motivation to connect these young adults to the Word. Perhaps it is easy to be so focused on this concern that one quickly passes over the blessings that campus ministry can give a congregation. The young adults in a campus ministry can focus a congregation on being mission-minded from their experiences in campus ministry. Through campus ministry, they are encouraged to share their faith and have many experiences of sharing their faith regularly. They can also help a

congregation focus on training strong leaders because campus ministry has done this for them through their time doing ministry with their classmates.

The problem this thesis will address is how campus ministry affects a congregation and its mindset toward ministry. This thesis will do that by first highlighting the spiritual needs students have that a congregation can fulfill with a campus ministry. Next, it will address the use of campus ministry as an agent of change for a congregation. Finally, the thesis will examine campus ministries conducted across different locations and the impact campus ministry has had on those congregations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a long history of campus ministries on college campuses throughout the United States. All of these were started and were maintained with various philosophies and purposes in mind. Considering these philosophies, this section will briefly analyze what common themes and ideas have been part of campus ministries throughout the years by specifically looking at what has been written about organizations, including InterVarsity Fellowship, the Disciples of Christ, and the WELS. This section will give the reader a general overview of what has been reported about these groups in the past.

InterVarsity has a long history of campus ministry throughout the world. The group itself has a long history beginning in 1928 in Great Britain. That same year the organization made its way over to America, finding an entrance point in Canada under the leadership of Howard Guinness. Through his influence, eventually InterVarsity would start making inroads to the United States in 1938 under the leadership of Stacey Woods. Widely considered the founder of InterVarsity in the United States, Woods was passionate about preparing students for the life of faith they would experience once leaving the university. This is a sentiment seen in the group's Basis of Faith that all members subscribed to. The Basis was written with the purpose of ministering across denominational lines. This sentiment continued throughout its history and continues today. The ethos of the group, to prepare students for their spiritual life, was a thoroughly thought out starting point that InterVarsity continues to strive for in the college campuses across the country even now and has borne fruitful results. The ethos of InterVarsity

Fellowship is an important takeaway for those intending to serve students in a campus ministry setting. It will be considered further in a later section of this thesis.¹

The Disciples of Christ have a history in campus ministry that stretches back even further than InterVarsity Fellowship. In 1890, it is claimed that the Disciples began a program that would be the beginning of campus ministry as it is known today in colleges. The reason for their initial beginning was because 30 years before their beginning, the Morrill Act was passed that greatly increased the building of state universities in the United States through the land-grant program. Because of this, Christians were facing a situation similar to what many Christians face today when considering to send their children to college. Many families were concerned about the lack of spiritual support these state universities would provide. Because of this, the foundation of the Disciples campus ministry movement was based on providing education and pastoral care to the students. This sentiment is still their driving force as they minister to students across the country today. This focus on education and pastoral care in campus ministry will be explored further in this thesis. These two principals are also very similar to principles that guide the campus ministry movement of the WELS.²

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod began its campus ministry efforts in the 1920s in partnership with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). This began at the University of Wisconsin Madison and continued until the split with the LCMS in 1961. Because of this, the Wisconsin Synod decided to create its own group on that campus and on many other campuses across the nation. Not long after this split, the Wisconsin Synod began to use the name

1. Keith Hunt and Gladys Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the USA, 1940–1990*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.

2. McCormick, Thomas. *Campus Ministry in The Coming Age*. St. Louis, MO: CBP Press, 1987.

Lutheran Collegians WELS in reference to their campus ministries across the country. They changed their name again in 1981 to WELS Campus Ministry. As mentioned above, the main focus of campus ministry in WELS has always been education in the Word of God and spiritual care for those going through college. The focus on the proper teaching of the Word of God is still the focus of campus ministry throughout the WELS today. This standard will become evident when this thesis explores the viewpoints of the interviewees who have worked in campus ministry in the WELS for years.³

The interest Lutherans have in education, which fuels the desire to be on college campuses preaching God's Word, did not begin with the WELS. Luther himself had a vested interest in education. The theologian also worried that those who went to schools where the Word of God wasn't preached were at risk of losing their faith. He was adamant about giving the teaching of God's Word to any who were deprived of it, and many of his writings encourage leaders to make this a priority in schools. The belief that God's Word is the most important subject for any student, no matter their age, is one that Luther held. This thesis will seek to show that this is still important today.⁴

3. David Koehler, "*From Madison to the World: A Brief Overview of the History of WELS Campus Ministry*", 2000.

4. F V N Painter, *Luther on Education: Including a Historical Introduction, and a Translation of the Reformer's Two Most Important Educational Treatises*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001.

THE NEED FOR CAMPUS MINISTRY

To say there is a need for campus ministry does not mean that every congregation needs to have a campus ministry. This section will express the spiritual care and foundational teaching that college students often need. That spiritual care and foundational teaching is God’s Word. This section will explain why campus ministry is an effective tool for providing God’s Word to students who need it. The students who need God’s Word are all the students who go to any college. In laying out the areas where God’s Word is sometimes lacking in a college student’s life, the following paragraphs will highlight the need for campus ministry. In this section, “need” describes an opportunity to fill a gap sometimes overlooked in a student's spiritual life.

The Spiritual Care of College Students

One of the issues the church at large faces is that fewer young adults frequent the pews of congregations than were regular in decades past. Research done by Pew Research suggests that young adults, people 18–29 years of age, make up only 17% of adults who attend church once a week.⁵ There are many factors for this, but one pointed out by many of the campus ministry leaders interviewed for this thesis is that many WELS congregations retain only some of their

5. Pew Research Center, “Religious Landscape Study,” *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/attendance-at-religious-services/>.

members as they transition into college and the workforce. A college student must face many temptations, which can quickly pull someone away from God if left alone. The WELS Campus Ministry Mission Coordinator, Pastor Dan Lindner, explained this in our interview:

There are many temptations that a college student faces. Among them is the newfound freedom to finally find fulfillment in something my church said I could not do. Another temptation is their logic and reason. The devil, when he opens his toolbox for a college student full of all the things he can throw at them, he probably has a lot more tools to work with than against a child or a recently married couple.⁶

A takeaway from this explanation is that college students face one of their most significant spiritual trials when they go off to school. Framed in the terminology that Pastor Lindner used, the devil is using all his tools against the college student. There are many of these tools. A few of these tools are the temptations around sex, alcohol, and disdain for God's commands because they restrict freedom in the eyes of college students. The problem is complicated when commonly held views of these temptations conflict with the college student's belief in God's Word.

It is complicated because in their everyday life, in the classroom and spending time with classmates, they must deal with the questioning of their faith and sometimes the attacking of their religion. This questioning does not only come from their peers but also from the professors they respect. Charlie Vannieuwenhoven, Dean of Students at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI, tells the story of a colleague who went to present at the local college near his church. While presenting the roles of men and women practiced in the WELS church body, the colleague received questions from a feminist woman and a Jewish man. He expected this questioning, along with the skepticism he received from the professor. What he did not expect was when one of the women in attendance raised her hand and confessed that she had been a

6. Dan Lindner, interview with the author, November 13, 2023.

member of a WELS congregation for many years and had never felt demeaned or felt like she was an oppressed woman. Instead, she felt the opposite of what the feminist woman and the Jewish man were proposing. Dean Vannieuwenhoven confessed that this confession took much courage from the student because that lady would continue to sit in that class and attend college. Still, now she had a metaphorical target on her back. For the rest of her time in that class and even the rest of her time on that college campus, she would be signaled out as a girl who believes in an “out-of-date” religion. This example is the kind of persecution that is faced when one attends a secular college and confesses one’s faith.⁷

If this is the case, students need spiritual support. They need to be around fellow Christians in God’s Word. Otherwise, one could argue that it may be better if they do not attend college. Luther states, “Above all, in schools of all kinds, the chief and most common lesson should be the Scriptures. ... But where the Holy Scriptures are not the rule, I advise no one to send his child. Everything must perish where God’s Word is not studied unceasingly, and so we see what manner of men there are now in the universities.”⁸ These harsh words are a much-needed warning. Without being connected to God’s Word, members going off to college are in spiritual danger.

Philosophies On a College Campus

The need becomes more apparent when we examine what the college will teach the Christian student. This section will analyze viewpoints suggesting that not all that is taught on campus

7. Charlie Vannieuwenhoven, interview with the author, December 5, 2023.

8. Painter, *Luther on Education*, 138.

necessarily has spiritually damaging content, but the philosophies behind its presentation are often the more spiritually harmful danger. This philosophical danger can come in many forms in a secular college; some examples given include a modern view of identity and human reason's supremacy over everything. Many examples exist, but it is suggested that these modern philosophies are prevalent in a secular college.

