

Material for a History of the WELS Campus Ministry

presented by
Martin Westerhaus

to the
Joint Meeting of the WELS SMB and GBHM on Campus Ministry
held at the
Plankinton House
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
September 26, 1979

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The title assigned for this paper: "A History of WELS Campus Ministry," has the sound of something more complete and more definitive than I find the Materials in this paper to be. Consequently I have taken the liberty of altering the title of what I shall present somewhat to read:

MATERIALS FOR A HISTORY OF THE WELS CAMPUS MINISTRY

In attempting to cover this topic I shall touch on five subject areas:

- I The beginnings of Lutheran campus ministry. (1905-20)
- II. The Early Years of the Campus Ministry in the Missouri Synod. (1920-47)
- III The Early Years of Our Campus Ministry. (1920-55)
- IV Wisconsin gets organized. (1950-70)
- V And, very briefly, the WELS Campus Ministry under the Special Ministries Board. (1970-

I. THE BEGINNINGS OF LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY

It may be well to begin this examination of Campus work in our synod by setting it against the background of early Campus work carried on by other Lutheran Synods. According to available records and materials, Lutheran campus work had its beginnings here in Wisconsin in 1905. That year Pastor William K. Frick, an influential member of the Northwest Synod of the General Council and pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church on 19th and Wisconsin Avenue here in Milwaukee, had three active young members attending the University of Wisconsin. There was at the time no "English Lutheran," i.e. General Council or General Synod, congregation in Madison. Since both the city of Madison and the University were flourishing, Frick was able to persuade the field secretary of the Home Mission Board of the General Council to begin holding services there. Beginning on Nov. 19, 1905, and continuing until July, 1907, students from the Theological Seminary in Chicago conducted services in the vicinity of the University. First services were held above a popular student hang-out

known as the Palace of Sweets, later above the college book store, for a time in an unused synagogue, and finally in a chapel on University Avenue built specifically for the congregation that had been gathered, first called Holy Trinity, today known as Lutheran Memorial. Of the thirteen persons who attended the first service, twelve were students. From the start the goal was to establish a congregation that would serve both the Lutheran University students and residents of the area. In July, 1907, Howard R. Gold, a graduate of the Luth. Seminary in Philadelphia became the first Lutheran pastor to serve a campus congregation, when he was assigned to Luther Memorial. In 1909, at the urging of its President, the Northwest Synod established a "Committee on College and University Student Work," to develop wider support of the campus ministry. The whole General Council was informed of, and enlisted for, the support of campus work at its convention later that year. A survey taken indicated between 500 and 600 Lutheran students on campus in Madison, at least 1000 in Minneapolis, also 1000 in the Fargo-Moorhead area. The General Council took over the support and supervision of campus work for all its constituent synods. In 1910 a campus ministry was begun by the General Council in Minneapolis. Work was also begun by the General Synod at the University of Illinois in 1911. In 1912 a traveling pastor was called by the New York and New England Synod of the General Synod to serve some 800 Lutheran students at five Ivy League Universities. Beginning in 1914 a Pastor Wendell of the Augustana Synod began student work in Minneapolis. In 1916 a pastor was called full time for Cornell University and a combination parsonage, campus house was purchased the next year for \$46,000. In Madison, Luther Memorial's Chapel student center built in 1915 had quickly become a popular place for Lutheran students to meet. In 1917 a pastor was called by the Pennsylvania Ministerium to minister to Lutheran students at the University of Pennsyl-

vania and other Philadelphia colleges. At all of the Universities except Pennsylvania a combination of students and local residents formed the congregation established.

Church services, Bible classes, lectures by religious leaders and theologians, social activities, and service projects of various kinds were common to the work at most of the campus centers.

Financing was no easy matter in the loosely organized General Council. Although the General body might approve a budget for campus work, individual synods and individual congregations decided how much they would actually contribute and in the early years funds received were not as generous as was hoped. To encourage support for campus work at the local level circulars were printed (in Swedish for the Augustana Synod - in English for the other General Council Synods) and distributed to the individual congregations. Dr. Frick, who wrote a column in the Lutheran called "Milwaukee Notes", frequently referred to the campus work in Madison and Minneapolis, brought information from the ministries there, and provided publicity and encouraged increased support for campus work.

