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An Evaluation of the "Affirming Rural Mission" Workshop as a Vital Part of the Preparation of Lutheran Pastors for the Town and Country Ministry

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AN EVALUATION OF THE "AFFIRMING RURAL MISSION" WORKSHOP AS A VITAL PART OF THE PREPARATION OF LUTHERAN PASTORS FOR THE TOWN AND COUNTRY MINISTRY

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by

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CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

Introduction: Purpose and Procedure

Rural America has experienced many significant changes in the past twenty-five years. Many of these changes have been good and have had a positive influence upon the rural community. But the changes in town and country life have also caused many problems. The churches in rural areas have also felt these problems.

As the population of America has shifted from rural to urban, the concern and planning of church leadership has also been urbanized. More and more attention in the church has been directed toward the numerous problems of our metropolitan areas. As a result, "the growing problems of the rural areas have been more or less neglected by the church."[1]

It was this general lack of concern for the church in town and country America that moved me to research this area of the church's ministry. The rural population has become a minority in the United States, but that does not mean that rural people can be ignored by the church.

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[1]Gilbert James and Robert G. Wickens, The Town and Country Church: A Topical Bibliography (Wilmore, Kentucky: The Department of the Church in Society, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1968), p. 1.

The purpose of this paper, first of all, is to examine the many problems faced by the people living in town and country communities. By citing various authorities on the rural church, I will demonstrate how these problems also affect the church in town and country.

Secondly, I will discuss the need of a more specialized training for ministerial candidates for the town and country ministry. My research for this section included a study of the placement of ministerial candidates of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod between 1962 and 1967 by Allen Nauss. I also studied the placement of the 1970 ministerial candidates of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in order to determine the type of congregation most graduates received. In addition to this, I studied the backgrounds of the 1970 graduates of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to determine what kind of experience the majority of the class had with the rural community previous to their graduation from the seminary.

Thirdly, I will examine what the three major Lutheran Synods have done in the area of specialized training for their town and country pastors. The methodology used for this section was primarily researching records of workshops and college catalogues of the two seminaries of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

Finally, I propose to evaluate the Affirming Rural Mission (ARM) workshop which was held in Marvin, South Dakota, on June 14 through July 16, 1970. This workshop was sponsored by

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod for the specialized training of its ministerial candidates who had been assigned to rural parishes. My evaluation of the Affirming Rural Mission Workshop was the result of (a) a previous evaluation of the Affirming Rural Mission Workshop by its participants and members of the staff, (b) my own evaluation Questionnaire which I sent to the participants and to four of the staff members, and (c) interviews which I had with one of the participants and with one of the staff members.

The Meaning of "Rural"

The term "rural" has a wide variety of meanings. The first thing most people think of when they hear the word rural is the farmer, who makes his living by working the land and raising crops. Others think of the farmer or rancher who raises some type of livestock, such as, cattle, hogs, or poultry. The word "rural," however, has a much broader meaning than this. The United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census used the term "rural" to describe any town under 2,500 population. In a publication entitled Rural Church Work, The Board for Missions of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod accepts a four-point definition of the word "rural." They define as rural a) all farm land people, b) all people who process agricultural products, c) all professions serving the farm land people directly, and d) all businesses serving farm

land people directly.[2]

Another term used synonymously with rural is "town and country." As noted above, the term "rural" has been given a broad meaning, but it lost its validity as an adequate antonym to "urban."[3] A better term was needed to include emerging relationships between open country and various sized communities. "Town and Country" is being used by the churches. It describes everything from the open country to communities up to populations of 5, 10, or 25 thousand people.[4] The National Lutheran Council used the phrase "church in town and country" from 1958 to 1966 to mean "a demographic and geographic area of mission responsibility from open country to communities up to 25,000."[5] Another term being used--although not as widely--is "nonmetropolitan."

In this paper I will be speaking about three different types of rural communities. First of all, I will use the words "country" or "rural" to describe the open country areas. This is where one finds the farm family living on the farm away from small towns and villages.

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[2]Rural Church Work: A Digest of Rural Life Institute Proceedings Board for Missions in North and South America (St. Louis: n.p., 1958), p. 2.

[3]Giles C. Ekola, Town and Country America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 12.

[4]ibid.

[5]ibid.

Secondly, in speaking about town and country America, I will be using the terms "small town" and "small city" for all communities under 20,000 population. These communities are included in the category "town and country" because the people living in most communities under 20,000 provide many goods and services for people involved in agriculture. These people, in many cases, are quite closely associated with the rural community. Many people living in communities between 2,500 and 20,000 population have become urbanized in their life styles. This is part of a general urbanization which is taking place in town and country America.

The third kind of town and country community is the fringe area surrounding the large urban communities. These "fringe communities" were, in many cases, open country or small town communities just ten or twenty years ago. But because of a rapid influx of population, these rural areas have become urbanized. This rapid increase in population has been caused either by the decentralization of industries into rural areas, or by the expansion of the metropolitan population in ever-widening circles into one-time town and country communities.[6] Another factor responsible for bringing urban population into rural areas is the increased leisure time in the urban society. Many urbanites flow out of the large cities

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[6]Shirley Edward Greene, Ferment on the Fringe (Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, 1960), p. 3.

in order to take advantage of resort and recreational opportunities in rural settings.

CHAPTER II

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

Change in Town and Country America

Many people think of the town and country community as a place where "nothing important ever happens." People who are not familiar with rural life tend to picture the small town and country communities as being "slow-moving," "conservative," and "permanent." In contrast to this view of rural America, one prominent rural sociologist has said, "the one word most characteristic of rural life in the United States today is the word 'change.'"[1] Some of these changes are: the decline in rural population, the urbanization of the rural community, a rapid technological advancement, and specialization in agriculture. Not only the families living on the farms have been affected with these changes. The citizens of the towns and villages are also feeling the pressures of change. Because of the great advancements in transportation and communication there is no longer a need for all the towns and small cities which are scattered through the countryside. Some of these changes have been good for the town and country community, but many of them have caused problems. In the rest of this chapter I

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[1]Shirley Edward Greene, Ferment on the Fringe (Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, 1960), p. 3.

will discuss the problems that the rural communities are facing and how they have dealt with them.

Movement of People from Town and Country to Urban Centers

The one change that has hurt the town and country community the most is the movement of rural people to the large cities. Most of those people moving into urban centers come from the farm or the small town. They are young people between the age of eighteen and forty, and they move because there are not enough jobs in town and country communities to allow them to remain in the country. The farms are becoming larger and fewer, and fewer farmers are needed to provide the food and fiber for our nation. Country towns and small cities do not have sufficient job opportunities for their young residents either. So the young, industrious man or woman in rural America who does not inherit his father's farm or business, naturally moves to the large metropolitan area for more promising employment.

The seriousness of this problem cannot be overlooked. A tremendous number of people have migrated away from rural America during the past thirty years.

> The net migration from farms amounted to 8.9 million between 1940 and 1950, and between 1950 and 1960 it was only slightly less, 8.6 million persons. The net migration from farms during those 20 years was greater than the net immigration from overseas into this country during the peak years, 1896-1915.[2]

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[2]Rex R. Campbell and Wayne H. Oberle, editors, Beyond the Suburbs (Columbia, Missouri: Lucas Brothers Publishers, 1967), I, 3.

This same trend has continued since 1960:

> The nation's farm population . . . continued to drop, decreasing about twenty-one percent during the five-year period (1960-1965), while the nonfarm population increased by ten percent. The twelve million persons now living on farms represent only about six percent of the total population. In 1960, the farm population had numbered 15.6 million, nearly 9 percent of the total.[3]

Although the percentage of this country's population that lives in the town and country communities is becoming smaller each year, there is a portion of that rural population that is getting larger. That is the rural nonfarm population. The rural nonfarm population includes all people who live in rural areas, but do not farm. The large number of people moving out into rural communities from the large cities contributes to the growing number of rural nonfarm residents. "In 1920 the rural nonfarm segment was approximately 40 percent of the rural total, while in 1960 it made up about 70 percent of the rural population."[4]

Both of these movements in the population--the moving away of people from the open country and the rapid influx of urban people into the fringe areas around large cities--have caused problems in the respective communities.

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[3]The United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Americans at Mid-decade (Revised edition; Washington, D. C.: The United States Department of Commerce, 1966), Series P-23, Number 16, 13. The 1970 census has not yet been completely released, therefore the 1965 Agricultural census report is being used.

[4]Campbell and Oberle, I, 45.

As more and more of the young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five move away from the farms, the average age of the farmer in the United States has risen. "The average age of farm operators in 1962 was about fifty years, and there were more operators between the ages of forty-five and fifty-four than in any other ten-year age group."[5]

The small town is experiencing the same problem. Many communities under 2,500 population have a shortage of children under ten years of age and a shortage of adults under fifty-five. On the other hand, there is a relative excess of older people; this excess is particularly marked for persons sixty-five and over.[6] "The small towns in many sections continue to provide a place to which older persons move from the open country when they retire. In the small towns, one person in every eight is sixty-five or over."[7]

One result of Town and country's older citizenry is that the community as a whole is more conservative. Since the community leadership in these areas is also older and more conservative, the community has been much slower to accept any beneficial change. This has hampered the advancement of the rural communities.

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[5] ibid., I, 6.

[6] ibid., I, 4.

[7] ibid.

The movement of the population to urban areas has hurt the town and country community in other ways. As the younger men and women leave the rural community, much of the leadership potential is lost to the larger cities. Doctors, dentists, lawyers, and other professionals know that opportunities are much better for them in the larger city. They avoid the small country towns.

The less populated rural areas have difficulty supporting adequate schools for their children. The cost of providing schools and equipping them with the latest educational materials puts a huge tax burden upon the few taxpayers that remain. The same holds true for other community services and projects which are financed by the local taxpayers. For this reason health and recreational facilities are often lacking in the villages and small towns.

But just the opposite problems face the people living in the fringe areas around large urban centers. There the problem is that too many people are moving in too fast. As factories are built and as people begin to move into the fringe areas the rural culture is threatened. New demands and laws are necessitated by the rapid upsurge in population. Zoning laws are put into effect; building codes are drawn up; soon the land is blocked into city blocks and new streets are paved. All these things are a way of life for the city dweller, but for people who have grown up in a town or country society, they are a threat.

Many times the more liberal urbanite, moving into the fringe community, dislikes the attitude of the more conservative people living there. The rural orientated person seems to be against change. He is a threat to any kind of progress in the community. Therefore, a temporary "split culture" may exist in the fringe areas until these misunderstandings are worked out, or until some of the rural orientated people move out.

The Urbanization of Town and Country Society

As was seen, many people living in town and country areas have been moving to urban communities. Besides this movement of population, the rural society is experiencing another change. Rural society itself is becoming more urbanized.

The traditional town and country community was made up of scattered farmsteads surrounding country villages. The social relationships of the farm families centered around that country neighborhood. The neighborhood interaction consisted of informal visiting and exchange of work. Families jointly built and supported their own institutions such as: schools, churches, cemeteries, stores and creameries.[8] The entire life of people living in the rural communities of the past centered around the country neighborhood and one or two towns or small

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[8] ibid., I, 39.

cities to which they traveled to purchase goods and to market their farm products.