Some have suggested that there is a danger in the fact that these philosophies are ingrained in many campuses, so students might not even notice they are learning them. Harry Lee Poe addresses this issue, saying, "Ironically, the philosophy may be hidden under so many layers of 'what everybody knows' that we do not even recognize its presence."⁹ The students learn spiritually damaging philosophy in the classroom and from their peers. The result is that the devil is tempting them so that it is hardly noticeable. This gradual eating away at an individual's faith is dangerous for college students. The need for campus ministry is evident. It is sometimes the only thing that can combat these philosophies that lead people to abandon their faith. Students learn to seek out their Savior and His Word through campus ministry instead of a hopeless way of thinking.

Another danger interviewees pointed out is the following sentiment sometimes heard in a congregation, "We have done our part. Now it is their time to show their commitment." This comment does not only harm the individual student but the whole congregation. Christians mourn when an individual falls from the faith or disconnects from their Savior. Moreover, if the

9. Harry Lee Poe, *Christianity in the Academy: Teaching at the Intersection of Faith and Learning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 22.

result of a college student going off to school without any spiritual support system is that that same student is leaving the faith, a congregation should have concerns.¹⁰

Because of this, there seems to be a need for campus ministry or ministries like it. If this is the case, then it is part of the church's mission to reach out to college students, especially those who are already members of a congregation within the synod at large. The "we have done our part" sentiment does not hold if a congregation takes it to its logical conclusion. If a congregation had this attitude towards all their mission work, how would any mission work get done? God would still spread his Word worldwide, but it would not be through a congregation with this attitude. If Christians only "do our part" for the elderly individual who requires visitation and communion, the individual would never be visited or given communion because the church has already "done its part" in the individual's life. Naturally, the neglect of the spiritual care of an older person would be viewed as spiritual malpractice by many Christians. How much more when we abandon college students going through the most brutal spiritual battle of their lives? College students need spiritual care because they struggle with many new spiritual battles that they have not come up against before in their lifetime. The church's mission includes campus ministry or some method to care for the college-age student as much as spiritual care for the homebound. That spiritual care is also useful for the training up of the next generation of Christians.

Campus Ministry and The Next Generation

10. Lindner, interview.

Luther speaks about the need for the Word of God in a student’s life. “The soul can do without everything except the Word of God. Without this, it suffers need. But, when it has the Word of God, it needs nothing more, but has in the Word enough—food, joy, peace, light, art, righteousness, truth, freedom, and every good thing in abundance.”¹¹ According to Luther, this need for the Word is something every Christian experiences. Without the Word of God, Christian souls are in danger. Luther is not talking about teaching this once or twice to an individual and then ceasing instruction. Instead, he is speaking of the continual instruction of the Christian. If, without the Word of God constantly in a Christian’s life, a believer is in danger of falling from faith, then the college student going off to school, where the Word of God is absent in the classroom, is in danger of falling from faith. This view of Luther is similar to that of Pastor James Hein, who leads the WELS campus ministry at UW Milwaukee.

We don’t have a problem in America with active teenagers and Christianity. They’re about as active as any other group. It’s once they get out of the home that the guardrails come off. They get into university classrooms with many brilliant people, including professors who are very confident in their particular area, and the professors are slightly disparaging towards things like the inspiration of Scripture. Unsurprisingly, it’s the easiest time to fall away from faith.¹²

Pastor Hein notes that the issue of not having young adults in the church is not because they are less active than any other groups. Instead, it is because they have almost no spiritual support when leaving home, especially when they go to college. That is why it is a noble task when a congregation intends to reach out to its members attending college and connect them to the Word of God so they can receive strength in faith throughout their time in college.

11. Painter, *Luther on Education*, 147–48.

12. James Hein, interview with the author, November 16, 2023.

Campus ministry is a need for those already connected to the church and those in unbelief. Campus ministry is not just a way to keep members in the church attached to God's Word, but it is also an opportunity for mission work. One of the largest mission fields in many communities is college campuses. In some cases, not being involved in mission work on the college campus is not to be connected to the community at large. So much of what a city does connects to its schools' campuses and vice versa. If this is the case for a congregation's community, how can it afford not to be involved in campus ministry? Each congregation's situation is different, so there are times when a church has to prioritize specific missions over others. Campus ministry can be one of those that has lower priority. This thesis section explains why campus ministry fills a vital need. Because campus ministry is sometimes the mission field God has put on the congregation's doorstep, it is a good thing when a congregation makes it a top priority. A congregation that views a campus ministry as the way to serve the mission field God has given to the church will recognize the importance of involvement in a campus ministry or some other method to connect with the school campuses in their community.

Although the mission field that is college campuses is a mission field that campus ministry serves, the focus of campus ministry is connecting our members to God's Word. Connecting members to God's Word also serves the mission field. Dan Lindner comments, "We reach those that we know first, but at the same time, we recognize that God brings a mission field to us, and it has different folks in it every year."¹³ He highlights that the main focus in campus ministry is to reach those from various congregations in the synod, but that the mission God is putting before the church is not only extensive but is changing every year.

13. Lindner, interview.

This is why a congregation can consider mission work in terms of touchpoints, moments where an individual encounters the Word of God. In that case, the number of touchpoints campus ministries are making with individuals is excellent, and there is no telling where they will go next and be served with the Word or serve others with the Word. The start of a campus ministry can exponentially affect the lives of individuals and those with whom they later interact.

It is straightforward to express the need for any form of ministry. Considering all the ministries a congregation could be involved in, it can be easy to overlook campus ministry. Other ministries include a congregation's school, the spiritual care of the elderly, and giving to people experiencing poverty. Starting and maintaining a campus ministry is complicated when a congregation has limited funds and volunteers to start new ministries. Nevertheless, the issue remains that students need campus ministry or programs like it to have sufficient support for their spiritual lives on a college campus. This section outlined why college students need spiritual support through God's Word and how congregations with a campus ministry can fulfill that need. This need for campus ministry is not going away; it will only become more needed as universities and colleges become more and more secularized. The church's role in campus ministry is to reach out to those for whom we are responsible and those who are yet far off so that the great commission Christ has given the church reaches fulfillment.

CAMPUS MINISTRY AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

The last section walked through the reasons why campus ministry is needed. The following section will address how campus ministry is perceived as an agent of change for many congregations. Conceptually, the first part of this thesis looked at what was lacking and how a campus ministry filled that need. This next portion will focus on the positive and how the church can make use of campus ministry and ministries like it and benefit from the many blessings that come from it.

Lay Leader Training

Ministry, in any form, provides an opportunity for training in one way or another. For those going door to door and inviting people to church, the training is found for the members in learning to do outreach and for the invited in learning about a chance to meditate on God's Word. Similarly, the pastor who gives a sermon and Bible class on Sunday trains the congregation in the way of God. This section suggests that campus ministry is no different. Moreover, many claim that the training that comes through campus ministry often produces leaders in the church.

In campus ministry students are receiving training in God's Word, and because of the situation and time in life, they bring questions plaguing their minds and find truth and solace in God's Word. The time they spend in Scripture produces a Christian strong in their faith. With an

elder or pastor at their disposal, some of the most challenging questions in life receive answers, questions that they would not broach with anyone else but their spiritual leader. Although many campus ministries can only meet week to week, that time is precious in the lives of these students. They are starved of gospel truth throughout their day as they go from class to class. This period is the one moment in their lives where they feel they can bring their guard down and meditate on the truths of God's Word.

Studying God's Word is essential for the students' lives. They regularly see the truth of Ps 119:105, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (NIV). This truth is vital amidst the constant barrage of secularism in their life, which feels to students as if they are walking through the darkness without a lamp. As we discussed above, this is why God's Word is needed and why campus ministry is needed to share God's Word, but it is also an essential part of building a Christian who is strong in their faith. When a student realizes that the only thing they can depend on for light in this dark world is the light of God's Word, then they are equipped with all they need to live as Christians through their years in college and on into their lives as full-time employees in their various occupations they are studying.

Not all campus ministry students become leaders in the various congregations they get connected to in the future. However, because of their time in God's Word, they are Christians uniquely challenged in their faith. They have experience working through the complex problems life throws at people in this world. Because of this, they are well-prepared laypeople who can help a congregation in various capacities but are passionate about spreading God's Word.