* One might ask at this point why campus work seemed to pop up all over in just a few years. One of the most important reasons was the growth of the so-called Land Grant Colleges or Universities. Howard R. Gold, the first resident campus pastor at Madison, from whose article: "The Beginnings of Work Among Lutheran Students" in the October, 1936, issue of the Lutheran Church Quarterly all of the above information is drawn, presents statistics that point up the dramatic growth

of the state universities:	1870:	6,699
	1900:	45,417
	1910:	101,285
	1912:	131,134

A rapidly growing number of young Americans was taking advantage of the relatively low cost college education offered by the state universities and going off to college.

II. BEGINNINGS OF CAMPUS MINISTRY IN LCMS.

The Missouri Synod began work on the campus of public universities in 1920. The details of this will be given shortly. Permit me here to describe briefly in a broader way the rapid growth of Missouri activity in this field. In 1923 the LCMS at its general convention instructed President Pfothenauer to appoint a Committee to "study the spiritual needs of our students at non-synodical institutions of higher learning, to take a census of such students and to consider ways of meeting this need and to disseminate the information gathered in the best possible way." This "Student Welfare Committee" reported back in 1926. They estimated there were 2500 LCMS students on non-Lutheran campuses. The names of all students sent in were referred to a LCMS Pastor closest to the college attended. To maintain contact with these students a paper, "Lutheran Student," was initiated. By 1926 there were 2000 on its mailing list. In August, 1925 representatives from the LCMS students at 10 universities met at River Forest and planned the organization of the Lutheran Student League, the first regular convention of which was to take place later in the summer of 1926. By the summer of 1926, the committee further reported, there were already 5 full time LCMS campus pastors, and many who were doing campus work part-time. A University Pastors' Conference had already been organized which was to meet annually to discuss matters of common concern. The convention showed its appreciation and approval of the work of this committee by adopting the following proposed resolutions:

1. That Synod acknowledge the care of its students at non-Lutheran institutions as its duty.
 2. That the synod call on the Districts to provide for these students through their Inner Mission Boards.
 3. That correlation of effort be secured through the Student Welfare Committee acting in an advisory capacity to District Mission Boards.
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- 4a. That synod approve of the calling of a General Student Pastor, to devote full time to General Student Work under the Student Welfare Comm.
- 4b. That the General Board for Home Missions in conjunction with the Student Welfare Committee call this General Student Pastor.
- 4c. That \$5,000. be appropriated for Student Welfare Work.
5. That Synod authorize the continued publication of the Lutheran Student. (Its publication to this point had been financed by the Walther League and Luther League.)
6. That it be considered normal policy^{not} to build up exclusively student congregations, but that the special needs of students be met either in connection with existing congregations, or that new congregations though established to care for students also seek non-student members.
7. That Synod approve the publication of literature designed to meet the peculiar needs of students, including monographs by recognized experts. (1926 LCMS Proc. p207f.)

A small oversight unfortunately delayed considerably ^{the} execution of this forward looking and ambitious program. The Synod resolution allowing \$5,000. to fund the General Student Pastor's salary did not specify whether this was to be an annual or triennial amount. The committee understood it to be an annual amount, the Synod officials ruled it was \$5,000. for the triennium, As a result the executive position, which had been approved, could not be filled and the Committee resigned. Responsibility for student work then was placed into the hands of the Board of Home Missions, which was encouraged to do what it could for students on non-Lutheran campuses. At the 1929 convention a committee of the General Board reported that it had kept ^{up} as much work as it could and again presented essentially the same resolutions as in '26. This time the resolutions calling for the calling and funding of ^a full time man were voted down. In 1932 resolutions calling for the placing of all student work in the hands of the Student Welfare Committee and providing \$1,000. funding for the work of the committee were voted down. Other resolutions highly commending work currently