In 1911, the sociologist C. J. Galpin made a study of Walworth County in Southern Wisconsin:

> By looking at the wagon ruts outside the farmers' gates he could tell which way they went to shop in town.... He found that people generally traveled a maximum of five miles to fulfill their ordinary trading needs. At horse and buggy speeds, this represented an hour's travel.[9]

Bernard Quinn uses C. J. Galpin's study to demonstrate that in 1911 "life was organized on a comparatively small scale; and people were satisfied with the goods and services obtained in towns of 500 to 1000 people."[10]

The town and country society has changed greatly since 1911. Town and country is becoming more and more urbanized. Bernard Quinn calls this urbanization "an increase in societal scale."[11] The boundaries which held the traditional rural society have broken down. There is more interaction between the rural and urban communities. Because of technological developments in the areas of transportation and communication, and because of a greater specialization in agriculture, the rural and urban communities are much more interdependent today.

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[9]Bernard Quinn, The Changing Context of Town and Country Ministry (Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1970), p. 9.

[10]ibid.

[11]ibid., p. 13.

The cause for this interdependence can be explained in various ways. Specialization in farming has made the farmer dependent upon the manufacturer for the highly sophisticated machinery that is needed for modern-day agriculture. He is dependent upon the scientist who develops hybrid varieties of the grain he plants. Today more than ever the farmer depends upon others to process and market his products. Farmers are becoming so specialized that "their own family food needs are often supplied from the outside."[12]

My own father owns and operates a dairy farm in Wisconsin. The degree of specialization that has taken place on his dairy farm is indicated by the fact that one no longer finds a variety of animals being raised there. The ducks, chickens, hogs, sheep, and horses have long since disappeared. Besides the many dairy cattle, the only animals that remain are the dog and cats.

Other causes for a greater interaction between rural and urban societies is the development of better communication and means of transportation. Studies have shown that mass media has brought the rural family in touch with the news. Through radio and television, people in rural areas can enjoy the same entertainment that urban dwellers enjoy.

> Recent sample surveys have shown that an increasing proportion of rural people have television, and that the difference in this regard between rural and urban areas

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[12] ibid., p. 11.

> is declining. By 1960, 76 percent of rural farm, 88 percent of rural nonfarm, and 89 percent of urban people had television, while in 1955, corresponding figures were 42, 61, and 64 percent respectively.[13]

Still another reason for increased interaction between rural and urban cultures is the new developments in transportation. Complementary to the use of the automobile has been the development of a network of all-weather roads. This has made it possible for rural people to greatly increase their radius of travel.

> In both 1921 and 1959 there were approximately three million miles of rural roads in the United States. In the former year, however, only 13 percent of this mileage was surfaced, while in the latter year 69 percent was surfaced. The old "team haul" has been replaced by the much larger radius of a comfortable one-day auto trip.[14]

This ability to travel farther from home enables the rural family to purchase goods in the larger cities. This is advantageous to the rural people because they have a greater variety to choose from. This mobility of the rural family has been harmful to the small town businessman, however, because people bypass his business in favor of the greater variety and lower prices of the large scale urban retailers.[15]

The better means of transportation not only allows the

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[13] Campbell and Oberle, I, 41.

[14] ibid., I, 40.

[15] ibid., I, 41-42.

town or country resident to drive to the large city on business. He goes there on pleasure as well. The rural dweller is no longer confined to the informal neighborhood visiting or to the card parties in the village hall. He is able to take part in the same social and cultural activities that the urban resident enjoys.

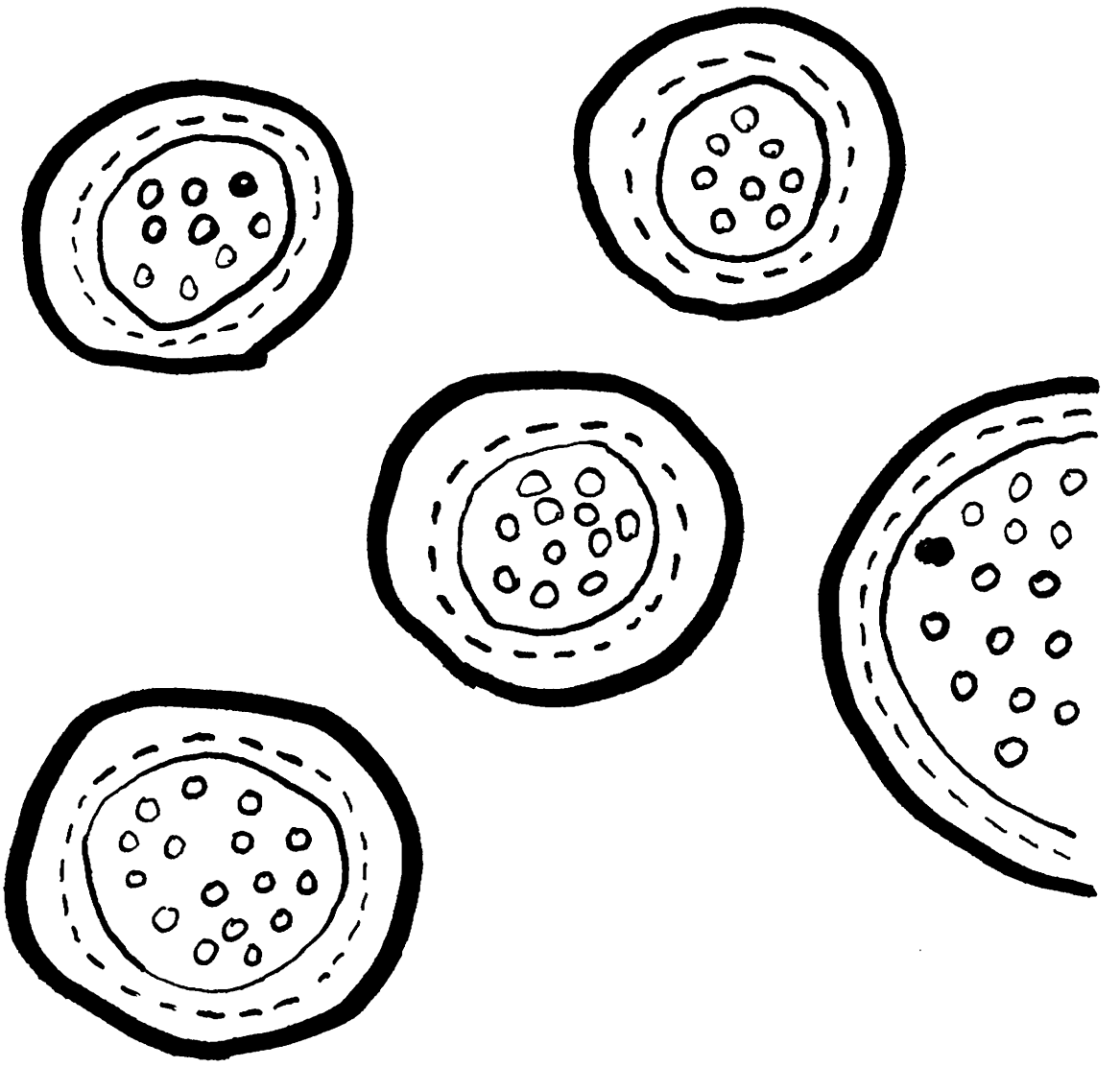
Another aspect of this interaction of rural and urban societies is the number of rural residents who drive to the cities to work. This group includes the rural nonfarm person as well as the part-time farmer.

Bernard Quinn uses an interesting diagram to illustrate his idea of the "increase in societal scale" in his book, The Changing Context of Town and Country Ministry. I have reproduced his drawings on the following three pages.

The small solid lines in Figures 1-3 circumscribe areas in which people know each other personally. Notice how these boundaries break down as one moves from the traditional small town to the town and country of the future.

The dotted lines indicate the boundaries within which people trade. It also includes the place to which they commute for employment and for social purposes.

The heavy black lines circumscribe the smallest area where it is possible for social systems to work together and really get things done. It is the smallest area in which interdependent action on the part of the social systems can be truly effective.



—— Where people know each other personally

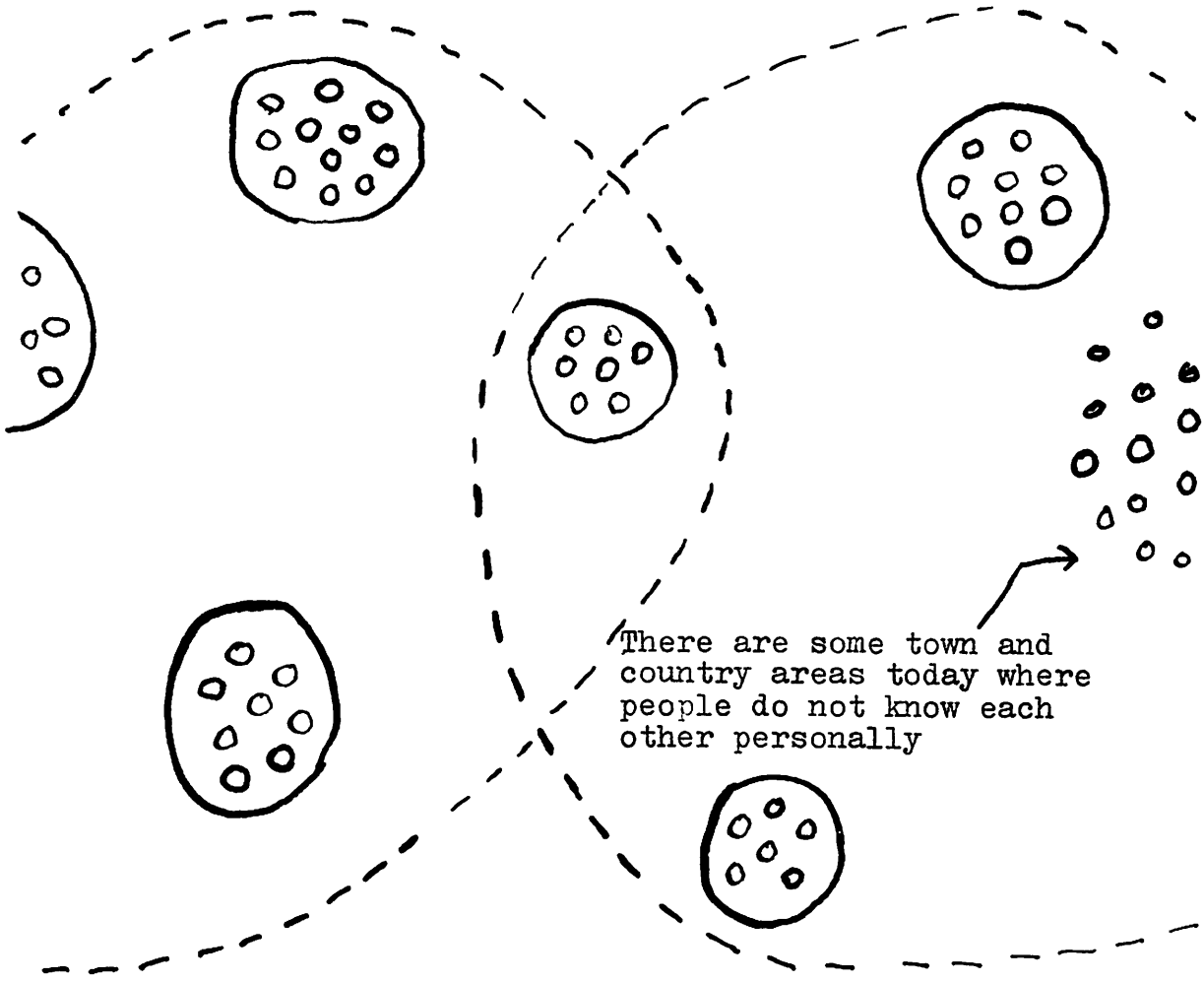
- - -Where people work, trade, and carry on their daily social life

▬▬ Where social systems interact with each other: an area large enough for effective interdependent action relating to daily life.