Dean Charlie Vannieuwenhoven, who previously served in campus ministry in North Mankato, MN, describes campus ministry as lay leader training. As a result of this training, "a lot of the kids that I served, when they got their jobs and went to their new congregations, were able

to jump right into committees, teams, leadership roles because they had already been a part of a similar type of ministry the last couple of years.”¹⁴ Previously, this thesis noted that young adults make up 17% of people going to church every week. A benefit of campus ministry is that it connects college students with a church community, providing God’s people with spiritually mature lay leaders. The reason for this spiritual maturity is, as Dean Vannieuwenhoven said, “They were strengthening their faith when it was being challenged and were able to get together with like-minded believers.”¹⁵ These leaders affect the overall culture of a congregation as more and more spiritually mature young Christians continue to do ministry in congregations across the country.

There is also the added benefit that when a congregation intends to continue training young adults, they benefit society. This benefit to society is essential in considering the effect campus ministry has on a congregation because part of a congregation’s mission is to reach out to the people and culture around their area. In discussing the value of training girls and boys to be good citizens, Luther says, “This consideration is of itself sufficient, namely, that society, for the maintenance of civil order and the proper regulation of the household, needs accomplished and well-trained men and women. Now, such men are to come from boys, and such women from girls; hence, it is necessary that boys and girls be properly taught and brought up.”¹⁶ Campus ministry is a beneficial method for properly teaching and bringing up men and women to serve faithfully in God’s kingdom.

14. Vannieuwenhoven, interview.

15. Vannieuwenhoven, interview.

16. Painter, *Luther on Education*, 135.

Connected to this discussion of the Christian benefiting society is that this type of lay leader training found in campus ministry is an effective way to foil the tempter's plans. Luther again weighs in on this topic: "The real difficulty is found alone in the absence of an earnest desire to educate the young and to aid and benefit mankind with accomplished citizens. The devil much prefers blockheads and drones, that men may have more abundant trials and sorrows in the world."¹⁷ Although Luther is speaking about education as intellectual training, in the time he wrote, the education of students also included spiritual training in their classes. His observation sheds light on the source of the spiritual attacks Christians will face in their lifetime. There is comfort in the resources that God gives a Christian to counter these attacks. The primary resource is the Word of God. A conduit for the Word transferring to the student is campus ministry. Through campus ministry and ministries that accomplish the same purpose, the church can prepare young Christians for the many temptations they will face throughout the rest of their lives on earth.

The lay leader training that a campus ministry provides produces spiritually mature Christians who not only benefit society but who also benefit the congregation they go on to serve. Another benefit of having young lay leaders come out of the training they receive through campus ministry is its effect on the other lay leaders they serve alongside. Dean Vannieuwenhoven points out the effect campus ministry students had on his congregation after graduating college: "We viewed campus ministry as lay minister training. So, these young people would join our congregation with new ideas and plenty of energy to go after them. We had great, young, capable leaders eager to do ministry. That was a huge blessing to our

17. Painter, *Luther on Education*, 200.

congregation.”¹⁸ New ideas and energy to carry out new ideas are helpful for a congregation when they are trying to reach out to their community. The energy that these young lay leaders provide also affects the lay leaders around them. This overall increases the members of the congregation’s energy for ministry.

Campus ministry also benefits the students because it plants a passion in themselves for campus ministry and ministries like campus ministry. After college, they carry this passion into the various congregations they will serve. Pastor James Hein had this to say about the potential of campus ministry leaders:

I had so much time with them. I’m doing Bible study with them 40 weeks a year, times four years. They know exactly how I think. I know where they’re at in their spiritual maturity, their personal struggles, and who they have become in the past five years. They are the top candidates for me to be leaders in our congregation, even though they’re younger than a lot of the other people. They have gone through this training. And so they’re perfect candidates, not all of them but many of them, to be small group leaders, to be on our boards and councils. Campus ministry has been a training program for discipleship and for leadership in our congregation, and those leaders have sympathy towards campus ministry as well.¹⁹

As Pastor Hein mentioned, it is not always the case that students in campus ministry become leaders, but it is a blessing when they do. There is also the added benefit of the young lay leaders understanding their pastor and how he thinks. They are passionate about campus ministry because they were a product of it and know its blessings. This passion can also affect the congregation. It can motivate members to see how worthwhile this lay leader training is for the college student.

Campus ministry serves well as a ministry for lay leader training. It provides students with the biblical knowledge and maturing of faith that people notice in a lay leader. Lay leader

18. Vannieuwenhoven, interview.

19. Hein, interview.

training is one of many added benefits of campus ministry. There is also an excellent opportunity for students to practice outreach.

An Experiential Training Ground

When a student starts attending a campus ministry, it can be for various reasons. Often, it is because they were connected to the campus ministry through their congregation at home.

Another driving factor is that these students have often experienced the first major tests of their faith while on their own in college. The reason for them joining campus ministry, in this case, is to receive guidance in answering questions when their faith is put to the test by classmates or professors. This section will explore the reason why some consider campus ministry an experiential training ground.

The “experiential training ground” terminology succinctly summarizes a student’s experiences participating in a campus ministry. It is one way Pastor Dan Lindner explains what is involved in a campus ministry:

It’s not a practice run because they’re in it. Whether they’re prepared for it or not, they’re in it, and they’re encountering people who want to have a lot of discussions. They encounter people who have either had a connection to a church or God’s Word; otherwise, they’ve heard something about Jesus. But they haven’t necessarily gotten to know who Jesus is, or they haven’t had a deep study of what the Bible has to say. All of a sudden, these students are having deep conversations with others and sometimes get stuck, saying, “Wow, that’s a good question. I don’t have an answer to that.” And so that’s kind of where campus ministry serves as a handoff. They can say, “I know my pastor, or I know this individual who would be able to talk further on this.” And so they have that resource. That is part of the experiential learning. I would say the first and foremost focus of experiential learning is just the building of relationships and then doing outreach. That’s just coming naturally through campus ministry. Evangelism is coming naturally through it.²⁰

20. Lindner, interview.

Pastor Lindner points out that this experiential training is not just a practice run but live situations where students face real and challenging questions. The campus ministry provides them a place to raise these questions and get answers. They learn how to answer these questions from experienced pastors. Another positive is that they can get peer feedback and work through problems together. The other point Pastor Lindner makes is that this experiential learning is evangelism. They are learning how to build relationships and share their faith in these relationships with people from many different backgrounds. They are gaining experience in building bridges to the spiritually lost. This experience is crucial for Christians growing in their faith.

This experience is also advantageous to them when they graduate, take up roles in other congregations, and help with the outreach in the communities of those congregations. One of the founders of the InterVarsity campus ministry group, Stacey Woods, once commented,

If undergraduate days are a preparation for that larger life beyond the microcosm called university, could there be a better training for Christian service in later life than that of the undergraduate taking an open stand for the Lord Jesus, assuming the spiritual burden for the ministry in daily prayer, himself engaged in studying the Bible and teaching the Bible to his classmates, and individually and corporately with his fellow Christian students endeavoring to lead others to the Lord Jesus Christ? Admittedly, such a program will have all the weaknesses of the immature undergraduate. But it has all the strength of personal conviction and God-given initiative and responsibility. And it has the great advantage of fulfilling the Biblical principle of Christian witness and of being a genuinely grass-roots student movement.²¹

The InterVarsity campus ministry group shares a similar belief that undergraduate days are a preparation for the rest of the life of a Christian. We can admire their passion for inspiring students to take ownership of their Christian lives.²²

21. Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*, 79.

22. Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang. *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 77–97.

Inspiring students to take ownership of their Christian lives is one of the main goals that campus ministry fulfills. It inspires college students, dependent on their parents or teachers for much of their spiritual life, to become comfortable in taking ownership of their Christian faith. Before college, many students view their faith background as what their family believes or the culture where they grew up. Through a campus ministry, a pastor and a congregation can give college students the tools to view their faith as their own.

Chief among these tools is the Word of God. The previous section discussed the need for the Word of God that college students have as they face difficult spiritual trials. In this section, the Word of God will be the chief tool college students use in conversations with classmates. As discussed above, experiential learning involves many discussions about faith with classmates and professors. It is natural for these students to have the desire to receive preparation to answer questions in these discussions. When writing about education, Luther made this point that applies well to equipping students with the Word of God.

It is an old proverb that “one can not speak well of what one does not understand.” Of this truth, our age has furnished many examples. For many learned and eloquent men have uttered foolish and ridiculous things in speaking of what they did not understand. But whoever thoroughly understands a matter will speak wisely and reach the heart, though he may be wanting in eloquence and readiness of speech.²³

Like Luther’s goal in education, campus ministry aims to educate students in the Word of God so they can “speak wisely and reach the heart” of their classmates and professors. When this is successful, students can converse confidently, even if they do not have all the answers. They will be familiar enough with God’s Word that they can come back with an answer the next time they have a conversation with the person who asked a tricky question.