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and previously done were passed. The work was left with District Mission Boards. Parents and Pastors were urged to cooperate more fully with the efforts of the Board. Only 43% of pastors returned student census cards. The Student Welfare Committee again resigned. The 1935 convention heard from the new committee that there were at least 5000 LCMS students on non-Lutheran campuses. Contact men for each district had been appointed to publicize and promote Student work and to try to get better cooperation from Synod pastors on sending in information. The student census was carried out with considerable assistance from the Walther League and its full-time staff. A National Association of Lutheran Students was organized. Again a student paper, now called Gamma Delta, was published with Walther League funding. A conference for mid-west campus pastors also was held in 1935 - thanks to the Walther League. And the ¹⁹³⁵ new committee brought in essentially the same recommendations approved in 1926. It was pointed out that the funding of the full time Secretary would amount to \$.008 for each LCMS student on a non-Lutheran campus - far less than the Synod was paying for the support of the education of the 400 students at Valparaiso. The recommendations were voted down. Finally, in 1938, having heard that there were 4200 reported students on non-Lutheran campuses and another estimated 1700 who had not been reported, and that 328 pastors had been given names and addresses of students at 546 colleges and universities, the full time secretary and the \$5,000. funding were approved. By now the National Association of Lutheran Students, frequently referred to as Gamma Delta, had 17 chapters and 400 members and was holding annual conventions. Response on the student census in 1937 reached 77%. In 1940 R.W. Hahn was installed as first full time executive. By 1947 the Budget of Student Service Commission had risen to \$20,000. It was reported there were now 14,000 Synod Conf. students on non-Lutheran campuses and 17 full time LCMS campus pastors. The LCMS had become convinced of the importance of student work.

III THE EARLY YEARS OF WELS CAMPUS MINISTRY.

Although the Wisconsin Synod cannot claim to be a pioneer in campus work, we did apparently begin at the same time as Missouri, and relatively early, in 1920, to be precise. Like the General Council's beginnings this first work was initiated in Milwaukee and carried on in Madison. No direct record of the organization has been found, but apparently it was a group of Milwaukee pastors and laymen from the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods who formed a Madison Student Mission Society which called Prof. A. Haentschel from St. Paul's College in Concordia, Missouri to begin the work. Services were held in a building identified as Wheeler's Conservatory Hall, rented for \$60.00 a month. Attendance the first year averaged 90. (Wouldn't any Mission Board like to have all their missions get off to a start like that?) The LCMS South-Wisconsin District received annual reports on the "Studentenkirche" in Madison along with the reports on their regular mission congregations. In 1922 they gave Haentschel permission to begin a fund raising drive for a building. Our WELS Wis. District Proceedings note only that Haentschel appeared and spoke on behalf of the mission and its fund drive. In 1926 our Gemeindeblatt carried a series of articles by Attorney Ernst von Briesen reporting that the Chapel for our student mission in Madison was being erected for an estimated \$135,000. Bonds in the amount of \$60,000. were being sold to help finance the project. WELS members were encouraged to invest in these bonds and the need for the student mission was fully explained. The 1928 West Wisconsin Proceedings reported that a Pastor A. Eggert of the LCMS appeared to appeal for more contributions and bond purchases to help pay for the fine facilities of Calvary Chapel. The 1929 WELS convention finally officially adopted the Madison venture when it voted approval of the proposal presented by WELS Mission Board members, Pastors P. Pieper and H. Knuth and laymen E. von Briesen and W. Graebner

that the Synod henceforth elect the Wisconsin Synod representatives on the Board of the Madison Student Mission.

The 1930 West Wisconsin Convention was informed that the new Board of the Student mission had been meeting regularly but that the legal transfer was not yet completed because of certain problems. Finally on Sept. 21, 1931 Calvary Lutheran University Mission Society transferred the title for the chapel to its new owners. The Wisconsin Synod owned 41%, the LCMS South-Wisconsin District 39%, and the LCMS North-Wisconsin District, 20%. Wisconsin's share of the indebtedness was reported to be \$36,000. By 1934 average attendance had risen to 150. Students were paying all operating expenses except Haentschel's salary. In 1936 it was reported that Wisconsin's annual subsidy was \$900. Our share of the debt was still \$36,000. There were 441 Synodical Conference students on campus. Of 169 Freshmen, 79 were WELS members. In 1938 it was reported that W.C. Burhop had replaced Haentschel as student pastor. Burhop remained at Calvary until 1951, when he was succeeded by Edward Wessling, who in turn was followed by a Wisconsin Synod man, Walter Wegner. (By 1940 there were 523 Synodical Conference students on the Madison campus. Average Sunday attendance at Calvary had risen to 278. Records for 1948 showed 1065 Synodical Conference Lutherans on campus, average attendance at 322. For several years pastor Burhop needed and received a part time assistant, Pastor Eugene Klug.)