In the traditional small community all three boundaries generally coincide within an area containing relatively few people.

Figure 1. The Traditional Small Community in Societies of Lower Scale.*

*Quinn, The Changing Context, p. 14.



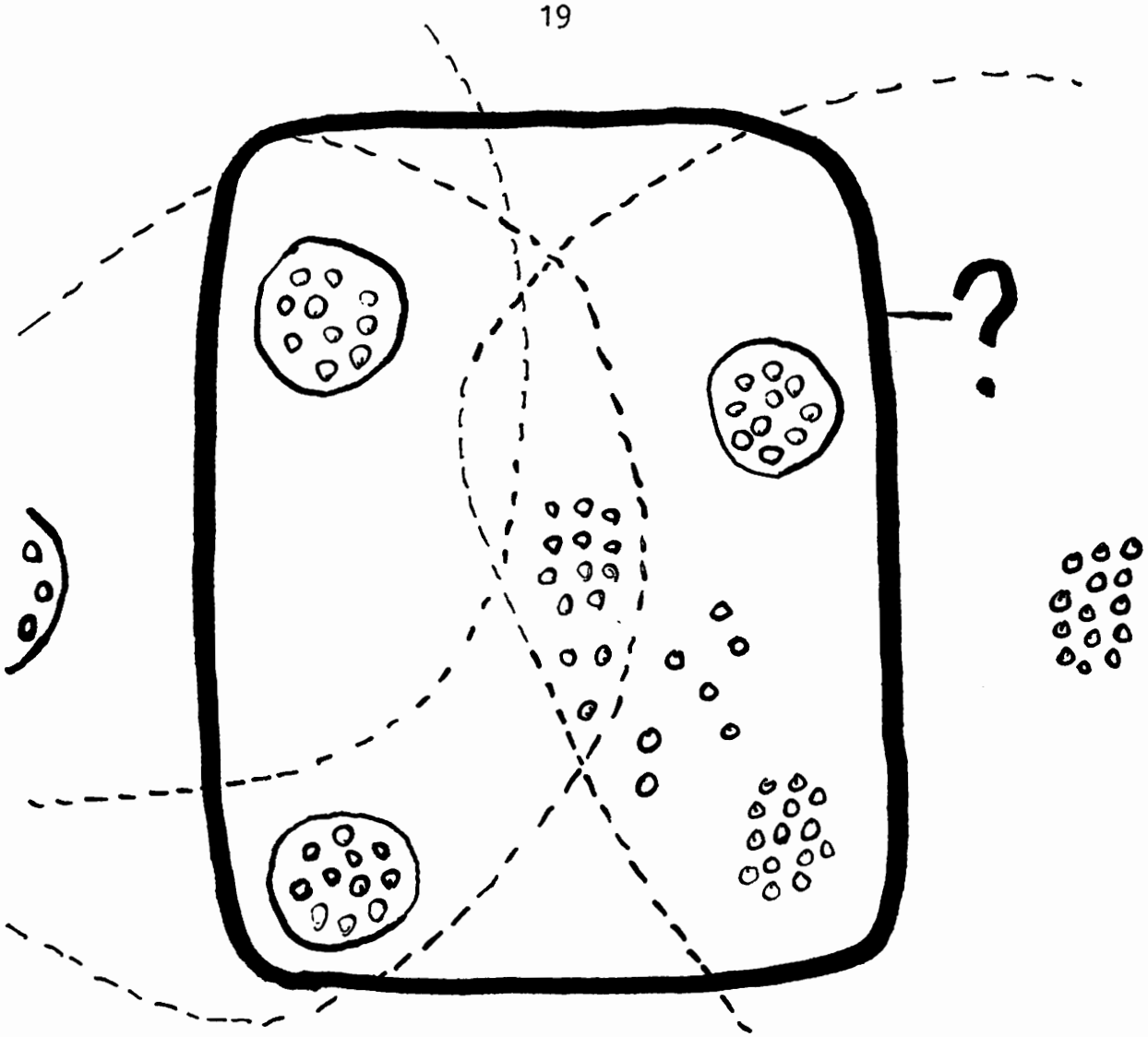
——— Where people know each other personally

- - - - Where people go for jobs, trade, services, and social life. The radius of interaction tends to increase and interaction-boundaries tend to overlap.

▬▬ The old boundaries of effective cooperation among social systems have disappeared, and the new, larger boundaries not yet emerged.

Figure 2. Localities in Town and Country America today.*

*ibid., p. 15.



——— Where people know each other personally. People will know each other in some localities; in others they will not.

- - - - Where people go for jobs, trade, services, and social life. The radius of interaction will tend to increase and interaction-boundaries will tend to overlap and disappear.

▬▬ Where social systems can interact with each other in multi-county areas large enough for effective interdependent action relating to the socio-economic environment. Will these boundaries emerge?

Figure 3. Town and Country of the Future?*

*ibid., p. 16.

Financial Conditions in Town and Country

Farmers and other people living in town and country America have had a lower income than the average urbanite. This is still true today. Many authorities on the rural economy agree that the economic problems of the rural resident are still very real and important.[16] James H. Copp exemplifies this problem by comparing the average income of farm families to that of the average nonfarm family:

> The current income for farm families is only a little more than half that for nonfarm families. Nonwhite farm families have a median income which is less than half that of white farm families. Rural nonfarm families also have lower median incomes than urban families--in general, it is about three-quarters as large as urban income. Not only are incomes lower, but families are larger.[17]

One reason for the generally lower income among farm families is that many farmers have failed to adjust to new methods of farm production. In some cases this has happened because of a lack of desire to change, but in most cases the reason has been economic. The individual farmer does not have the capital necessary to purchase the needed machinery. He cannot afford to invest in additional land. "Therefore, within our total agriculture population, an increasingly large segment of the farms is found to be characterized by malad-

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[16]Robert W. Larson, E. W. Mueller, and Emil R. Wendt, Social Changes and Christian Responsibility in Town and Country (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1960), p. 11.

[17]Campbell and Oberle, II, p. 28.

justment and gross deficiencies."[18]

The farmer has been caught in a price squeeze for many years. The cost of machinery, land, and other goods and services have been rising each year. On the other hand the return the farmer gets for his products has not risen in proportion to his cost of operating. In some cases, the return he gets per unit for his product has decreased in the last twenty-five years. The following tables will demonstrate this trend.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF SELECTED ITEMS ON CORN BELT FARMS, 1947-49 AND 1960 (HOG-DAIRY)*

Item	Unit	1947-49	1960
Land in farm	Acres	158	178
Gross farm income	Dollars	9,956	11,939
Total farm capital	Dollars	33,700	56,240
Net farm income	Dollars	5,386	4,616
1960 net farm income as a percent of 1947-49		(86)	
Return per $100 invested	Dollars	7.90	.49
Return per hour of family	Dollars	1.10	.31

*E. W. Mueller and Giles C. Ekola, editors, The Silent Struggle for Mid-America (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963) p. 28.

[18]Ernest J. Nesius, The Rural Society in Transition (Morgan Town, West Virginia: Office of Research and Development, West Virginia University, 1966), p. 28.

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF SELECTED ITEMS ON CORN BELT FARMS 1947-49 AND 1960 (HOG-BEEF FATTENING)*

Item	Unit	1947-49	1960
Land in farm	Acres	192	216
Gross farm income	Dollars	19,182	23,221
Total farm capital	Dollars	50,920	83,370
Net farm income	Dollars	10,343	5,422
1960 net farm income as a percent of 1947-49			(52)
Return per $100 invested	Dollars	14.61	1.41
Return per hour of family	Dollars	2.22	.07

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF SELECTED ITEMS ON CORN BELT FARMS, 1947-49 AND 1960 (CASH-GRAIN)*

Item	Unit	1947-49	1960
Land in farm	Acres	222	248
Gross farm income	Dollars	13,732	15,159
Total farm capital	Dollars	58,220	109,670
Net farm income	Dollars	8,802	6,780
1960 net farm income as a percent of 1947-49			(77)
Return per $100 invested	Dollars	11.70	3.33
Return per hour of family	Dollars	2.21	.02

*Mueller and Ekola, p. 28.

*Ibid.

The statistics show that the farms are getting bigger (see TABLES 1-3). At the same time the farmers are forced to invest more and more in equipment. But as the cost of farming rises, a smaller return is received for farm products. This trend is continuing today.

These economic conditions have posed many problems for farm families. If a man wishes to remain on the farm, and at the same time receive an adequate income, he must expand. The great demand for land in this country has caused land prices to skyrocket.

The economic conditions in rural America have also made the family farm less feasible as a working unit. The family farm has been the "archetype for American agricultural production."[19] It can be described as one meeting three criteria: (a) except in peak season or in unusual temporary circumstances, the farm family performs most of the labor; (b) the farm family supplies most of the management; and (c) the farm yields sufficient income for at least an acceptable level of living for the farm family.[20]

One problem that the family farm faces is whether the farm will provide enough income for the family. When a farmer is ready to retire, he also faces the problem of how to divide

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[19]Campbell and Oberle, II, 19.

[20]Larson, Mueller, and Wendt, p. 15.

his farm between his sons. He certainly cannot split the land between his sons because the land he has been farming, very likely, was not enough to support one family adequately. Still another problem is that the farms are getting so big that the members of the family cannot perform all the labor.

The financial conditions on the farm have caused many farmers to be "part-time farmers." A part-time farmer is one who works off the farm besides working his farm. Off the farm employment has been increasing.

> 34 percent of all commercial farm operators reported some off-farm employment in 1959, compared to 27 percent in 1950. Off-farm employment of 100 days or more was reported by 15 percent of the commercial farm operators in 1959, compared to 9 percent in 1950.[21]

There are several reasons for this increase. Urban and industrial expansion have multiplied job opportunities for farm people. There has been an increased desire of farm people generally for higher incomes. Some farmers--especially younger men--want to increase their capital to invest in a bigger farm operation.[22]

But not only the farmer is faced with problems caused by the economic conditions in rural America. The small town businessman is also hurt by the existing conditions. Because people are driving greater distances to large cities to purchase goods and services, the small town businessman is losing business.

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[21] Campbell and Oberle, III, 23.

[22] ibid.

He finds it difficult to compete with the large volume businesses in the urban areas. Due to the specialization of the farms today, the farmers often require special goods and services which not every small town can offer.

In summary, one can explain the major causes of problems in rural America as: the movement of population away from town and country areas, the urbanization of rural society, economic conditions in rural areas, and technological developments in agriculture. These factors are causing a transition in town and country America which affect the lives of all the people who live there.

Changes in Rural Life are met with Mixed Feelings

The residents of town and country America have viewed the changes taking place in their communities with mixed emotions. Some people have risen to meet the problems with the necessary changes in their business or their way of life. Others, however, have consistently resisted the thought of changing.

Many people badly miss the old traditional country life. The social bonds that once held town and country people in a closely knit community have all but disappeared. Many people living in rural areas have very good reasons why they still identify themselves with their individual town or country locality. They like to live in conditions that are not so crowded. People read in the newspapers about what is happening in the large cities. They seem to be ungovernable. For

this reason rural residents want to retain the rural environment. That is why many rural people stay on the farms or in the small towns even after they retire. That is also the reason why farmers remain on their farms even after they realize that they could be making more money in some other occupation. But there is a danger that as rural people cling tightly to the traditional community, they prolong a needed transition. The traditional town and country community is simply "too small to serve as the focus for meaningful socio-economic and environmental concern."[23]

The younger members of the rural community, however, have been more ready to accept the changing situation in rural areas. As was mentioned above, it is the young portion of the rural communities that is moving to the urban centers. Some of the younger rural residents want to leave because they believe that their home town is dead.[24] Others are interested in staying and improving their community with their leadership.

The individual farmer has dealt with the economic problem he faces in three different ways. Many farmers are forced to quit farming. This can be shown by the decreasing percentage of the labor force in the country that is engaged in farming. In 1900, 38 percent of the work force of this nation was

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[23]Quinn, The Changing Context, p. 22.

[24]ibid., p. 28.

in agriculture. By 1950 only 12 percent of the work force was employed in agriculture, and by 1960 the percentage had dropped to 6 percent.[25]

Many of the older farmers quit because they did not want to make the necessary changes to stay in the business. Some of the younger men who were farming quit because they did not have the necessary capital to expand. There were also many young men who were potential farmers, but they were forced to go to the cities for employment because it was just too expensive to get a start in the farming business. Most of these men had to find employment in the larger cities because town and country communities did not offer enough opportunities.

Farmers have also faced the economic crises by finding part-time work off the farm. This off-farm employment is temporary for some farmers, but for others it is a permanent arrangement. All the farmers who wanted to remain full-time farmers have accepted the changes in technology. They have expanded their farming unit, and have bought the necessary machinery to increase their production.

Through this technological advancement the American farmer has demonstrated his ability to adjust to change. The records of the past seventy years demonstrate this.

> In 1910, each farm worker supplied farm products for seven persons at home and abroad; in 1950, he met requirements for 15.47; and in 1964, he supplied for 33.25 persons.

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[25]Campbell and Oberle, II, 16.

> If farm labor productivity had not changed since 1910, the farm labor force would account for 37 percent of the civilian labor force rather than the 9 percent found today. In 1939, 21 billion man hours of labor were required for farm work, whereas in 1964, slightly more than 8 billion were required. Today, less than 3.6 million farms produce a surplus of farm commodities annually as contrasted with the more than 6 million farms in 1930....[26]

The farmer's acceptance of the new technical innovations goes beyond the modern machinery he uses. He is also dependent upon agricultural science to provide better fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides. He plants the latest hybrid grains which are suited for his specific purpose.

The livestock raiser is able to get his animal on the market faster because the hybrid cattle, hogs, and poultry gain weight faster and are much more resistant to diseases. This is another way in which the modern farmer has conformed to the highly industrialized, high production farming.

The problems of declining population in the open country and the rapid increase of population in fringe areas around large cities has been dealt with by community planning and organization. The steady decline in the open country population is still a serious problem. The villages and small towns in rural areas find that they can no longer support their schools properly. As the citizenry see the young people moving to the cities, a feeling of defeat creeps over these small communities. Rural people see some of their towns turning

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[26]Nesius, p. 26.

into ghost towns, and they begin to wonder if there is any hope left for their small communities.

But careful community planning will help establish healthy communities in the open country. Some authorities on rural sociology agree that some of the small towns will have to die. Area community planning will be necessary to help develop small cities of 5,000 and over to be centers for the surrounding countryside. This seems to be the only hope for the survival of open country communities.[27]

The Lower Sioux Basin surrounding Sioux Falls, South Dakota, is an excellent example of long range community planning. An organization called "Center for Community Organization and Area Development" has been organized to help plan and "Open City" or "Total Community" idea.[28] The area is comprised of Sioux Falls and other "satellite cities" and towns around Sioux Falls. There are no real set boundaries for this community. These boundaries are set by the movements and activities of the people living in the area.

"Center for Community Organization and Area Development" urges the citizens in the area to develop a new neighborliness among the villages and towns that make up the community. This community is urged to be on the offensive rather than on the defensive. Its citizens are urged to plan and work together.

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[27] Campbell and Oberle, III, 38-39.

[28] The Lower Sioux Basin (Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Center for Community Organization and Area Development, n.d.).

CHAPTER III

THE CHALLENGE FACING THE RURAL CONGREGATION

The Over Churched Country

Most of the problems that exist in the town and country community are also felt by the congregations in those areas. One problem that exists in rural areas is that there are too many churches. In some cases there are two congregations of the same denomination only four or five miles apart. It is very probable that both of these congregations are suffering from a lack of membership. Both churches are experiencing difficulties in supporting their pastor--if they have one, and both congregations have very limited programs.

At the time that many of the older town and country congregations were built there was a need for them to be four or five miles apart. In the horse and buggy days four or five miles was almost a one-hour drive, and the churches were built with that in mind.

Another cause for several different congregations of the same denomination being built in a town was the existence of different ethnic groups. Language barriers did present a problem as people of different nationalistic and linguistic backgrounds settled in an area.[1] The men and women who formed

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[1] Northeastern Montana Town and Country Workshop: Held at Pella Lutheran Church, Sidney, Montana, March 20-21, 1961, (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1961), p. 2.

these congregations were also interested in preserving the customs that they had been used to in the past.

When the congregations in town and country America were started, in most cases, there were enough people to justify starting a congregation. At that time these small congregations could support a pastor. This is no longer the case. The gradual decline of the population in rural areas has hurt the church. This decline in rural population is occurring in areas of low income, but is also occurring in areas where the land is good and the production is high. In these prosperous areas the farms are becoming larger. This means fewer farms and fewer people. "Possibly a third of our rural churches are in such areas."[2]

As more and more people move away from town and country areas, the average age of the church members increases. This leaves fewer young people for leadership roles in the rural congregations. In many cases when older members hold positions of leadership in congregations, the congregation will be more conservative.

> ". . . some older people like to maintain a status quo. They are quite often resistant to any change. While they have not resisted the change as far as farm operations are concerned, they are quick to resist any change as far as the church is concerned."[3]

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[2]Robert W. Larson, E. W. Mueller, and Emil R. Wendt, Social Changes and Christian Responsibility in Town and Country (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1960), p. 20.

[3]Northwestern Montana Town and Country Workshop, p. 26.

Another factor in the decline in congregational membership is the accompanying feeling of despair and defeatism that is experienced by many members. As they watch their membership decline, they realize that they will not be able to support as full a congregational program as they would like. The members begin to realize that if their fellow members continue to move from the country, they will not even be able to support a pastor.

If an area is overchurched, a merger may be the answer to the problem of a declining membership. "The Kingdom of God can . . .be advanced by congregations closing their doors and merging with a neighboring congregation."[4] Where mergers or consolidations will result in a more adequate use of resources and a stronger Christian witness, congregations should advance the mission of the church by taking the necessary action.[5]

Forming multiple parishes does not always solve the problem. In some cases the congregations involved in a multiple parish arrangement do not have worship services every Sunday. Each individual congregation in a multiple parish situation does not always have enough members to have a full program. Often Sunday School classes are so small that two or three different age groups have the same teacher. The youth groups are

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[4]E. W. Mueller, A Look Ahead (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1960), p. 4.

[5]E. W. Mueller and Giles C. Ekola, editors, The Silent Struggle for Mid-America (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), p. 124.

often very small or without leadership, and adult programs are neglected because there are not enough adults interested enough to start something.

The spirit of defeatism also affects the congregation's evangelism in the community. Sometimes when a congregation becomes very small, the people begin to think that their congregation is too small to do any effective evangelizing in the community. Part of this attitude is also due to the fact that many rural people do not realize how many unchurched people there are living in the country.

Some Pastors are not Acquainted with Rural Society

Sometimes the failure to deal with the problems of town and country areas is not the fault of the congregation alone. The pastor may be just as guilty. There are some rural pastors that are very unsympathetic to the problems in their congregations. This is often caused because the pastor is not at all acquainted with rural society. The pastors serving town and country congregations are often younger men who have had no town or country background.

Such a pastor, then, does not understand the life in the small town or on the farm. And more important, he is not familiar with the problems of the church in a town or country community.

Most pastors come out of the seminary highly trained in the area of theology. Some have a good background for the

urban ministry, but on their first assignment, find themselves in a town or country parish. There is a good chance that a man assigned to a rural parish will have a multiple parish. This alone may cause a pastor to dislike a rural parish. At times a low salary is cause for a pastor's dislike of a rural call. There are times when a pastor in a rural situation feels a lack of enthusiasm among his people. It is difficult for him to become excited in that parish if that is the case. He may also sense a lack of willingness on the part of his congregation to follow him. Unfortunately there are also pastors who fail to find any challenge in the town and country parish.

Sometimes a rift is formed between the pastor and his congregation because he looks down upon the people in his congregation. He thinks that he is too talented to be wasting his life on country people.

Occasionally a pastor is not satisfied with his town and country parish, so he does not "unpack mentally."[6] Since he does not intend to stay very long, he does not take his ministry seriously.

Another problem which might exist is that the more conservative congregation may consider their pastor too liberal. If this happens, the members of the congregation will not support

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[6]If a pastor does not like his call, he does not "unpack mentally." He is waiting for a chance to accept a call and get out. In an unpublished report by a rural planning committee entitled "Task Force on Ministry in Town and Country America" (December 4-5, 1969), this problem along with the high mobility among the clergy were listed as problems of prime importance.

their pastor's leadership. If that is the case, it would not make any difference if the pastor did recognize the problems facing the congregation. Even if he would establish some excellent goals and plan programs to reach those goals, it would do no good. His parishioners would not support him.