23. Painter, *Luther on Education*, 158–59.

A big part of the experiential training ground is that the students can use campus ministry to answer questions while in the heart of ministry. Jerry Worden, Staff Minister at Divine Word and The Word, serves in campus ministry at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. The congregation and church, Divine Word, opened a second location, The Word, nearer to campus to serve as a chapel and meeting place for the students. Staff Minister Worden gave the following example of a student making use of the resource of campus ministry.

He has a student involved in the campus ministry who is on the cross-country team. As the student was running with his fellow teammates, their conversation turned into a discussion on the doctrine of election. The student's classmates begin to ask him what he believes about the doctrine of election, and the student responds with a short, basic answer but only goes into a small amount of detail. After the run, he asked if he could meet with Staff Minister Worden. When they meet, he explains the exciting discussion he and his classmates had on their run and his questions from that discussion. He confessed he kept his answer simple because he wanted to explain the doctrine correctly. Staff Minister Worden and the student then go through the doctrine and how to explain it. The student then goes out, ready to explain the doctrine on his next run with his teammates.²⁴

This story is a perfect example of the usefulness of campus ministry as a resource. The student involved in campus ministry knew precisely where he could go to get an answer to a profound theological question. He even catered his response to his fellow teammates in such a way so that he could bring this conversation up again and give a more complete answer. This story also highlights the surprising place these students will stumble into discussions about faith. As college students, they are constantly filling their days with classes and activities after class.

24. Jerry Worden, interview with the author, November 16, 2023.

They have conversations with classmates and teammates throughout their day and have opportunities to confess their faith regularly. Campus ministry is a great resource they can use, and they feel comfortable bringing their questions. The main reason is that campus ministry provides the students God's Word and a person to talk them through complex doctrines.

Campus ministry can be a safe place to ask questions when college students struggle. In most scenarios, campus ministry is the one place besides church where Christian college students can meet with fellow Christians. It is natural for these college students participating in campus ministry to grow in their faith together and form bonds of friendship. This fellowship is an excellent experience for young Christians because it prepares them to build organic relationships with fellow members of congregations they join after they leave college. Dean Vannieuwenhoven observed, "They have a place where the students can build friendships as a group. The other thing is that they also have their fellowship. It was kind of cool to see these students bond in groups every year."²⁵ The bonds these students form in campus ministry they learn to depend on as they return to campus ministry week after week.

An important thing to note is that a big part of campus ministry for these students is the fellowship they experience each time they get together with their fellow campus ministry students. Each year, the group in campus ministry becomes close to one another as the year progresses. Relationships that come from campus ministry are sometimes lifetime friendships. A relationship that develops in campus ministry is that sometimes, students find a significant other while attending the campus ministry regularly. Dan Lindner noted, "Couples meet while at campus ministry. And again, those couples that met at campus ministry have been the ones to bring in or embrace the students at the congregation level just to say, 'We kind of know what

25. Vannieuwenhoven, interview.

you guys are going through. Tell us about it.’ They want to open their homes to the students because they went through the same struggles they did.”²⁶ The blessing is that the students sometimes find a spouse who believes the same thing as they do and can center their marriage on Christ. Later in life, they also led the charge in opening their homes to campus ministry students.

The point is that these campus ministry students feel close enough to share their struggles with their fellow campus ministry classmates. The faith of these young Christians is leading them to be united in one faith and have discussions with one another on how to carry out their faith in their lives as students on a college campus. Staff Minister Worden lays out what the experience is often like for campus ministry students, “Maybe they came from a Lutheran high school, where they were always around other students who believed the same thing they did. Now, they are at a big campus where there are all these different beliefs, but they finally meet a bunch of other students who believe the way they do.”²⁷ In college, students are experiencing, for the first time in many instances, being around many peers who do not share the same beliefs as they do. This experience can be exhausting for a college student. In campus ministry, they experience the refreshment that is fellowship with fellow believers and friendship with classmates on a spiritual and mental level.

This experience results in students in campus ministry learning the important lesson that a Christian needs to connect with a family of believers. They not only see the benefits of fellowship with students who believe the same thing they do, but many involved in campus ministry actively seek out that fellowship after experiencing the beliefs of the secular college they attend. With this lesson in mind, when campus ministry students graduate college, they

26. Lindner, interview.

27. Worden, interview.

often seek out a congregation to become a member of because they still desire a family of believers to support them.

The Discipleship Model

Campus ministry being used for lay leader training and as an experiential training ground is a strategy for congregations who wish to provide faith strengthening for the member college student. Both these strategies also feed into the approach of the discipleship model. Many campus ministries practice the discipleship method across denominations, and references to it are evident in much of their material. When a WELS campus ministry wants to use discipleship, it uses it with God's Word as its center. The model itself is scriptural. This method gets its basis in how Jesus Christ operated his earthly ministry.

Jesus Christ employed this method throughout his ministry. He wanted his disciples to continue to practice it when he said, "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" (Matt 28:19). There are different ways that congregations choose to carry out the great commission. Some decide to take Jesus' ministry as prescriptive rather than descriptive. If you take Jesus' ministry as prescriptive then you take Jesus' ministry and how he chose to carry it out as the way Jesus intended us to carry out ministry. If you take Jesus' ministry as descriptive, then you take Jesus' ministry as just a description of the way he carried it out and that this method isn't necessarily what he expected his disciples to continue to do. Leroy Eims, a writer who contributes to the Navigators campus ministry, comments on the great commission, "The commission of Jesus was to make disciples (see Matt. 28:19). He went a step further than just admonishing us to become disciples. So if we are to fall in step with the grand design of God, we must help people become disciples. To stop

short of that is to fail to capture the genius of the commission of Christ.”²⁸ Eims insists that this discipleship method is the genius of Jesus’ great commission. There are undoubtedly other ways to do ministry, but this method has value because it is not only about outreach but also about taking someone by the hand and leading them into their lives as disciples of Christ.

The way we carry out ministry is ultimately up to us. This is different than what Eims describes as the way we should carry out ministry. In some respects, this difference of opinion is not the main issue. The main problem is deciding if the church uses the most effective ministry method to reach the lost. A good argument for taking Jesus’ ministry method of disciple-making and using that as the basis for the church’s ministry is that this is the example of ministry that Christ chose to show the church.

Other denominations’ campus ministries use this discipleship method regularly. Groups like InterVarsity and the Navigators follow a similar process.²⁹ The technique is effective in many non-denominational groups. The downside is that denominations that practice this discipleship method become pretty large but shallow regarding their theology. Quinnett, in referencing InterVarsity campus ministry, remarks, “At first glance, it seems great and it is set up to make you feel like you are accomplishing something, but as you dig deeper there is much false doctrine just below the shiny veneer.”³⁰ However, just because these non-denominational groups use this method does not mean that the WELS campus ministry can’t use it to connect college

28. Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Zondervan, 1978), 87.

29. Hunt and Hunt, *For Christ and the University*; Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*.

34. Nicholas Quinnett, *A Study of WELS Students and Campus Ministry* (2020), 12.

students to their Savior and a life of service for their Savior. Eims explains the mentality and benefit of the discipleship method:

Let's ask again, if you lead a person to Christ, are you happy? Of course you are. You're elated and so is everyone else concerned—the person himself and the angels of God. But are you satisfied? No, you shouldn't be. Jesus told us to do more than just get converts. He told us to make disciples. So you must stick close to the person whom you've led to Christ, and help him grow till he takes his place among those who can vigorously and effectively advance the cause of the Lord. When that happens, he may be considered a mature, committed, fruitful follower of Jesus Christ.³¹

Ultimately, we do not want to stress the discipleship method so far that it overshadows the centrality of Christ in our message. The end goal of every evangelist is to lead a person to God's Word so they can see the justification for sin that is theirs in Christ Jesus. From these words from Eims, however, an evangelist can glean some valuable takeaways. The church doesn't just want to get converts; they earnestly desire strengthening the faith of all those who believe. The discipleship method makes this strengthening of faith the responsibility of those who introduced God's Word to the new believer.