A perhaps unduly large amount of time has been devoted to Calvary. But it was our first venture into campus work. For too long a time it was our only official campus ministry. That is not to say, however, that it was the only campus work done by Wisconsin. Already in 1929 Wisconsin Synod pastors were requested by a Pastor A. Schroedel, LCMS student pastor in Minneapolis to send him the names of our young people attending the u. of Minnesota. I found one refer-

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ence to a WELS subsidy of this campus ministry but all other information is lacking. About 1939, if my figures are correct, Pastor Herbert Wackerfuss began his ministry of over 35 years on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston where he served all synodical Conference students and a small Wisconsin Synod mission. I found no information on the amount of Wisconsin Synod financial support, if any, before 1961.

Other men also did campus work for many years in addition to serving their own congregations. And here there is an almost total silence, a total lack of information ~~down~~ on black and white. I report this not as a criticism of these men who, usually on their own became involved in campus work, simply because it was there to be done. I know that men like Loeper in Whitewater, Krauss in Lansing, Kleinhans in Oshkosh, Sitz in Tucson, Mennicke in Winona, (plus I don't know how many others) ministered to students on campuses around or near their churches. I don't know when they began, what they did, how many they served, what God-pleasing fruits they could observe. I am quite sure that each in his unique situation, given the gifts and talents with which he was endowed, and given the opportunities and obstacles he faced, sowed the Good Seed, preached sermons, taught Bible classes, arranged fellowship activities as best he could to carry out the Gospel ministry faithfully in the special atmosphere and with the particular type or types of human characters that make up an academic community. The Lord's instruction not to let the right hand know what the left hand is doing seems to have been applied most zealously to this work. We as a synod really paid no attention, showed no interest or concern, offered no help until the late 1950s. At the synodical level we did not ask: how large is this field of student work? Where are the opportunities? What are the unique problems in campus work? What kind of talents are important for doing this work? What kind of materials could we produce to assist our men in making their work easier and more effective?

To the great credit of those men who did campus work in spite of our synod's lack of interest, let it at least be set down that they saw the opportunities, the harvest field at their door-step, and quietly went to work, so that it is not necessary to say today the Wisconsin Synod did nothing in those early years, about ministering to its youth on the campuses of public universities and colleges. Let it also be recorded that, orally, if not in writing, appreciation is expressed by some of the pioneers and some who followed them of the worth and helpfulness of materials produced by the Missouri agency concerned with student work in the '40s and '50s.

IV. WISCONSIN GETS ORGANIZED.

Happily, ~~too~~, the picture began to change in the late '50s. The Spiritual Welfare Commission, called into existence in 1940 to minister to our people in the military services, after the termination of the Korean War began to extend its services to students. In 1955 the Michigan District memorialized the Synod to establish a Student Service Commission to 1) gather names and addresses of WELS students at non-S.C. colleges and universities, 2) to direct these students to the nearest church of our Synod, when possible, 3) to supply the local pastors with these students' names, and 4) to prepare and send out suitable literature. (1955 Proc. pp. 75-77). In the 1956 Report to the Nine Districts LSWC Chairman Blakewell reported: "Action on the assignment to inaugurate a "Student Service Bureau" has, after preliminary study, been temporarily deferred because of circumstances beyond our control." (p.11). The 1957 BoRaM happily reports: "Late last fall (1956) the first attempt was made to obtain a listing of students attending universities, colleges, and schools away from home. Form cards were mailed to all pastors requesting the necessary information to carry out our assignment. THE RESPONSE WAS NOT TOO ENCOURAGING. Only 350 students' names and addresses

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have been received to date, surely a small percentage of Synod's potential. ...Possibly a greater response from the churches will be received with the opening of a new school year in September. Regular mailings to those listed have been made." (p.9) The number of names on the student list did not grow dramatically (at first). 1958: 350, 1959: 450 1960: 300.