The Unique Problems of Congregations in the Fringe Areas

Today there are more and more small communities being swallowed up by large metropolitan areas as the large cities expand their boundaries. As the culture in these fringe areas changes from rural to urban, the congregations in them experience the same kinds of problems as the residents do. Shirley E. Greene, in his book, Ferment on the Fringe, states that these congregations on the outskirts of large metropolitan areas are currently suffering from "high blood pressure."[7]

This malady is caused by the rapid transition from the village or small town congregation to a rapidly growing congregation in suburbia. Unlike their sister churches in the small towns in the open country, they find themselves with more people than they know what to do with. Many times these congregations find themselves with budgets, facilities, and programs that are geared for a small rural congregation. Yet a much more aggressive program is needed.[8]

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[7]Shirley E. Greene, Ferment on the Fringe (Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, 1960), p. 4.

[8]ibid.

Frequently a congregation in this situation fails to recognize the opportunities around them. The members of such a congregation are often satisfied with things just the way they are. They feel comfortable and at home in a small congregation, and this feeling would be lost if the congregation would glow. Therefore there is no real serious attempt to go out into the new community forming around them to evangelize. Shirley E. Greene describes this feeling well in his book, The Ferment on the Fringe:

> Frequently the church simply fails to notice what is happening. Things are going along very well. The same people show up Sunday after Sunday, sit in the same pews, greet the same neighbors, are elected annually to the same offices, fulfill the same functions in the same ways --and this can go on until they all are dead, without regard to the burgeoning community outside the walls of the church house.[9]

Sometimes when the newcomers begin attending the worship services at the church, they hear grumbling and complaints because the facilities are becoming too small. Those who become members of the congregation may feel left out because their ways are different than those of the congregation or they are too liberal or progressive. Thus, the newcomers are overlooked or pushed to the side.

Fortunately, with proper leadership and careful planning the congregations in the fringe areas have been solving many of the problems with the transition from rural to urban in their area. By studying the needs of the growing community

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[9] ibid., p. 7.

around them, they have discovered that they do have a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the newcomers. And even though the people who move into the fringe areas from urban communities are different in many ways, they possess many talents which they can share with the members of the fringe area congregations.

In summary, one can say that congregations in rural areas do experience the problems connected to the changes that are taking place in town and country societies. These problems, of course, differ between the open country congregations and those congregations which are located in the fringe areas around large cities.

It is certainly not correct for anyone to say that nothing ever happens in town and country. And likewise, it is incorrect for a pastor to think that there are no challenges in rural congregations.

Town and country America is in the midst of a period of transition. The congregations in rural areas must share in this transition, and they must do their part to help rural people adjust to that change.

CHAPTER IV

RURAL TRAINING NEEDED FOR MINISTERIAL CANDIDATES

A High Percentage of Ministerial Candidates is Called to a Rural Parish

Since many of the problems in town and country congregations are unique to that area, it would appear that there should be some kind of special training or orientation for pastors who are involved in rural ministries. This training would also be very valuable for all ministerial candidates who have been assigned to town or country parishes.

I will demonstrate that the latter is especially true since a high percentage of ministerial candidates receive calls to town and country congregations. A second fact which demonstrates the need for special rural training for ministerial candidates is that a growing percentage of the seminary graduates have had little or no contact with the rural society.

In 1967, Mr. Allen Nauss, who is now Director of Student Personnel Services at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, did a study entitled A Six-Year Review of Ministerial Placement. In this study, Mr. Nauss lists the percentage of the candidates who received calls to established congregations,[1] to missions, and also to other specialized

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[1]Mr. Nauss used the term "established congregation" to distinguish between those congregations which have already been established and a mission congregation.

calls. He has included in the study all the candidates graduating from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, and those graduating from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, between 1962 and 1967.

Within those six years, 1,168 men graduated from the two seminaries of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. 578 or 49.49 percent of those candidates were assigned to established congregations. 21.83 percent of the candidates received calls to missions, and 28.68 percent were given specialized calls (see TABLE 4).[2]

Of those assigned to established parishes, 28.6 percent received calls to a rural parish,[3] 15.67 percent took calls to town congregations, and 5.22 percent went to city congregations. This information is given in greater detail in table 4.

The total number of graduates who received calls to established town and country congregations between 1962 and 1967 was 517. This means that 44.27 percent of all graduates in that

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[2]Allen Nauss, A Six-Year Review of Ministerial Placement (An unpublished paper for Concordia Seminary Studies--67-3, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, 1967), p. 21. A copy of this study can also be seen in the office of Dr. L. C. Wuerffel, Director of Placement, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

[3]Rural congregational calls included all located in the country or in communities with a population less than 2,500. Town parishes were located in communities of a size 2,500 to 25,000. City parishes were listed with a population of over 25,000.

six-year period received calls to town and country congregations. This same data shows that 86.7 percent of all the candidates who received calls to established congregations went to town or country congregations.

TABLE 4

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CANDIDATES ASSIGNED TO CALLS DURING 1962-1967*

	Number	Percent
Established	587	49.49
Rural	334	28.60
Town	183	15.67
City	61	5.22
Missions	255	21.83
New	128	10.96
Established	127	10.87
Specialized	335	28.68
Assistantship	96	8.22
Campus	32	2.74
Deaf	17	1.46
Teaching	49	4.20
Minority Groups	40	3.42
Inner City	5	0.43
Overseas Missions	87	7.45
Special	9	0.77
TOTAL	1168	100.00

*Nauss, p. 21.

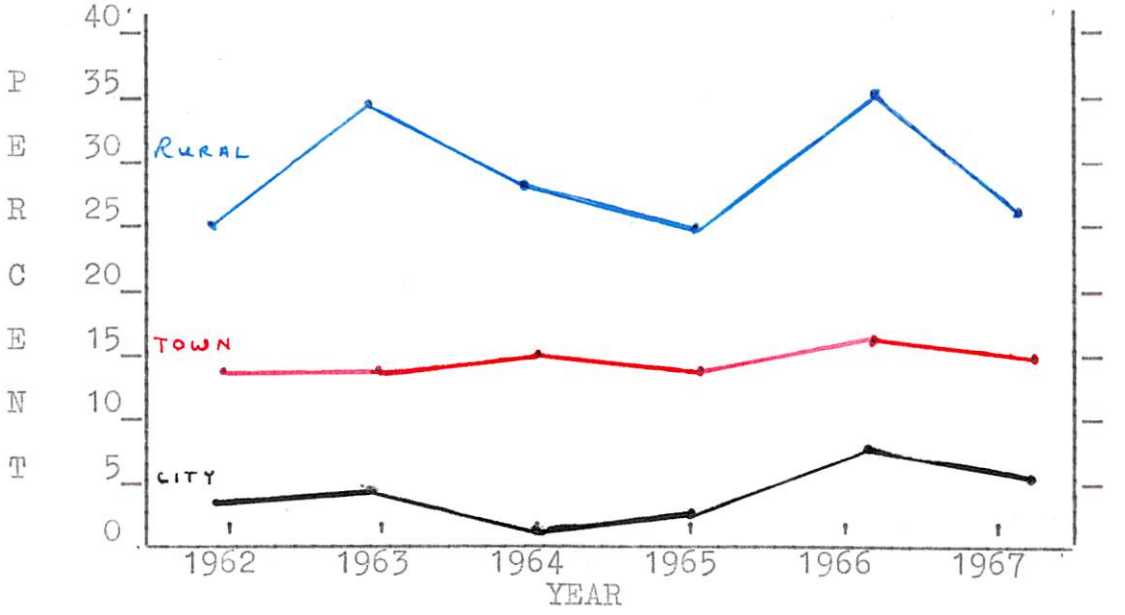

Figure 4. Percent of Candidates Assigned to Rural, Town, and City Parishes.*

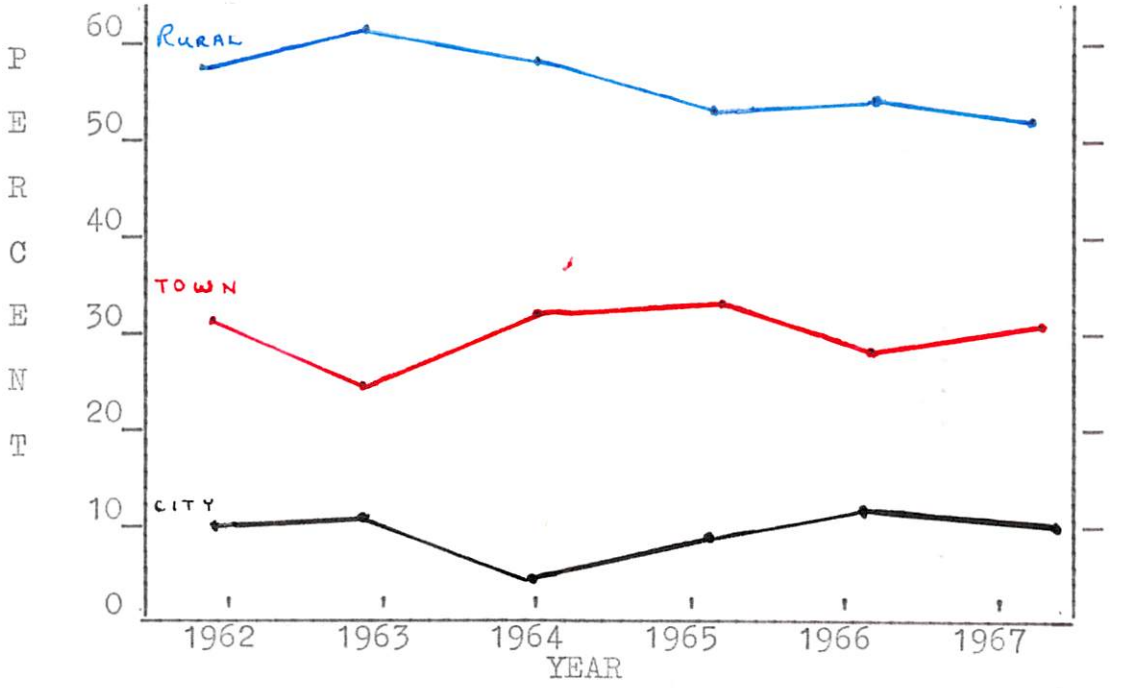

Figure 5. Percent of Candidates Given Established Calls Assigned to Rural, Town, and City Parishes.*

*Nauss, p. 30.

I did a similar study of the candidates receiving calls at the 1970 spring placement from both the St. Louis and Springfield Seminaries. A total of 200 candidates received calls. Of this number 176 received calls to established congregations, 14 received mission calls, and 10 received specialized calls. I divided the calls to establish congregations into three different categories: town and country congregations, small city congregations, and urban congregations. In the group that I labeled town and country, I included congregations in the open country and congregations in all communities of 5,000 population and under. In the category which I called small city, I included congregations in cities of between 5,000 and 20,000 population. The congregations in cities over 20,000 I labeled urban.

The results of this study showed that 54.0 percent of the candidates who received calls to established congregations went to town or country areas. 22.7 percent of those receiving calls to established congregations went to small cities, and 23.3 percent of those receiving calls to established congregations went to urban congregations. 67.5 percent of all the candidates placed in 1970 received calls to communities of 20,000 and under.