The implications of this method for campus ministry are many. First, when a campus ministry applies the discipleship method to campus ministry, it benefits the college-age student. With this amount of focus put on strengthening the student's faith, not just so they know the facts but also how to live their lives as Christians, the students come away with the skills to thrive in their lives as Christians. This thriving is only because of the work of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God. Still, the method God chose to bring this about is through the church, making it their intention to teach God's Word to students in such a way so that they don't just receive head knowledge but practical life-changing knowledge. Second, the life-changing knowledge they receive serves them well as they share the faith with their classmates and can imitate the

31. Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 87.

discipleship training they received from the campus ministry leader. They also take that same passion with them to their new locations. In his comments on students using what they received from campus ministry, Pastor Lindner says, “I would say the bigger impact, though, would be the term that they’re using these days, multiplication ministry. It’s where you get that young adult for a short amount of time. But then what happens is they end up taking how they’ve grown, how the Lord’s blessed them, and they end up taking that with them to another location.”³² This method is a multiplication ministry. Campus ministry can equip students to be strong Bible-believing Christians and leaders who can reach out to others and raise them in the faith through God’s Word. Essentially, what the discipleship method does for campus ministry is that it makes the focus of the group the training of the disciples of Jesus for their role in the kingdom of God.

Because many non-denominational church bodies have misused this method, the temptation can be to throw the discipleship method out to avoid any temptation of taking ecumenism too far. However, the benefits of a ministry designed to train students how to train others are beneficial for spreading the gospel message in its truth and purity. It also increases the likelihood that more will hear this gospel message. This increase is likely because the discipleship method is a multiplication ministry.

In all of this, it is essential to remember that college students have many structured teaching methods directed at them in their college classes. In the words of Luther, “I should prefer, it is true, that our youth be ignorant and dumb rather than the universities and convents should remain as the only sources of instruction open to them.”³³ Luther makes a great point.

32. Lindner, interview.

33. Painter, *Luther on Education*, 175.

Maybe it would be preferred to be ignorant and dumb if the structured classes of a college were the only modes of education. Thank God there are ministries like the campus ministry that can be a structured learning experience as much as any college class but with eternal implications. That is what discipleship ministry is all about. It is a chance to give college students the Word of God and then show them how to live lives dedicated to God. Give them the structure of a path, and young believers will run in that way.

The discipleship method looks different in each ministry setting. When a WELS campus ministry applies it, the discipleship method hopefully looks a lot different from when one of the many non-denominational campus ministries uses it. The main difference that will be apparent is the centrality of Christ and the pure teaching of God's Word. An example of a WELS campus ministry doing this discipleship method is Pastor Hein, who applied this discipleship method in his ministry serving the WELS campus ministry at UW Milwaukee. One of the ways that he teaches discipleship is by asking his campus ministry students to do at least two things. The first thing he asks is that they learn to read their Bibles. He teaches this by walking through one book of the Bible with them throughout the year. As they work through God's Word, he asks them questions. He asks them what they see in the text, what the text means, and how they can apply it to their lives. His goal is to teach them how to try to apply the Bible to their lives in an organic way. He wants them to learn how to do personal Bible study. The next thing he asks of them that is non-negotiable is that they pray out loud around the room. This process can take a while in a room full of twenty-five college students, but his goal is to teach them how to pray. This practice is not only for themselves but so they can offer to pray for their classmates during conversations.

In this way, he can teach his campus ministry students to pray for themselves and confess their faith in front of those who may not believe the same things they do.³⁴

The result of this work that Pastor Hein is doing is that he has complete confidence in asking his campus ministry students to pray in almost every setting. “I have twenty-five 18- to 20-year-olds that I think could stand up in front of a thousand people and lead a prayer. Whereas if you just gave me twenty-five adults in a congregation and said, ‘would you be comfortable praying on Sunday?’ I think a lot of them would be terrified.”³⁵ Because he has this confidence, he also has a lot of confidence in relying on his campus ministry students to lead. He also knows these students well, so he can play to their strengths as he sets them up to take on more responsibility. This discipleship method is incredibly beneficial to the students and the congregations they will later serve in because they will work as faithful disciples in the church.

Another massive benefit of the discipleship method is the congregation participating in campus ministry learns how to communicate with this generation. Concerning this, Pastor Hein highlights the problem some congregations face with bringing in people looking for a church: “The vast majority of the people who will be looking for a church are not in their 60s. They’re in their 20s. So you have to be able to figure out how to converse with this generation. How do we make sure that we are a place where they can see themselves growing in their walk with Christ?”³⁶ One of the blessings of campus ministry students trained to be disciples of Christ is that they can connect their congregation with their age group and teach the congregation how to communicate with the college student generation.

34. Hein, interview.

35. Hein, interview.

36. Hein, interview.

Implementing a campus ministry to train disciples for Christ is sometimes tricky for a congregation. Investing so many ministry resources into students can be hard when the congregation may not see the students again. But this is where it is essential to remember that a congregation is only one part of the bigger kingdom of God. Pastor Lindner sympathizes with the congregation going through these thoughts, saying, “We don’t always see the fruit of our work on the campus ministry side or the home congregation side, but that place, wherever that student lands, gets to see how the Lord blessed that investment made into those young adults.”³⁷ Even though a congregation might not see the fruits of their labor, they are making a massive impact on the kingdom of God when they invest their time and energy into running a campus ministry.

Campus ministry significantly impacts mission starts in our synod. In describing the usefulness of campus ministry students in building up the Kingdom of God through mission starts and new congregations, Dean Vannieuwenhoven said, “Many of our new congregations [have core group members who] are either Prep grads who didn’t go to MLC or campus ministry students. Home Missions’ core groups tend to be those kinds of kids.”³⁸ The students, who have had a lot of experiences leading from their campus ministries and reaching out into the community, make perfect candidates for core groups that go on to start mission congregations. This preparation is because they know what it takes to lead and run a ministry, especially if they helped do that with their involvement in campus ministry. It is always a blessing to see how God blesses the work of congregations, even when the congregation doesn’t get to see God’s final plan for the campus ministry student.

37. Lindner, interview.

38. Vannieuwenhoven, interview.

But what about those not in a situation that needs a campus ministry? Not every city in the country has a college campus. A congregation may be in a situation where the nearest college campus is 50 miles away. What do they do then? Thankfully, WELS Campus Ministry, which is a part of WELS Home Missions, has outlined ways in which these congregations can help. One of the biggest things a congregation can do is to ensure that, if they have any members moving away and going to a college, the student enters their name into the campus ministry database. Interestingly, a form of this database has been running for a while. Joel Nitz reported that in 1987, a system began that collects the names of all WELS members going to college.³⁹ The system has come a long way since then and is now accessible on the WELS webpage.⁴⁰ This sign-up is an important step every congregation should take to ensure their members have the Word of God and spiritual mentors.

Another thing that congregations can do to help with campus ministry is consider sending care packages and recipes to the campus ministries where their college students are involved. With these recipes, the congregation running the campus ministry can make meals at church that the students used to have at home. The goal of providing these recipes is to do something special for the students but also make them feel at home in their congregation. This way, they know they aren't only disciples of Christ but part of the family of believers.

As disciples of Christ, a congregation recognizes that the family of believers strengthens when the congregation can train more believers to be disciples of Christ. This strengthening is

39. Joel Nitz, *Philosophy and Approach to Campus Ministry in the ELCA, LCMS and WELS*, 1987.

40. <https://wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/campus-ministry/>.

done by connecting students to the Word of God and leading them by the hand into a life of sanctification. Campus ministry is an excellent tool to implement this discipleship training.

THE IMPACT OF CAMPUS MINISTRY

Campus ministry has been an essential part of many congregations for many years. This section will explore a handful of these congregations, see how they run their campus ministry, and see the impact that campus ministry has had on the members. The campus ministries with descriptions in this section vary in size and scope, but they all have the same mission: to spread God's Word to college students.

Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel – Madison, WI – Pastor Jonathan Bilitz

The mission statement of the Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel is “To know Jesus Christ and make him known on campus.” This campus ministry is unique in the synod because it is the only church that is set up to be specifically a campus ministry. The congregation has many blessings because of this effort. They often hear that the campus ministry is why students choose to attend the university. The ministry itself intends to be a sending ministry. They understand many students will not stay at the congregation after college. They hope to prepare the students for lives of service in congregations elsewhere. They have been successful in this regard.

The effect this campus ministry has on the congregation is that the congregation is very involved in the campus ministry since it is the congregation's primary mission. Many of the things they do support this ministry, and they have seen blessings because of it. Regarding the culture of his congregation, the congregation's pastor, Jon Bilitz, says,

Each person or family that is a member of our congregation understands the culture of campus ministry. The vitality of the congregation is a wonderful blessing. On a given Sunday, we have as many as 100 (or more) college students worshipping in our services. There is an energy that college students bring to a congregation that many of our members enjoy.⁴¹

That energy that their congregation has and the love for the students they have fueled the ministries at their church. It primarily fuels their love for campus ministry and serving in this way.

The one negative that Pastor Bilitz pointed out, if you can even really call it a negative, was that some of the members wish there was a school or more activities for members. Their congregation has tried to maintain that they are a campus ministry first while also serving members with other spiritual needs. This focus has benefited their ministry greatly. They recognize that they specifically serve WELS college students and can help more if they keep that their focus. The congregation still understands its primary mission and is very generous towards serving its campus ministry.

They understand that much of what they invest will not pay dividends directly to their congregation but are happy to build up God's kingdom in this way. It is why some call the Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel the "seminary for lay people." The students trained here don't usually benefit the congregation that trains them, but they certainly bless the many congregations they go on to serve after they graduate.⁴²

41. Jonathan Bilitz, *Appendix 1*.

42. Bilitz, *Appendix 1*.

Shepherd of Peace Lutheran Church – Powell, OH – Pastor Stephen Kuehl

Shepherd of Peace has served the WELS campus ministry at The Ohio State University for many years. In the past year, the local churches have reconfigured the campus ministry so that St. Paul in downtown Columbus is now the main church serving the campus ministry at the university. Pastor Kuehl was the campus contact pastor while Shepherd of Peace served the campus ministry.

The campus ministry has had an impact on the congregation's members on an individual level. Pastor Kuehl writes concerning the effect of campus ministry on the congregation and on himself:

It has probably had an effect on different individuals within the congregation more than on the congregation as a whole. It has given people the opportunity to show Christian love to fellow Christians in very basic ways (giving rides, inviting them over for meals, checking on them, and seeing how they are). Personally, working with our WELS students attending public universities has made me marvel at the working of the Spirit—that amidst what is often a very non-Christian culture, these students seek to stay faithful to their Lord, and make that a priority. I have often wondered if I would have been the same at their age. I could very well have been one who had drifted ... so these students have a special place in my heart, and I want to support them however I can.⁴³

It is inspiring to see students prioritizing their relationship with their Lord. Campus ministries like this one affect the people who interact with the students. Pastor Kuehl highlights how vital this campus ministry is to students seeking to stay close to their Savior, and having the opportunity to serve these students has affected the members of the congregation who serve the campus ministry. The congregation and the students built each other up in their walks of faith. This action is evidence of a healthy culture in any congregation and has long-lasting effects on the campus ministry students.

43. Stephen Kuehl, *Appendix 4*.

The Word Lutheran Church – Stevens Point, WI – Staff Minister Jerry Worden

The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) campus ministry receives service from The Word Lutheran Church, a second location of Divine Word Lutheran Church in Plover, WI. The Word started with the intention of providing campus ministry at UWSP. Pastor Scott Wolfram and Staff Minister Jerry Worden are the primary contacts for the campus ministry. There has been a WELS campus ministry at Stevens Point for many years. Pastor Keith Free served this same campus ministry from 1990 to 2010 and participated in filling out one of the questionnaires in the appendix of this thesis. This time of service means the congregation at Divine Word and The Word have had decades of campus ministry affecting their congregations.

The goals of this campus ministry include connecting students to Christ, being their home church while they are away from home, and connecting the students through Bible study and fellowship activities. Staff Minister Worden comments on the congregation's involvement in campus ministry: "It certainly is one of the main ministries that we focus on here. It isn't just the called workers but also the leadership and members have this ministry as part of their focus to both support financially, through volunteering or by just simply befriending students."⁴⁴ The effect campus ministry has had on this congregation is that they see doing this vital ministry as the focus of their congregation. They provide spiritual care for the students and physical care through meals. The congregation makes their church feel like a home church for these students far away from home. The students are also one of the reasons that the congregation gets excited about serving. The work of The Word in feeding the students physically and spiritually has been a blessing to the students in many ways.

44. Jerry Worden, *Appendix 7*.

St. Marcus Lutheran Church – Milwaukee, WI – Pastor James Hein

The WELS campus ministry at UW Milwaukee receives support from St. Marcus in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Pastor James Hein is the primary contact for the campus ministry. Pastor Hein sums up the goal of this campus ministry in this way:

The UW-Milwaukee campus ministry seeks to provide several hours on Wednesday nights where students can foster Christian community/friendships, through a meal from 6-7 pm, study & prayer from 7-8:30 pm, and usually some additional fellowship afterward. This typically looks like me sitting in a large living room with 20-25, 18–25-year-olds.⁴⁵

One of the byproducts of the St. Marcus campus ministry is that they produce leaders to serve in congregations. Pastor Hein applies a form of discipleship ministry to build the faith of the campus ministry students. This discipleship training is part of the reason St. Marcus sees campus ministry as incredibly valuable for the college-age student. Commenting on the value of campus ministry to these students, Pastor Hein said, “On a secular campus, in a society that is increasingly post-Christian, campus ministry presents a safe space for young adult Christians to share struggles & concerns, grow in their understanding of Christ and sharpen their biblical worldview, and develop authentic, transparent Christian relationships.”⁴⁶ As mentioned in an early section of this thesis, Pastor Hein makes sure that when students leave St. Marcus’s campus ministry, they are prepared to read their Bible for private devotions and lead prayer publicly with others.

This training directly affects the congregation because some of the students trained to lead end up on the leadership team at St. Marcus after they graduate. The congregation itself continues to grow younger as the congregation serves the campus ministry at UW Milwaukee.

45. James Hein, *Appendix 3*.

46. Hein, *Appendix 3*.

This kind of growth is a blessing in a congregation over 150 years old, and it seems the campus ministry here will continue to be a blessing for the congregation.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to fully capture the many moving parts of a campus ministry and how it affects a congregation that can participate in it. It overviewed the needs that campus ministry fills. It examined campus ministry as an agent of change. It gave examples of congregations with a campus ministry and how it affects them. This research concludes that campus ministry does impact a congregation in different ways.

This impact is different for each congregation because each congregation has a different situation they are attempting to address. This thesis research shows that campus ministry can boost congregations' energy. Campus ministry also provides leaders and well-trained laypeople for the kingdom of God and many congregations nationwide. The makeup of the congregation can change when campus ministry is a focal point. Younger members bring in younger prospects and campus ministry is a great way to start this process of bringing in younger families. Campus ministry affects the congregation in various ways, but most importantly, it leaves a lasting impact on the students' lives, and their spiritual well-being receives blessings through it.

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APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE – PASTOR JONATHAN BILITZ

What are the goals of your campus ministry?

Our mission statement is “To Know Jesus Christ and Make Him Known on Campus. We strive to provide a “home away from home” with our worship and events, as well as the student center that was built in 2006.

How is the campus ministry administered in your congregation?

We are unique in the Synod as the only CM that is specifically a CM and has a congregation who supports the ministry. We have a campus pastor, an outreach coordinator, a worship coordinator, and IT coordinator and two part-time office assistants.

Is the campus ministry valuable to the students? Why or why not?

We are told regularly that the CM in Madison is the reason students chose the University. Coming to a large campus can be daunting, and having a place where students can keep connected to Jesus in faith and then connect with another Christians is so important. Students who have graduated say their faith was able to grow during their time in college, and the CM was a big part of that.

What are some benefits or positive effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation’s involvement in campus ministry?

Our congregation is generous. First, they support the students and student ministry. They know that much of what is invested will not pay dividends directly to our congregation. After 4 or 5 years in college, students generally leave and do not become members. Secondly, the congregation works at being a sending ministry or multiplication ministry. We try to train students to be active in their future congregations by giving them roles and responsibilities at the church (volunteering, music, Sunday School, committee work, etc.) A former pastor called our ministry “the seminary for lay people.”

What are some drawbacks or negative effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation’s involvement in campus ministry?

Some congregation members wish there was a school or more activities for families. We have tried to maintain the focus on the students ministry for college students while serving the other needs of the congregation.

Describe what certain aspects of congregational culture were like before the start of the campus ministry in comparison to now.

Each person or family that is a member of our congregation understands the culture of campus ministry. The vitality of the congregation is a wonderful blessing. On a given Sunday, we have

as many as 100 (or more) college students worshipping in our services. There is an energy that college students bring to a congregation that many of our members enjoy.

Describe campus ministry's effect on your congregation's culture in comparison to other ministries of your congregation.

Not an easy question to answer because we are a CM first.

Do you believe campus ministry is important for your congregation to be involved in? Why or why not?

Yes! The fields are ripe and the harvest is waiting! Every year of our lives is important to stay connected to the Savior, but the college years, especially on a secular campus, are particularly challenging. CM provides an opportunity for students to stay connected to Jesus during those important years.

How do you feel about the effects involvement in campus ministry has had on your congregation?

There is an energy that our congregation has and a love for the students that is appreciated.

APPENDIX 2. QUESTIONNAIRE – PASTOR KEITH FREE

What are the goals of your campus ministry?

Find the students - UW-Stevens Point was a campus which allowed students to fill out a religious preference card. WELS was listed. Thus, each year we were aware of 40-60 students who indicated they were WELS. The campus had 250 WELS (ELS too) + students each

Invite the students - Every August we would send a snail letter home and in later years electronic letter to let the students (parents too as able) about our campus ministry. AT student orientation we had a booth to introduce ourselves to those who stopped. As school started we offered various events to connect with students.

Serve the students with the Means of Grace - For a period of time we had a small bus which transported students to worship. We also had members who offered rides. Around 1996 we started renting the lower level of a two-story home very close to campus. We offered a 20-30-minute vesper type service. We were blessed to see that grow from 2-4 per Wednesday evening (8:30 or 9:00 p.m. start) to 20-25 in the 1st semester and 15-20 in the 2nd semester. Having our own place was KEY!

Involve the students in campus ministry and in Divine Word ministry - As you know Jonah, when a student starts to take ownership through active involvement, we are building a stronger foundation. Over the years students served in many ways.

Assist the students in their time of need - Of course there were times when there was a break-up or even a death which called for attention. Being part-time, there weren't as many of those situations, but there were a number of Bible Information Class participants. Some joined WELS and some knew more about Jesus Christ. Over the years I was also blessed to do 4 or 5 weddings.

How is the campus ministry administered in your congregation?

Since campus ministry was part of the Call, ultimately the voters had oversight. I would report to the Council. In the mid-90s we had a campus committee develop with a number of members close to college age. For 3-4 years this group helped assist getting the ministry more traction. Also, once we had our own place we had 2 housefellowes (2 men or 2 women) who often were active and assisting in ministry. And because it was a part of my Call, there were items I continued to do.

Is the campus ministry valuable to the students? Why or why not?

Yes, there is a lot of value:

- Sharing God's Word with those who have little to no Christian background
- Counseling a student for the end of 2nd semester and into the 1st semester at the death of her boyfriend from an overdose.
- Watching some students develop in their service ministry

- Being there when school is a drag or life is hard.
- As it is on most public school campuses where anything goes, it is good for the students to know that there is right and wrong and there are morals (one of our students had to stay in the dorm the first semester. During that semester, her roommate's boyfriend spent most nights in her bed).

What are some benefits or positive effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

- Sometimes when their son or daughter went off to campus ministry, they were more apt to check out that school's campus ministry.
- Praying for students.
- Serving the students with food being a favorite
- Working to enlarge the facility to do more campus ministry. After I left Plover, around 4 years later the congregation bought a building near campus, renovated it, and did a number of things to make it campus ministry friendly including offering a 10:30 a.m. worship service 1 mile from campus. As I note below, if possible, it is huge to have your own space in which to do campus ministry.

What are some drawbacks or negative effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

During my time in Plover, the prayer was to involve our own "college" age members in this ministry, but that didn't often happen. Some went off to college and those who got a job and stayed in the area didn't often participate with campus ministry. Since we were serving this age demographic through campus ministry, we sometimes didn't think about or serve our own members in this demographic.

Describe what certain aspects of congregational culture were like before the start of the campus ministry in comparison to now.

I would not be able to answer this since the campus ministry was already started by my predecessor. One feature which is neat is it keeps the congregation younger.

Describe campus ministry's effect on your congregation's culture in comparison to other ministries of your congregation.

Having been away for all these years, am not able to answer this question.

Do you believe campus ministry is important for your congregation to be involved in? Why or why not?

Certainly! As a church body which is bleeding members (In 1994 or thereabouts WELS was 425,000 and now after the 2022 numbers WELS is about 330,000) we can't afford to be nonchalant about serving any demographic of members. While of course numbers are interesting, more importantly is serving the blood bought souls for whom Jesus died. We would say that when students were at UW-Stevens Point we were their church away from home. We never wanted to make them our members – just serve them as our members until they moved on.

How do you feel about the effects involvement in campus ministry has had on your congregation?

Again, this would be a tough question to answer 13 years removed from the congregation. I would say though it was great to see that expansion project (close to a \$1M project).

APPENDIX 3. QUESTIONNAIRE – PASTOR JAMES HEIN

What are the goals of your campus ministry?

The UW-Milwaukee campus ministry seeks to provide several hours on Wednesday nights where students can foster Christian community/friendships, through a meal from 6-7 pm, study & prayer from 7-8:30 pm, and usually some additional fellowship afterward. This typically looks like me sitting in a large living room with 20-25, 18–25-year-olds.

How is the campus ministry administered in your congregation?

Many of the UW-Milwaukee end up joining membership at St. Marcus, where I serve as Lead Pastor. St. Marcus has several members who serve on the Board of Directors for The Point of Grace (TPOG). That said, I'm the only one with weekly ministry involvement.

Is the campus ministry valuable to the students? Why or why not?

Very much so. On a secular campus, in a society that is increasingly post-Christian, campus ministry presents a safe space for young adult Christians to share struggles & concerns, grow in their understanding of Christ and sharpen their biblical worldview, and develop authentic, transparent Christian relationships.

What are some benefits or positive effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

Many of the young leaders at St. Marcus have come from being disciplined by me weekly for 4 years at campus ministry. I've been able to shape their philosophy of ministry and they're largely able to hit the ground running as council members, small group leaders, etc. in the church.

What are some drawbacks or negative effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

I haven't seen any. It costs me personally about 5-6 hours every week, but it's the single best pipeline for congregational leadership development in our church.

Describe what certain aspects of congregational culture were like before the start of the campus ministry in comparison to now.

I don't think a significant amount has changed, except that we've continued to grow younger.

Describe campus ministry's effect on your congregation's culture in comparison to other ministries of your congregation.

N/A

Do you believe campus ministry is important for your congregation to be involved in? Why or why not?

Yes. WELS churches are aging quickly. We need to invest disproportionate resources into time-intensive relationships with future leaders. This is Christ's discipleship model, which I believe is prescriptive, not descriptive.

How do you feel about the effects involvement in campus ministry has had on your congregation?

All positive. We're a 150-year-old congregation, but our biggest demographic groups, by a significant margin, are members in their 20s + 30s.

APPENDIX 4. QUESTIONNAIRE – PASTOR STEPHEN KUEHL

What are the goals of your campus ministry?

I suppose it depends on the campus ministry... but in general, to nurture the faith of WELS students attending public universities and to reach out (usually through friend connections of the WELS students) to other souls on campus.

How is the campus ministry administered in your congregation?

Since I have served as a “contact” pastor, it has all been basically administered through me. We have no separate congregational committee. People have helped with things, but usually at my request.

Is the campus ministry valuable to the students? Why or why not?

The majority of students on the list I get from WELS CM usually don’t make themselves available... but students that take the initiative to come/get involved/etc... they seem to value campus ministry. It really depends on the student and their desire to be connected or not.

What are some benefits or positive effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation’s involvement in campus ministry?

Since the congregation doesn’t see the “on campus” stuff, my comments here have to do with Sunday morning worship. I think the biggest benefit is the example involved CM students set for high school students... of being a college-aged Christian, and making worship a priority.

What are some drawbacks or negative effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation’s involvement in campus ministry?

It’s not a real “drawback”, but I suppose volunteer opportunities to help with, say, picking up students for worship, is seen as “one more thing” you’re asking already busy people to help with.

Describe what certain aspects of congregational culture were like before the start of the campus ministry in comparison to now.

I inherited the “campus contact pastor” role from my predecessor, so I can’t really answer this question.

Describe campus ministry's effect on your congregation's culture in comparison to other ministries of your congregation.

People are more aware of college students in the area, and seek to support them in natural ways (rides, inviting them for lunch,etc, babysitting jobs, sending exam bags, etc).

Do you believe campus ministry is important for your congregation to be involved in? Why or why not?

If there is a nearby college, yes. As we seek to support the faith of other age groups, we want to support the faith of this age group too – especially since it is an age group that often drifts away.

How do you feel about the effects involvement in campus ministry has had on your congregation?

It has probably had an effect on different individuals within the congregation more than on the congregation as a whole. It has given people the opportunity to show Christian love to fellow Christians in very basic ways (giving rides, inviting over for meals, checking on them and seeing how they are). Personally, working with our WELS students attending public universities has made me marvel at the working of the Spirit – that amidst what is often a very non-Christian culture, these students seek to stay faithful to their Lord, and make that a priority. I have often wondered if I would have been the same at their age. I could very well have been one who had drifted... so these students have a special place in my heart, and I want to support them however I can.

APPENDIX 5. QUESTIONNAIRE – PASTOR SNOWDEN SIMS

What are the goals of your campus ministry?

For me, the goal was to keep a connection between the collegians and the congregation while providing an ongoing opportunity to deepen relationships among the collegians.

How is the campus ministry administered in your congregation?

The congregation provided seed money for the campus ministry. We would also make use of the Synod's campus ministry funds that were available for various types of events or items. We became a registered group on the campus of Arizona State University. Members of the congregation were willing to pick students up if they had no transportation.

Is the campus ministry valuable to the students? Why or why not?

From my perspective, the students who were involved in it expressed how valuable it was to them. It provided them with a sense of community in a university setting that could be a challenge to find like-minded people when it came to beliefs.

What are some benefits or positive effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

The congregation was able to see the desire of the young people to be in God's house and active in building relationships. Older members enjoyed chatting and encouraging them. The collegians gained grandparents away from home. The members grew to understand the importance of encouraging those young people. A few of the musicians served in the worship services at times. We also had a young professional group which eventually decided to do things with the collegians.

What are some drawbacks or negative effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

I do not recall any negatives or drawbacks.

Describe what certain aspects of congregational culture were like before the start of the campus ministry in comparison to now.

As I mentioned, the older members looked forward to seeing these young people and became concerned about them. There was a disconnect between the students and congregation. It went from "those young people wanted nothing to do with the members" to "it is so nice to have ___ playing their instrument."

Describe campus ministry's effect on your congregation's culture in comparison to other ministries of your congregation.

If the collegians were around for more than a year and became involved in the life of the congregation on boards/committees, there were new ideas and different ways of looking at items/issues. The collegians helped the members see another valuable group.

Do you believe campus ministry is important for your congregation to be involved in? Why or why not?

If there is an opportunity to be involved with a campus ministry, yes, it is very important; especially in the climate of today.

How do you feel about the effects involvement in campus ministry has had on your congregation?

It was nothing but positive at Emmanuel in Tempe working with the ASU Campus Ministry group. We had students from other local colleges join us also.

APPENDIX 6. QUESTIONNAIRE – PASTOR CHARLIE VANNIEUWENHOVEN

What are the goals of your campus ministry?

I'm not currently serving in a campus ministry so I don't remember the specific goals which we had. But our goal was to connect students to Christ on the campus. That included serving our WELS members who were away from home at school. That also included reaching out on the college campus to serve people who didn't yet know Jesus.

How is the campus ministry administered in your congregation?

In Mankato, the synod owned a building that we did ministry out of. The campus ministry was a part of the mission of our local church, St. Paul's in North Mankato. When I was there, we were contracted to do half time work at the campus center. In reality, we did much more. Each member of our staff spent 1 day/week at the campus center. As the head campus pastor, I was there all day on Thursday and stayed through the Dollar Supper and Thursday Bible Study.

Is the campus ministry valuable to the students? Why or why not?

The students greatly valued the campus ministry. It was a Beacon of light as they were surrounded by the darkness of sin. They greatly appreciated the chance to gather with fellow believers and be encouraged by God's word. They enjoyed being able to sit down and talk about experiences they were having. They really enjoyed the Christian fellowship they shared with fellow believers. Many of those students became friends for life. We also had a number of different couples who found their spouses through campus ministry. For most of our students, Campus Ministry was a very important part of their life on campus.

What are some benefits or positive effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

It was always extremely encouraging for our congregation to see so many young people in worship on Sunday morning. We didn't have Sunday morning worship at the campus center, so all of the students came to worship at our church. It was such a joy for our members to see all the young people at worship. They also enjoyed the opportunity to serve these students while they were away at school. We had couples that would take kids out for brunch after church. They would invite them to spend some time in their homes, let them do laundry at their house and just look out for them. It was much appreciated by the college students (and their parents!) and it gave our people a chance to serve. It was greatly beneficial to both. The other benefit is that anyone who graduated from college and stayed in the area joined our congregation. We viewed campus ministry as lay minister training. So these young people would join our congregation with new ideas and plenty of energy to go after them. We have great, young, capable leaders who were eager to do ministry. That was a huge blessing to our congregation.

What are some drawbacks or negative effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

There honestly weren't many drawbacks to campus ministry. Perhaps the biggest is that it took time. We had a large staff which made it easier for us to do. But it takes time to develop relationships with students for them to get comfortable with you and allow you to minister to them. Those relationships didn't just happen. They had to be cultivated. And that takes time. It's important for a congregation who is looking to get into campus ministry to realize that it is going to take a chunk of the pastor's time to carry out a thriving ministry. It's worth it. But there is an investment there. That would be the only drawback or negative thing (and it really isn't that negative!) that I can think of.

Describe what certain aspects of congregational culture were like before the start of the campus ministry in comparison to now.

That is hard for me to say because our congregation was doing campus ministry long before I got there.

Describe campus ministry's effect on your congregation's culture in comparison to other ministries of your congregation.

For me, campus ministry was a huge joy. Going up to the campus center on Thursday was a breath of fresh air. You didn't have to deal with problems between the students because that really got along well. You were dealing with some of the cream of the crop and they were just happy and thankful to be there. They didn't grumble or complain. They were very eager to pitch in and help out. They were extremely engaged in the Bible studies because they were being challenged in their faith every day. It was always such a positive environment to be part of. Congregational life isn't always that way!

Do you believe campus ministry is important for your congregation to be involved in? Why or why not?

I thought it was vital to our ministry. It is vital because the mission field was there right in our own backyard. I believe every congregation should be looking to see how they can serve the people in their community, and any way they can serve is vital. If we didn't serve those college students, I don't know who else would have done it. It was also such a positive blessing to our congregation that I couldn't have imagined our congregational life without it.

How do you feel about the effects involvement in campus ministry has had on your congregation?

See my previous answers.

APPENDIX 7. QUESTIONNAIRE – STAFF MINISTER JERRY WORDEN

What are the goals of your campus ministry?

The goals for our campus ministry are to keep the students that are attending UWSP connected to Christ. We look to be their home church while they are away from home. We also look to be able to connect them to each other through Bible study and fellowship activities.

How is the campus ministry administered in your congregation?

Our campus ministry is funded through WELS BHM. As the staff minister I schedule the Bible studies and work with our students officers as they plan different activities. I look for opportunities on campus to promote our WLES campus ministry and make sure students know about who we are and what we offer.

Is the campus ministry valuable to the students? Why or why not?

I believe that it is very valuable for our students for several reasons. We both physically and spiritually feed them. With our Campus Ministry Center, which is located in the basement of the The Word Church, we give them a safe place to meet and to eat and to do laundry and just gather with friends. We weekly meet for a evening of Bible study either on campus or at The Word. They get to weekly worship on Sundays. As students get to know both Pastor Wolfram and myself they at times will ask to meet with us to discuss issues they may be dealing with instead of dealing with them on their own.

What are some benefits or positive effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

On Thursday evenings, before our Bible study, we have meals that are provided by different members in our congregation. There are so many of our members that look forward to being able to be part of serving that way. They often stay for the meal and interact with the students. They also participate by donating food for our student food pantry.

What are some drawbacks or negative effects on the congregation, if any, that you have seen from your congregation's involvement in campus ministry?

I have not seen any negative effects on our congregation. Campus ministry has been part of Divine Word since it started over 50 years ago.

Describe what certain aspects of congregational culture were like before the start of the campus ministry in comparison to now.

Its difficult to say what it was like. Divine Word was started with the focus to minister to WELS students attending UWSP from the very beginning. So it is really part of the culture here and the ministry.

Describe campus ministry's effect on your congregation's culture in comparison to other ministries of your congregation.

Campus ministry seems to be filled with more excitement and concern for the students. Maybe its because many of our members are older and have had sons or daughters in college and may understand the concerns or difficulties students may face being away from home.

Do you believe campus ministry is important for your congregation to be involved in? Why or why not?

I believe that Campus Ministry is vitally important here at UWSP. Divine Word in 2017 opened a second location closer to UWSP. It's called The Word. Inside is our campus ministry center and also a place to worship on Sunday. It gives students a place to worship and to be part of fellowship. It allows the students to use their skills to serve in the congregation whether it's in worship or by doing service projects in the community or helping members in our church.

How do you feel about the effects involvement in campus ministry has had on your congregation?

It certainly is one of the main ministries that we focus on here. It isn't just the called workers but also the leadership and members have this ministry as part of their focus to both support financially, through volunteering or by just simply befriending students.