In 1960 the SWC under the chairmanship of Paul Kuehl noted that the constitution gave it a responsibility in student work. A study of the whole matter was promised. The results of this study (which we might compare with the 1926 report of the LCMS Student Welfare Committee) was offered to the 1961 WELS Convention. It noted that in the Fall of 1960 letters had been sent to all WELS pastors requesting that the names of all students be sent into the SWC. Only 20%, one out of five! reported. Even so, the total number of names on the SWC lists jumped to 700! In words considerably more gentle than I would have found appropriate, the committee pointed to apparent "lack of real concern, even indifference on the part of congregations back home and congregations near campuses to the spiritual needs, and dangers confronting our youth when they enter the academic world." (One wonders why the SWC didn't also point a finger at the 80% of the pastors who returned no reports). The Committee further saw only "half-hearted attempts to meet this need, even though it deserves our whole-hearted concern and is a Christian OBLIGATION." (1961 WELS Proc. p.)

(In a more peaceful day a report like this might have ^{brought needed reactions} been a bit of a bombshell.

Amid the doctrinal and inter-synodical battles of 1961 it attracted little attention. The Committee proposed a practical program to meet the needs. First a four part program to arouse pastors and people to their responsibilities over against their student members by letters, NWL articles, the appointing of contact men for each conference, and an "all out program" to secure the names and addresses

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of young people temporarily or semipermanently away from home." (p.33) The committee also proposed eight practical steps or actions which pastors and congregations could take to meet their responsibilities. Among them was the proposal to "empower the LWSC, perhaps through the District Mission Boards, to subsidize the proposed program in congregations where demands may be heavy and need for some subsidy may be indicated, and to reimburse the contact men for out-of-pocket money." The convention adopted the SWC report and voted a \$15,000 increase in the SWC budget to develop the Student Service Committee's program.

The SWC was reorganized in the Fall of 1961 with Arnold Schroeder as the General Chairman, Clayton Krug as Military Service Committee Chairman and Conrad Frey as Student Services Committee Chairman. As synod Historian I am happy to note that at this point, minutes, correspondence, and other materials resulting from the LSWC work began to be preserved and eventually found their way into the Synod archives. That same Fall ~~yet~~ the first Campus Pastors' Workshop was held. It was described as very beneficial and much appreciated. Unfortunately what was on the program was not recorded. Another was planned for 1962. Planning began for an organized student program, i.e. a student organization. Contact men for the Synod's Welfare And Relief Committee were asked also to serve as contact men for the Student Service Committee. Student names on SEC lists increased to 800.. Since it was known that there were 700 WELS students at UW alone, it was clear a majority of names had not yet been reported. Plans to call full-time men for Milwaukee and ^{The} Twin Cities were announced. Eight other campuses were known to need part-time ministries. Need for on-campus facilities ^{was} were foreseen. Work was begun on a campus ^{pastors'} handbook. Significant from an organizational point of view was the recommendation from one OJN to Arnold Schroeder reported in correspondence on July 30, 1962 that "the Minnesota District Mission Board be

responsible for the development of a WELS ministry to students in the Twin Cities. The SWC had found a large concentration of students there and urged the early calling of a full-time campus pastor to serve them. As a alternative possibility it was suggested the SWC might call together with the Minnesota DMB.

The 1963 WELS convention was informed by the SWC that there now were one full-time and 25 part-time campus ministries in our synod. The SWC expressed a desire to begin several more full-time ministries (Milwaukee and Twin Cities especially) but noted that the Synod had not demonstrated that it wished to support a full-time ministry in all the areas that called for it. The Synod, it was urged "needs to become clear on the nature and extent of the student service program it wishes to pursue." (1963 Proc. p.155) Lack of action was resulting in the loss of an important segment of its future potential by default."

~~1963~~ ^{In 1963} saw Pastor Elmer Mahnke replace Conrad Frey as chairman of the Student Service Committee.