The results of the study that Allen Nauss made covering the candidates placed between the years 1962 and 1967 demonstrated that a high percentage of the candidates receive calls to town and country congregations. My study of the placement

of the 1970 candidates has shown that that trend is continuing. There is no indication that it will change considerably in the future.

TABLE 5

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CANDIDATES ASSIGNED TO CALLS IN 1970

	Number	Percent
Established	176	88.0
Town and Country	95	47.5
Small City	40	20.0
Urban	41	20.5
Missions	14	7.0
Specialized	10	5.0
TOTAL	200	100

More Ministerial Candidates Have Urban Backgrounds

Another factor which will help determine how much experience a ministerial student has had with town and country society is his own background. Since an increasing number of people have migrated to urban areas and still continue to do so, it would seem a higher percentage of ministerial candidates would have urban backgrounds.

In order to determine how many graduates still had a rural background, I studied the records for the 1970 graduating class of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The value of this study is limited somewhat because only one year was considered. When I conducted the study, I had only the records for Concordia

Seminary, St. Louis, so the study does not include any of the graduates from Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois. However, the study does serve the purpose of being a spot sampling of ministerial candidates.

In order to determine the background of a graduate, I studied the placement questionnaires that were turned in by each student. If the graduate indicated on this questionnaire that he had spent just a few years of his life in a town or country community, I included him in the group who had a town or country background.

I placed each graduate into one of four different categories. The first group included only those who indicated that they lived on farms. The second group consisted of those who lived in towns under 5,000 population. The third group I labeled small city; it included those who lived in cities between the population of 5,000 and 20,000. The final group was made up of graduates who lived in large urban areas over 20,000 population.

The results of this study showed that only fourteen of the graduates, or 14.6 percent of the 1970 graduating class of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had lived on farms. Seventeen of the graduates or 17.7 percent of the class had lived in towns under 5,000 population. Only twelve of the graduates or 12.5 percent of the class had lived in small cities of populations ranging between 5,000 and 20,000. And 53 graduates or 55.2 percent had lived only in large cities of 20,000 and over.

The results of this study were not surprising. In fact, they supported my theory that few of the seminary graduates have town and country backgrounds, yet a high percent of those graduates receive calls to town and country congregations.

The only surprising result of the study was the relatively small percentage of graduates who had lived in cities between 5,000 and 20,000 population. I expected that group to be larger than those who had lived in towns or on the farm. But I expect that if a larger group were studied, the number of graduates coming from cities between 5,000 and 20,000 population would increase.

If these figures continue to be true in the future, they will show that more than half of the graduates have spent their earlier life in large urban areas of over 20,000 population. On the other hand, only about 15 percent of the graduates lived on farms, and about another 15 percent of the graduates lived in towns under 5,000 population. Thus, just over 30 percent of the graduates will have town and country backgrounds while 60 to 80 percent of the ministerial candidates who receive calls to established congregations will go to town or country parishes.

In figure 6 I placed the percentages of the candidates who received calls to town and country, small cities, and urban areas next to the percentages of the graduates who came from the various backgrounds. Both of these percentages were taken from the 1970 ministerial candidates. But the figures

on the placement included all the candidates from both seminaries, whereas the percentages showing the backgrounds of the graduates included on the graduates from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

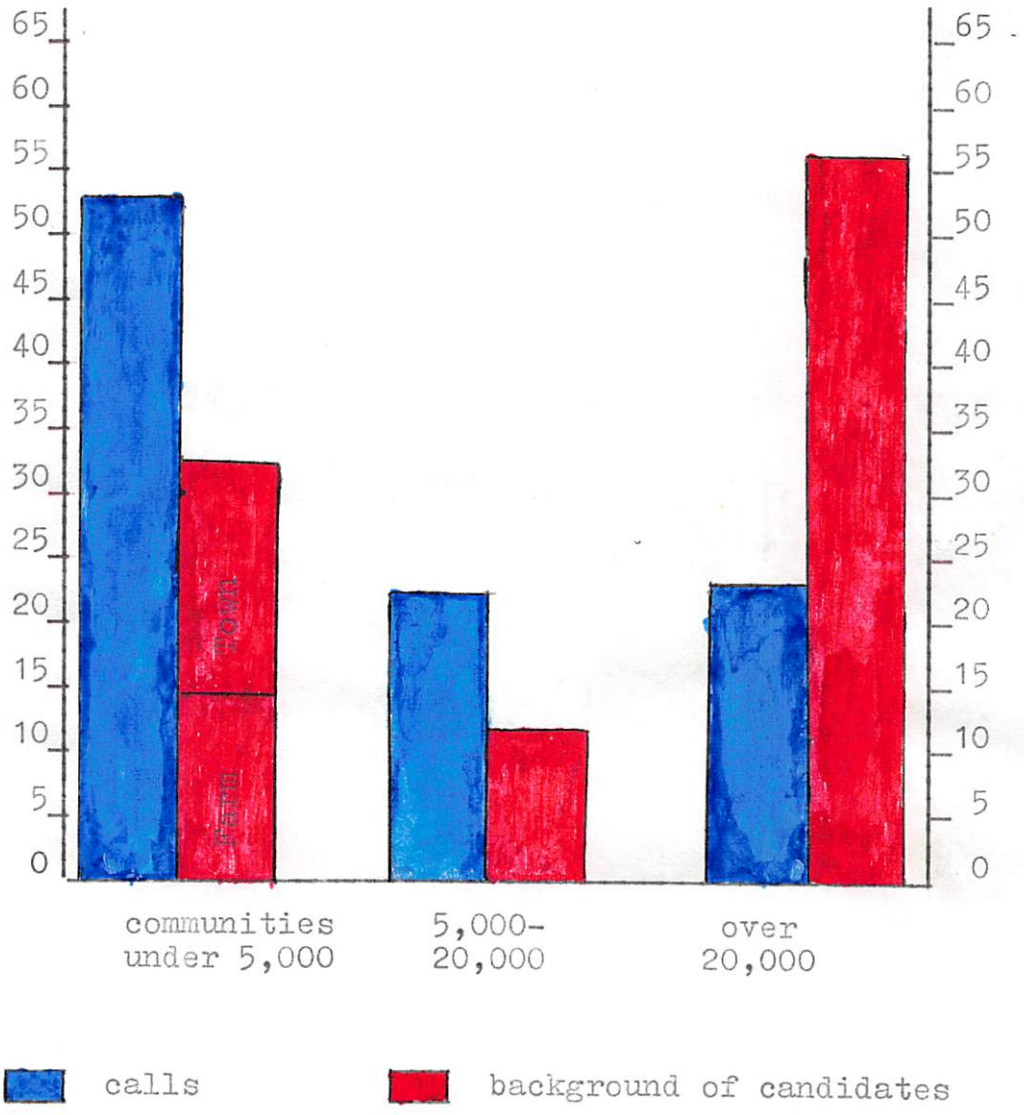

Figure 6. The Percentage of Different Types of Calls Received in 1970 Compared to the Background of the Graduates.

A Questionnaire Demonstrates Need for Special Training

During the spring of 1970, a questionnaire was sent to several District Presidents, several District Executive Secretaries, several congregations, and several ministerial candidates. The questionnaire was sent out by the "Affirming Rural Mission" task force, and those who received the questionnaire were connected in some way with the "Affirming Rural Mission Workshop," which was held during the summer.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to (a) determine the attitude of the ministerial candidates toward the rural call, (b) to discover the major problems of the town and country parish, and (c) to obtain the opinions of several rural congregations concerning the new candidates which had just been assigned to them.

Responses to the questionnaire indicated that many candidates coming from the seminaries did not receive a call to a town or country congregation with enthusiasm. Three out of six of the District Presidents who responded indicated an element of fear or disappointment among candidates who received calls to rural congregations in their districts.[4] Some of this fear was caused by the fact that the candidate would be beginning his ministry. There was some anxiety about the new

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[4]District President Responses: Affirming Rural Mission (An unpublished questionnaire which is available from the Task Force for "Affirming Rural Mission," 1970), p. 1.

responsibilities they would have as a pastor, but much of the fear and disappointment that was shown was directly the result of the rural call.

All three District Executive Secretaries who responded to this questionnaire indicated a negative feeling among candidates toward a rural call.[5] This negative feeling is partly due to a misunderstanding of rural people. One of the responses indicated that the negative attitude over against the rural was learned from college and seminary professors.[6] A second reason given by the District Executive Secretaries for the negative feeling toward town and country congregations was a lack of special training for the town and country ministry in the seminaries.[7]

Two out of six congregations noted a lack of enthusiasm on the part of a new candidate for a call to their rural congregation. One reason given for this lack of enthusiasm was the general attitude of many seminarians that nothing ever happens in the rural congregation.[8] Another reason given by

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[5] District Executive Secretary Responses: Affirming Rural Mission (An unpublished questionnaire which is available from the Task Force for "Affirming Rural Mission," 1970), p. 1.

[6] ibid.

[7] ibid.

[8] Congregational Responses: Affirming Rural Mission (An unpublished questionnaire which is available from the Task Force for "Affirming Rural Mission," 1970), p. 1.

the congregational responses for the lack of enthusiasm over a rural call was the dual parish. Most ministerial candidates do not like a multiple parish.[9]

The questionnaires were also sent to six graduates who had just received calls to town and country congregations. Four out of six of these men answered that they had some anxieties about their calls. The reason for this was that for five out of six had not had any experience with rural life previous to their call.

One of the questions asked in the questionnaires sent to the congregations was, "Do you feel that pastors and their wives are sufficiently prepared for parish ministry in rural areas?"[10] Most of the congregations answered that they were prepared theologically, but if the candidate or his wife had not had a town or country background, he was not completely prepared. If this were the case, then a period of adjustment would be necessary before the pastor and his wife would really be ready for a successful rural ministry.

The candidates agreed with the responses of the congregations in this respect. Three out of five of the ministerial candidates who answered this question stated that they were not completely prepared for a rural ministry.[11]

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[9] ibid.

[10] ibid., p. 2.

[11] Participant Response, Male: Affirming Rural Mission (An unpublished questionnaire which is available from the Task Force for "Affirming Rural Mission," 1970), p. 3.

The responses to the questionnaire indicated that the new candidates had much to learn about the people living in the town and country. It was also pointed out that they needed to be familiarized with the problems that are being experienced by rural people.

Some of those responding indicated that the candidates ought to know more about rural sociology. This would put them more in touch with the people living in the town and country. It would give them a better understanding of the rural life in general.

Those who responded to the questionnaire also indicated that the new candidates should know more about the economic problems encountered by farmers and by people living in the small towns.

It was pointed out that the minister and his wife should learn not to look down upon rural people. In some cases rural people may be less educated than people living in urban areas, but that does not mean that they are unintelligent.[12]

Another point stressed in the answers to the questionnaire was that the new candidates need to know that there are opportunities to evangelize in rural areas. There is a great challenge in the town and country congregations today.[13]

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[12] District President Responses, p. 5.

[13] District Executive Secretary Responses, p. 5

In summary, one can say that there is a need for some specialized training for new candidates who have received calls to a town or country congregation. This training should be offered before the new candidate begins his rural ministry. The Affirming Rural Mission Questionnaire has shown that there is much a new candidate needs to learn--especially if he has had no previous experience with a town and country community. The studies on the placement of candidates have shown that a high percentage of new graduates are placed in rural parishes. Finally, the study on the background of the candidates indicates that well over 50 percent of the graduates have had no town or country background.

CHAPTER V

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO TRAIN MEN FOR THE RURAL MINISTRY?

At One Time the Rural Ministry Gained Much Attention

During the early part of this century, concern began to mount over the apparent lack of public interest in the conditions of rural life and the welfare of rural people. "Leadership of the rural church was untrained, rural education was inadequate, rural society was not organized, soils were being depleted, and service facilities were poor."[1]

A turning point came in 1910 when the Commission on Country Life appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt made its report to the president. The commission had been formed by the president to study some of the problems and deficiencies of the rural society.

Stimulated by the findings of the Country Life Commission, denominations and inter-denominational agencies formed rural church departments to seek ways of overcoming the serious problems pointed out by the commission.

> In its zenith the rural church movement, . . had generated a rather rich variety of instruments including official departments in the Home Mission Council of North America (subsequently in the National Council of Churches), and in all the major denominations, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, rural church departments in numerous theological seminaries, a flourishing Conference on

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[1]Rex R. Campbell and Wayne H. Oberle, editors, Beyond The Suburbs (Columbia, Missouri: Lucas Brothers Publishers, 1967), II, 43.

> Cooperation between Theological Schools and Colleges of Agriculture, and in inter-denominational Christian Rural Fellowships, annual Town and Country Church Convocations, more than a score of in-service training schools and conferences for town and country leaders on land grant college campuses, and a number of regional commissions, institutes and programs dedicated to the strengthening of the rural church and its leadership.[2]

But today the town and country church movement is all but dead. Most of the machinery just mentioned has been dismantled. Almost no new leadership is emerging with a commitment to the church in town and country.[3] Rev. Shirley E. Greene, secretary of the Town and Country Committee of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, gives two reasons for the death of the town and country church movement:

> I attribute the death of the town and country church movement basically to two causes. For one thing, the urban crisis stole the center stage. In the years following World War II, Protestantism discovered the inner city. . . . The bright and aggressive young leadership from the seminaries began to sense that here was the frontier for Christian action and here they flocked. Let me hasten to say that I have no quarrel with this trend.
>
> With the other reason for the decline of concern for the town and country church I do have a quarrel. I refer to the defective syllogism which says: Modern forms of communication and mobility have erased the sociological differences between "rural" and "urban;" therefore, there is no need for specialized attention to the needs of the churches in town and country. . . . Most denominational and inter-denominational leadership has swallowed this fallacious argument.[4]

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[2]Shirley E. Greene, Renewal of the Church for Mission and Action (A lecture given at the Summer Clinic, Duke Divinity School and distributed privately to members of the Non-metropolitan Issues Group. 1969), p. 2.

[3]ibid., p. 3

[4]ibid.

Other Lutheran Synods have Shown Some Interest in Specialized Training for Rural Pastors

Prior to 1945 there were three church leaders in the Lutheran Church that stood out as men who were "responsible for alerting the church to proper consideration of rural congregations."[5] Those three men were Dr. A. D. Mattson, a member of the Augustana Lutheran Church; Dr. T. F. Gullixson, a member of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America; and Dr. Martin C. Schroeder, who was a member of The United Lutheran Church in America.[6]

Dr. Mattson was a professor at Augustana Theological Seminary, Rock Island, Illinois. A milestone in his efforts for the rural ministry came in 1938 when he was able to establish a course in rural sociology at the seminary.[7] He is also credited with helping to persuade the president of Iowa State University to offer a short summer course in rural sociology for clergy and seminarians.

Dr. Gullixson made his greatest contribution to the rural ministry during his teaching days at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Dr. Martin Schroeder served the cause of the town and country ministry as rural work representative of the Board

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[5]Charles De Vries, Inside Rural America: A Lutheran View (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1962), p. 9.

[6]ibid., p. 9,10.

[7]ibid., p. 10.

of American Missions of The United Lutheran Church in America.

Some of the most noteworthy work done to strengthen the work of the church in town and country America was done by Dr. E. W. Mueller. When the National Lutheran Counsel needed someone to head its Department of Rural Missions and Rural Life in 1945, Dr. Mueller accepted.

Through his work with the National Lutheran Council, Dr. E. W. Mueller became known as the Lutheran's rural specialist.[8] He has been instrumental in developing a more positive attitude toward the church in town and country. Under his leadership the National Lutheran Council helped sponsor over twenty-five regional and area workshops between November, 1950 and February, 1965. Besides these the National Lutheran Council has also helped plan and participate in more than 150 area meetings of one to two days duration, institutes and seminars held throughout the country.[9]

These workshops and institutes were designed to help the pastors in town and country congregations deal with some of the unique problems in their communities. Laymen were also included in these special training sessions. The town and country workshops were designed for the pastors and laymen in the region in which they were held. They did not provide any specialized training for ministerial candidates.

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[8] ibid., p. 14.

[9] ibid., p. 27.

The proceedings of many of these town and country workshops which were sponsored by the National Lutheran Council have been printed and distributed to seminary libraries. Many are available in the library at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has Done Little to Prepare its Pastors for the Rural Ministry

By the early 1950's some of the leaders in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod began to feel the need for a special commission on rural life. In 1953, the Houston Convention of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod authorized the creation of a Rural Life Commission. Its personnel was appointed by the Board for Missions in North and South America. The commission listed its most important objectives as:

> (a) to direct attention to the scriptural principles as they apply particularly to the rural church work;
>
> (b) to help develop proper attitudes toward rural church work and rural life on the part of rural people, rural churches, church workers, urban churches, and faculties at our synodical colleges;
>
> (c) to attract the notice of our preparatory schools and seminaries to the training that is necessary in order to adequately prepare rural church workers;
>
> (d) to indicate to rural congregations various ways in which they can build the kingdom more effectively in their respective areas.[10]

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[10] Rural Church Work: A Digest of Rural Life Institute Proceedings (St. Louis: Board for Missions in North and South America, 1958), p. 13.

Even before the creation of the Rural Life Commission, Annual Rural Life Institutes had been sponsored by Valparaiso University at Valparaiso, Indiana. These institutes were meant to alert the church to the condition of rural church work in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

After the formation of the synodical Rural Life Commission, however, these institutes were co-sponsored by the commission and Valparaiso University. They were held on the Valparaiso University campus until 1957. Then it was decided to hold these institutes at different centers throughout the country. The 1957 institute was held at Seward, Nebraska, and the 1958 institute was held on the campus of Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota.[11]

The annual Rural Life Institutes encouraged many local institutes throughout the country to help train the rural pastor for a more successful ministry. Some of these workshops were sponsored at a district level.

Through these Rural Life Institutes The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod took a big step forward in the training of its town and country pastors. But, again, these institutes were designed primarily for the men who were already rural pastors. The seminary students and the ministerial candidates were left out of these practical training sessions.

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[11] ibid.

Workshops were also held annually between 1957 and 1960 during the summer sessions at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. These summer workshops on the rural church lasted one week. They were designed for the pastors who would return to the seminary for additional study during the summer class sessions.

In order to determine if there have been any courses at the seminaries dealing specifically with the town and country ministry, I checked the catalogues of both Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.[12]

I found no courses at all listed in the catalogues of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. In the catalogues of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, I found one Mission Area Elective entitled "The Rural Church." This course was taught by Dr. Alex Guebert five times between 1956 and 1963. When Dr. Guebert left the seminary the course was dropped. Except for some courses which might lightly touch upon the subject of the rural ministry, no other courses have been offered to the students of either seminary.

During the summer of 1970 The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod held a rural workshop designed especially for the seminary graduate who had received a call to a town or country parish. The workshop, entitled "Affirming Rural Mission" (ARM),

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[12] I had access to the course listings from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, beginning in 1953. The course listings I had from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, dated back to 1943.

was held at Marvin, South Dakota, between June 14 and July 16, 1970. This workshop was open to all Lutheran ministerial candidates. The purpose of Affirming Rural Mission was to help prepare the graduates for the town and country ministry. I will describe this workshop in greater detail and give an evaluation of it in chapter VI.

In summary one must say that before the "Affirming Rural Mission" workshop held in the summer of 1970 there was very little done by any of the Lutheran synods in America to prepare the ministerial candidate for the rural ministry.

Much work has been done through the National Lutheran Council to train town and country pastors. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has done much less than the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America in the area of special training for rural pastors.

Much work needs to be done in the area of training town and country pastors. And a greater effort should be made to prepare ministerial candidates for their work in the rural ministry. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has taken the initiative in the specialized training of seminary graduates for the rural ministry through the "Affirming Rural Mission" workshop.

CHAPTER VI

A DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF "AFFIRMING RURAL MISSION"

The Objectives of the Workshop

The main problem facing the planning committee that was responsible for establishing a training program for ministerial candidates was to familiarize the candidates with life in the town and country. The major cause of the lack of understanding was the fact that many of the men graduating from the seminaries had no experience with rural life.

As the plans for "Affirming Rural Mission" took shape, part of the goal of the task force was to give the participant some "on the scene" experience in what the rural life is really like. Through personal experience with rural people, the participant would learn a little more about how people in rural areas think and act. Another goal was to familiarize the ministerial candidate with the farming process and also the various businesses in the towns and small cities scattered about the country. Finally, it was hoped that Affirming Rural Mission would sensitize the seminary graduate to the problems that the people in town and country are experiencing.

Besides learning about what life in town and country America is really like, the planning committee hoped that the participants would gain a better understanding of themselves through their involvement in the workshop. It would help them to set goals for their future work in their town and country

parishes. Hopefully the new candidates would discover that many of the fears and misgivings which they had about their rural call were really not valid. Still another goal of the workshop was to show the participant where his own personal weaknesses were. He would then know where future training was needed.

The Program for "Affirming Rural Mission"

The format of "Affirming Rural Mission" was not just a modified copy of an Urban Training Center. The basic program was arrived at by extensive study and reflection over the needs of the rural church and also the needs of the ministerial candidates who would be involved. Experts on rural sociology and religious sociology, town and country pastors, and rural laity all had a hand in the planning of the workshop.[1]

The program of "Affirming Rural Mission" consisted of three different types of learning experiences: lecture, small group discussion, and personal experience through involvement.

The first five days after the arrival of the candidates and their wives were spent in introducing them to the rural scene. This was done through lectures given by two experts

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[1]I received this information from Mr. James C. Cross, Secretary for Church and Community Planning, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. He was actively involved in the task force which planned "Affirming Rural Mission." This information was in reply to a questionnaire I sent to the members of the task force entitled Evaluation Questionnaire for Affirming Rural Mission.

on rural life and the rural ministry: Dr. E. W. Mueller and Mr. Osgood Magnuson. During these first five days the participants were also able to visit some of the towns and small cities near Blue Cloud Abbey, the base of the workshop.

After the five-day orientation to rural life the candidates left their lives at Blue Cloud Abbey and went for a "cold plunge" into the town and country society. During the "cold plunge" the participant was to live on his own in the rural area surrounding Blue Cloud Abbey. He could find some work in a small town or city, or he could work on a farm. But he was not to tell anyone who he was. The purpose of this "cold plunge" was to give the ministerial candidate the opportunity to observe and learn and inconspicuously inquire about "the nature, issues, and life of their respective communities and the people who comprise them."[2]

After a brief post-cold plunge reflection back at the Blue Cloud Abbey, the candidates and their wives began a ten-day "warm plunge" with a Lutheran family in the area. The purpose of the "warm plunge" was to allow the candidate and his wife to live as a part of the rural family. This gave them the opportunity to experience what family life on a farm or in a small town was really like.

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[2]Basic Program Design: Affirming Rural Mission, June 14-July 16, 1970 (This is an unpublished program of "Affirming Rural Mission." It was given to the staff members and participants of the workshop), p. 3.

Following the "warm plunge" the participants in the workshop assembled at the Blue Cloud Abbey again to relax and to discuss their experience. Some time was also spent in evaluating the entire workshop.

Evaluation of the "Affirming Rural Mission" Workshop

The participants evaluated the "Affirming Rural Mission" workshop in a questionnaire which I sent to each of them. They responded greatly in favor of their experience.

All of the participants indicated that their participation in the workshop had helped them to understand rural people and the rural way of life. It had helped them adjust to the rural life which they now had in their town and country parishes. Secondly, their experience in the workshop had shown them that rural people were people. Basically they were no different than anyone else, and that there was really no need to fear their ability to relate to them.

One of the participants responded by saying that because of his involvement in "Affirming Rural Mission" he felt more comfortable in the town and country society. Through his personal contact with rural people, he had learned much more about farming. But he had also learned that if there was something that he did not know, he could be free to ask. Most rural people do not look down upon someone because they do not know all the details about farming.

Another positive point which was stressed in the questionnaire was the insight which was received into the problems which town and country people experience. The economic problem was specifically mentioned.

Some of the participants also indicated that one great benefit of the workshop was that it showed them that they still had much to learn about themselves and about the rural ministry. This education, they felt, would come only from the experience they would get in dealing with town and country people in their ministry to them.

Each one of the participants in the "Affirming Rural Ministry" workshop indicated that his involvement had contributed to his ministry. One participant said that he now saw hopefulness in his rural ministry. Another indicated that he learned to be more patient in dealing with the members of his congregation.

One of the participants stated that he had learned the importance of grass roots planning for his ministry. It was necessary to understand the problems and then set goals to meet. These goals would then be met by working and cooperating with the people involved.

Although the participants all praised the workshop and the methods used, there were some criticisms which deserve mentioning.

Most of the participants agreed that the material presented by Dr. Mueller and Mr. Magnuson was excellent. Some

of the men suggested that there should be more cognative content to future workshops. One man stated that he felt that he was pushed too quickly into "in depth" studies of rural society. He felt that it could have been more gradual and that he should have been more prepared for it.

Another man stated that he thought that more opportunity should be provided for the students to talk to the resource people about their own personal feelings.

There was also a general feeling among the participants that there should be more outside resource people from the area. (a) More experienced rural pastors and their wives should be included in the discussions. (b) Some experts in agriculture should also be invited to participate. (c) Rural youth should have an opportunity to talk with the participants.

There was the feeling among almost all of the participants that there were too many discussion groups and sharing sessions. In some cases the participants were almost forced to talk about things they knew very little about. In fact, they talked until they knew nothing more to discuss.

Finally, the participants stated that there should have been more time for rest and relaxation. Not enough time was given for their families.

Members of the planning committee also agreed that the workshop was a success. It had accomplished the goals of familiarizing the candidates and their wives with town and

country life. It had also introduced the candidates to some of the problems which they would face in their future ministry in a town or country congregation.

The changes suggested by the staff participants for future workshops can be summarized in this way: (a) greater involvement of field town and country pastors, (b) the inclusion of parochial school teacher candidates, (c) the inclusion of a few more sessions for planned input by resource persons, staff, and students, (d) a "cold plunge" opportunity for wives, and (e) more free time and recreation for the participants and their wives.

"Affirming Rural Mission" was a success. The staff members and the six participants who attended all agree that the workshop accomplished its goals. The only real failure was the fact that only five ministerial students from The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and one intern from the American Lutheran Church attended the workshop.

The reason for this poor attendance was partly due to the fact that the final plans for the workshop were not made until just a few months before graduation. By the time the information about the workshop was in the hands of the students, many of the graduates had planned vacations or summer work. In some cases their ordination dates were set.

The slim attendance, however, was not all the fault of the planning committee. Some of the students simply could not see the need for such a training program. If the

ministerial candidates who will graduate from the seminaries in the coming years do not take advantage of this learning opportunity, there will be no hope of improving the attitude toward the town and country ministry.

A very important start has been made in the area of specialized training for the rural clergy. If one can judge by the evaluation of the participants of the first "Affirming Rural Mission" workshop, this workshop should be continued in the future. Each one of the men who attended the 1970 "Affirming Rural Mission" workshop stated that other seminarians should seriously consider attending this workshop. If a graduate received a call to a town or country congregation, he will gain invaluable experience and insight if he attends. "Affirming Rural Mission" will begin to fill the gaps that have been left in a candidate's training by the seminary.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

On the basis of this study one must conclude that the town and country ministry of the church deserves more attention from the church leaders and from those who are responsible for training pastors and teachers. The town and country society is not a place where "nothing ever happens." On the contrary, there is a great challenge for the church in rural areas of our country.

The movement of people out of rural areas, the urbanization of rural society, the economic conditions in town and country areas, and the great technological advancements in farming have forced the rural society to face many changes in a relatively short span of time. The people in rural areas are presently experiencing many problems and challenges, and the church in town and country also faces them.

There is a need to prepare town and country pastors to face these challenges. This paper has demonstrated that little has been done to prepare the pastor for the specific problems of the rural ministry while he was still in the seminary. Since 1963 neither of the two seminaries of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod have offered a required or an elective course which deals specifically with the town and country congregation.

The National Lutheran Council has sponsored many regional town and country workshops in the past twenty years. These workshops have been very helpful in improving the sensitivity of town and country pastors to the problems in rural areas. As a result of these workshops, the town and country pastors are better equipped to deal with those problems. These workshops, however, have been directed toward the man who is already a pastor out in the field. The ministerial student in the seminary has been overlooked.

An important step was taken in the area of training the ministerial candidate in the summer of 1970. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod sponsored "Affirming Rural Mission." This was a workshop designed especially to prepare the seminary graduates for their future work in town and country parishes.

This study has shown that "Affirming Rural Mission" was a successful experiment. Although some improvements need to be made in the workshop, it will prove to be a vital program in the training of the clergy of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and other synods in the future. The result of this workshop will be a better equipped rural clergy.

Because of the diversity of the rural society throughout this country several "Affirming Rural Mission" workshops may be necessary in the future. This would enable more candidates and pastors and even parochial teachers to participate in these workshops. If these workshops were regional, they would do a better job of training their participants for the specific

challenges of the rural ministry in that area.

This study has also shown that town and country workshops need not be the only answer for the training of the clergy for the rural ministry. More training can and must be given in the seminaries. Certainly not every seminarian will be interested in the town and country ministry. The movement of the population out of rural areas has placed the biggest percentage of the population of the United States in urban areas. Probably fewer pastors will be needed in rural areas in the future.

But this study has shown that a high percentage of ministerial candidates receive calls to town and country congregations. In addition, it has shown that the majority of the graduates of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1970 did not have a town or country background. If this trend continues there will be a great need from seminary courses to prepare the ministerial candidates for the rural ministry.

This training should start in the seminaries and continue in town and country workshops after graduation. This type of long term planning is necessary now so that in the future the congregations in town and country will be served by pastors who have been sensitized to the problems of the rural ministry, and who are well equipped to carry out the ministry of the Gospel.

APPENDIX

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AFFIRMING RURAL MISSION PARTICIPANTS [1]

Evaluation of ARM - 1970

1. Was your social background previous to entering the ministry urban, small town, or rural?

2. Did you have any contact at all with the town and country society through friends or relatives?

3. What were your feelings when you received your call to a town or country congregation and why?

4. Now that you have been at a rural congregation for several months, is the town and country congregation what you thought it would be? If you had negative feelings upon receiving your call were those feelings valid?

5. Why did you decide to attend ARM? Why do you think the participation was so poor on the part of seminarians?

6. Evaluate the introductory sessions of ARM prior to the "cold plunge." Were the presentations of Dr. E. W. Mueller and Mr. O. Magnuson valuable? Were the small group discussions fruitful?

7. Was the "cold plunge" and educational experience for you? Was it valuable in preparing you for some of the problems of the town and country ministry which you face today?

8. Did you gain valuable insights into a town or a country family on your "warm plunge"? Did this at all change your attitude toward rural living? Did this experience help you to see some of the problems in a town and country parish?

9. What were the major contributions of ARM to your present ministry?

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[1] This questionnaire was sent to each of the participants. The following were participants in "Affirming Rural Mission": Rev. and Mrs. Roger Stuenkel, Rev. and Mrs. Nathan Castens, Rev. and Mrs. Bert Klein, Rev. and Mrs. Michael Werner, Rev. and Mrs. Donn Radde, and Mr. Paul Reeg.

10. What was the reaction of your wife to her experiences in ARM? Were any of her attitudes changed?

11. Do you have any suggestions for change in the ARM program in the future?

12. Would you suggest that other seminarians participate in ARM in the future?

13. Would ARM be fruitful for seminarians who have rural backgrounds?

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AFFIRMING RURAL MISSION

For Staff Members[2]

1. Do you think that the town and country workshop, "Affirming Rural Mission," was successful in achieving its goals? Why?

2. Were the methods used (introductory sessions, cold plunge, warm plunge, sharing sessions) good learning devices? Did they accomplish what you expected them to accomplish?

3. What changes would you make in future ARM workshops?

4. What was the cause of such a small attendance at the 1970 Affirming Rural Mission workshop?

5. Do you view ARM as complementary to the town and country training methods used by The American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church in America? Are the major Lutheran synods in America working together or against one another in their rural training programs?

6. Do you look for regional workshops similar to ARM in the future?

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[2]This questionnaire was sent to four of the staff members: Dr. E. W. Mueller, Director, Center for Community Organization and Area Development, Mr. Osgood Magnuson, Associate Secretary, Department of Church and Community Planning, Lutheran Council in the U. S. A., Rev. Walter Weber, Executive Director, Affirming Rural Mission, and Mr. James C. Cross, Secretary for Church and Community Planning, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

7. Do you think that Lutheran ministerial students are well prepared for a town and country ministry when they graduate from the seminary? How does the average Lutheran ministerial candidate compare with a ministerial candidate of any of the other denominations in this respect?

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