1964 saw a number of very important developments in the growth of our campus ministry. We sold our share of the assets of Calvary chapel in Madison to the LCMS enabling the W. Wis. Dist. Mission Board to begin efforts to establish a campus ministry completely our own in Madison. Richard Balge was called as Full-time campus pastor. Campus work was begun in rented quarters in a good location. Campus houses were dedicated in Brookings, S.D. and Mankato, Minn. A student organization: Lutheran Collegians was established. A search was begun for a campus house in Milwaukee. 1965 saw the installation of a second full-time campus pastor, Richard Ziesemer, in Milwaukee and the dedication of a campus house there. Lutheran Collegians held their first convention at Whitewater. Twelve chapters were represented. Daniel Malchow was appointed chairman of the SWC. In 1966 WELS students in La Crosse were provided with a campus house. A Clearinghouse

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program for exchanging information, ideas, and materials among campus pastors was now in operation. Pastors were urged to send students' names directly to the campus pastor assigned to the university their student was attending. In 1967 the student mailing list was reported to have reached 1560 names, and still there was ample evidence that many names were unreported. The SWC urged the DMBs to give more attention to enrollments of WELS students on fast growing campuses in their districts. The Student Service Committee complained about the overlapping of responsibilities between themselves and the DMBs and the fact that the SWC often was left uninformed of developments and received no reports from campus pastors. Lutheran Collegians continued to grow. Campus Pastors' Workshops were being held annually. Investment in campus work was described as an investment in the future. In 1968 1800+ names were on the student mailing list. Sixteen LC chapters were functioning. In 1969 John Raabe replaced Daniel Malchow as SWC Chairman. The student mailing list topped 1900. Reports from campus pastors suggested there were approximately 7000 WELS students on college campuses. There were 10 campus houses. 43 campus pastors were listed in the synod yearbook. Sixty more ^{were} ~~are~~ appointed to work on campuses in 31 states. Lutheran Collegians now has 20 chapters. 200 attend ^{ed the} annual convention. They voted to fund the sending of a husband and wife team to the ELS mission in Peru. Inner city VBS and canvassing projects ^{were} ~~are~~ carried out. The 1969 WELS convention adopted the recommendations of the Administration Survey Commission to establish a Special Ministries Board to combine under its supervision the work of the Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission and the Board for the Mentally Retarded. In the reorganization that resulted in 1970 James Albrecht was named chairman of Student Services Committee. He was succeeded in 1972 by Larry Pautz. Looking back, 1970 appears to be a turning point in the work of the campus ministry. Surveying the years from 1955 to 1969

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we can clearly see that Wisconsin as a Synod did indeed finally get organized for doing student work on our country's campuses. That there was plenty of work waiting to be done certainly is evident. Increasingly in these years manpower was recruited, financial resources were made available to permit the striking expansion of our campus work we have just reported. May God in His grace grant abundant fruit to the labors of our now numerous campus pastors!

V. THE WELS CAMPUS MINISTRY UNDER THE SPECIAL MINISTRIES BOARD.

In the '70s our campus work has taken on a somewhat altered emphasis. The rapid growth of the 60s could not be maintained indefinitely. Several turnovers in committee membership also brought a slowing in the progress of Student Service Committee work until new members could familiarize themselves with their responsibilities. In its 1973 report (BoRAM p. 56) the Committee expressed concern that "our campus ministry and the Lutheran Collegians apparently are not as vigorous as several years ago." There were discussions on ways of clarifying where responsibility lay for various aspects of campus work. By 1975 the SSC had been enlarged to five members. A revised Campus Pastors' Handbook was prepared. A paper directed especially to WELS college students was on the drawing boards. In 1976 criteria were worked out for evaluating the potential of a given campus or area for a WELS campus ministry, these criteria also are intended for use in evaluating existing ministries. A program of orientation for Wis. Luth. Seminary graduates assigned to campus ministries was being carried out. It would appear then, that the main thrust in the '70s has been toward the improvement in quality of work, rather than to expansion. The result under God's grace ought still to be an increase of young Christians retained and strengthened to join us and all the members of WELS in carrying on and expanding further the work of our Lord's Kingdom.

Whether the delayed involvement of our Synod in effective campus ministry was caused by lack of vision, lack of confidence we could do it, or the bad habit of letting Missouri do it, ^{remains to be determined} ~~I am not able to say.~~ ^{It is clear} But ~~I do know and thank God~~ that he has taught us since 1961 that ^{we are entrusted,} if we but put the talents to use that He has entrusted to us He will provide blessings and fruit beyond our expectations. Even amid the Godless humanism and rationalism that pervades most academic communities the Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation.