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Promoting Congregational Public Relations in Public Press and Parish Journalism

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**PROMOTING CONGREGATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN PUBLIC PRESS AND PARISH JOURNALISM**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. PUBLIC RELATIONS	4
Promotion in Public Relations	9
Public Press and Parish Journalism	13
Congregational Public Relations	14
III. THE SUNDAY BULLETIN	16
Scope and Purpose of the Sunday Bulletin	16
Makeup and Style of the Sunday Bulletin	19
IV. PARISH PUBLICATIONS	25
Scope and Purpose of Parish Publications	25
Type and Makeup of Parish Publications	27
Financing the Publication	39
Style and Content of Parish Publications	41
V. THE PUBLIC PRESS	47
The Church-Newspaper Relationship	47
The Church in the News	56
Advertising in the Newspaper	68
VI. CONCLUSIONS FOR THE CHURCHMAN	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY	81

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is readily acknowledged that the church's singular task is to spread the good news of salvation through Christ Jesus to every corner of the globe. To this end the Lord of the church has equipped His workers with varying tools and skills. Not the least of these is the printed word, the means by which He chose to have His Word preserved to the end of time. The printed press, proven as the herald of the Reformation, has become the priceless servant of the church. The church, however, and especially the local congregation have only begun to tap the full potential which the press offers. As capable as a tool may be, its effectiveness can be realized only to the extent that it is used, or misused, by man.

Simply stated, the purpose of this study is to encourage the local congregation's use of the printed word in the public press and parish journalism and to discourage its misuse. The Department of Public Relations for The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, now in its eighth year, has contributed much to the growth of the church in this field. It promotes the public relations of the church on a national as well as local level. Yet there is no substitute for the contact which the local congregation can and should have with its people. This

contact can at best be only impersonal when it is promoted solely through the mediums of synodical and national publicity.

The local congregation is forfeiting the resources of a potent ally when it neglects the printed word as a means for promoting the Kingdom. Are these resources destined to remain untapped by an overworked clergy which is unschooled in arts of journalism and public relations? It becomes a matter of necessity for the clergyman to take advantage of this efficient servant, the printed word, if he is to utilize his energies more effectively.

America knows that the church is here. The church is recognized. But is it understood? Often it is the victim of misunderstanding and prejudice. The Church exists among the churches. Who will make the distinction and avert the mass rush toward the "watered down" Christianity of the day? For this dilemma the printed word offers a working solution. Education is an answer to misunderstanding and the printed word is the standard bearer of education. A task of the church, then, is to educate the masses.

This study is concerned with several important phases of the printed word as it is relevant to the pastor and the church in its public relations outreach. It does not propose to exhaust the many possible ways in which the printed word might be used to the congregation's advantage. After an introductory view of public relations, the study seeks to apply

the principles of public relations to the Sunday bulletin, the parish publications, and the church's news as it appears in the local newspaper. The newspaper is considered not only as a news medium but also as an advertising medium. Different types of parish publications are considered together with the problems of financing, style, and content.

Although this paper would encourage a greater use of the printed word in the program of the local congregation, it is only of secondary consideration. Many parishes use the means extensively. Of primary concern is the desire that the pastor rethink his publications program in the light of good public relations. The printed word is readily used, but does it always promote the best congregational public relations? The parish publication may carry the news to the reader, but if it also carries the news in a neat and impressive manner it has greatly increased its worth.

Since the church has been at work for some time in the field of public relations, public press, and parish journalism, it was possible to use source materials which were directly applicable to this project. Secular sources, however, were also very helpful.

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC RELATIONS

In a public address Dr. John Evans, religion and education editor of the Chicago Tribune, made the pointed statement that the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod for a long period of time has been the storehouse of the Reformation Gospel, but that this church has not shared this saving knowledge with others as it should. It was also stated that it is now the duty and obligation of this church to become a positive core of influence within humanity, especially in these days when men are groping for spiritual truth.¹

This accusation in effect displays the need for public relations within this church body. When a church has not effectively witnessed its message to humanity it is lacking in its relations with the public. It is impossible to avoid public relations because the very state of existence demands a relationship to every other form of being. But it is quite possible to escape exerting a positive influence on the public by a lack of dynamic.

In diagnosing its malady in public relations, the church will look both for external and internal failures. Does the

¹Walter F. Steinberg, "Public Relations for the Parish," Lutheran Education, June, 1950, p. 529.

church recognize its public? Or, more correctly stated, does it recognize its publics?

The church is concerned with various publics. Its first public is its own local congregation. The local congregation applies its public relations program first of all to itself. The church is intimately related to this public because its members are inter-related by the closest of ties, that of Christian fellowship. It is both a physical and spiritual relationship. It is member loving member, member loving pastor, pastor loving member, and all love united in Christ.

This public is primary but the publics include not only the congregational family but also anyone who in any way may come into contact with the church or members of the church.² The local community is the church's public. It is the church's initial mission field and the church seeks to establish good public relations with it lest unnecessary stumbling blocks hinder the work of the Gospel.

Nor are the publics of the church confined to the local scene. As a priest of God the Christian is intimately related to the Communion of Saints as it is spread throughout the world. This brings the sphere of influence of the local congregation to limitless boundaries. The church is

² Stewart Harral, Public Relations for Churches (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1945), p. 18.

responsible not only to its brother but also to its brother's brother. With such boundless areas of public relations the church's task looms anew.

While world opinion is an important factor in the on-going program of the church as a whole, the success of the local church depends a great deal upon what its immediate public thinks of it.³

Having determined the size of its public, the church then becomes concerned about its public relations. Public relations is not to be confused with publicity. Public relations is essentially a matter of policy whereas publicity is the technique of making the public acquainted with policies, philosophies, aims and results. "We are free to decide whether or not we are to have publicity; public relations may be good, bad, or indifferent--but it cannot be avoided."⁴ Public relations simply exists. We cannot escape it because in every situation we are related to the public. Merely by existing all churches have public relations. Whether they are good or bad, effective or ineffective, they are public relations.⁵ Almost everything an

³Stanley I. Stuber, Public Relations Manual for Churches (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, c.1951), p. 24.

⁴Harral, op. cit., p. 23.

⁵Roland E. Wolseley, Interpreting the Church Through Press and Radio (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1951), p. 12.

organization does has an impact on some public or publics. To the extent that any activity reaches a public or the general public it has a bearing on public relations.⁶

A church, by its very existence, creates impressions on others. These impressions are positive or negative.

"Either your church is 'a city . . . set on an hill that cannot be hid,' or it may be salt that has 'lost his savor.'"⁷

The church cannot possibly avoid its public relations.

Everything about a church is public relations--pastor, people, property.

"Public relations," as the term implies, means relations with the public. And we all are engaged in public relations. There is no such thing as anyone or any organization not being public-related. It simply cannot be avoided. It is only a question as to whether it is good or bad. Sometimes a good program is accidental; sometimes a carefully planned program is very bad. But, good or bad, planned or otherwise, we cannot escape our relationship to those about us. Nor should we, as Christians and as ambassadors of the Savior, want to. We should, therefore, make every effort to develop and maintain only the best relations with our public.⁸

In the final analysis every effective program of Christian public relations on the parish level is based upon a multitude of seemingly unimportant actions that lie close to

⁶Herbert M. Baus, Public Relations at Work (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1948), p. 7.

⁷Harral, op. cit., p. 16.

⁸Herbert W. Knopp, "Using Your Laymen in Public Relations," Proceedings Second Institute of Public Relations July 25 and 26, 1950, edited by Herbert W. Knopp and Roberta Ihde (Valparaiso, Indiana: Valparaiso University, c.1951), p. 53.

the heart of living. A sincere and understanding approach to the problems of others, a friendly handclasp, a word of praise, a visit during days of illness, a deep and abiding interest in the glorious task of guiding the feet of a little child on the path that leads to God--these are actions that promote Christian public relations.⁹

Christian public relations is Christian witness. It is sanctification in action. It is a living testimony to the hope and love within the Christian heart. Christian public relations is the Holy Spirit in action through people.

Jesus shows concern for public relations when He asks the disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"¹⁰ The church may or may not be asking this same question. But whether or not it is being asked, it is always being answered. The church is always leaving some sort of impression in the minds of its publics. Good public relations is the work of letting Christ through--through you--to people.¹¹ But to give Christ pre-eminence in all things is much easier said than done in public relations. To proclaim Him is to invite the hatred of unbelieving men. Yet it remains the task of the church. "For to me to live is

⁹Steinberg, op. cit., p. 531.

¹⁰Matt. 16:13.

¹¹M. L. Koehneke, "Public Relations in the Lutheran School," Lutheran Education, February, 1954, p. 270.

Christ," says the apostle Paul.¹² Whatever falls outside this circle is poor public relations.¹³ Christian public relations is a means to an end--the end being the extension of the Kingdom throughout the world, beginning in each community.¹⁴ An important guide line for Christian public relations is the Golden Rule. When Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,"¹⁵ He set the key to all deep understanding of human relations. It is therefore the foundation of all good public relations.¹⁶ Good public relations is loving our public "relations."¹⁷ Living according to the law of love promises the best of relations with the public for it demands that we treat others with the same concern that we hold for ourselves. It means having them in mind with the planning of any public relations venture.

Promotion in Public Relations

For the sake of clarity the words of the title might bear explanation. "Public Relations" has been considered.

¹²Phil. 1:21.

¹³Koehnke, op. cit., p. 270.

¹⁴Stuber, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁵Matt. 7:12.

¹⁶Harral, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 24.

The terms "Promotion," "Public Press and Parish Journalism," and "Congregational" will now be treated briefly.

"No major industry," said Bruce Barton, ". . . has the moral right to allow itself to be unexplained, misunderstood or publicly distrusted, for by its unpopularity it poisons the pond in which we all must fish."¹⁸ Probably the most misunderstood institution in the world is the local church. People think of the church as being a social club. They think it is narrow-minded. They cannot understand why all churches do not agree. They do not understand the function of the clergy and laity. How then can the church function with its real message unless there is a positive program of public relations that will clear up popular misconceptions? Public relations exist. Poor public relations are the natural thing. Good public relations demand an active promoting interest. After malady has been diagnosed, remedy must follow.¹⁹ The local congregation has an obligation not only to itself but to its community, to the church at large, and to the general public to promote good public relations. Poor public relations are injurious to the entire community and they come easily. Good public relations demands concentrated and consistent energy. It demands promotion.

¹⁸"Public Relations. Its Uses for Industry," Time, May 10, 1954, p. 100.

¹⁹Stuber, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

Public relations is not a technique which is employed only in emergencies, although certain days may receive emphasis. If the full impact of public relations is to be realized it must be a continued normal day-to-day operation. A lopsided program can never be successful over a long period of time.²⁰ The program with ups and downs is usually on the way down. The consistent program is the successful program.

No public relations program has ever succeeded in an atmosphere of defeatism and pessimism. "Oh, what's the use!" is never good public relations. There is nothing deader than a dead church. Progress is possible only in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and optimism, because power and achievement are attained by those who have great faith and courage.²¹ As the leader in the program the pastor must be an optimist, even in the face of discouragements, because his philosophy often has to sustain the beliefs of his followers.

Good public relations do not take shape automatically.

Good public relations must be encouraged and promoted.

Jesus described his followers as leaven hidden in three measures of meal, which worked upon the meal until the whole was leavened. The meaning is plain: the church must continually induce the community to move in the direction of Christlikeness, thus leavening the community until favorable public opinion results.²²

²⁰Harral, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

²¹Ibid., p. 27.

²²Ibid., p. 16.

The important thing in a company is to educate all employees as to the public relations impact of their work. By making them conscious of the effect of their work on public opinion, and of the importance of that effect on the welfare of their company and therefore their own welfare, a company can help these employees do a better job. The result is that the cumulative public relations impact of the company will be more effective.²³ The public relations impact of a church, too, is dependent upon its individual members. If the church will educate each of its members to the public relations responsibility which he holds, it, too, will reap the rewards of a united public relations front.

"For a good company, there is no mystery in good public relations. The secret is simply to tell all it can about itself."²⁴ Modesty is not one of the church's virtues. This institution, if any in the world, should be speaking freely of itself. The church has yet much to learn from the "children of this world." The church might do well also to "tell all it can about itself," and talking about itself means talking about Christ. "Keep Christ in your public relations

²³Baus, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁴"Public Relations. Its Uses for Industry," op. cit., p. 100.

program!"²⁵

Public relations is not a passive program that comes from a passive interest. Public relations at work is a process of getting attention, expressing ideas, establishing communication and obtaining action.²⁶ It must be promoted and the word "promotion" implies a positive, planned, and systematic approach. A conscious and alert program is necessary if public relations is to serve an edifying end in the church.

Public Press and Parish Journalism

Public relations covers every phase of church work from the church lawn to the preacher's clothesline. It can be applied to any phase of the congregational program. This study, however, will be restricted to the printed word. Here we are concerned only with applying the principles of public relations to the church's use of the public press and its own parish journalism.

If the unchurched in any community are to be reached they must either be brought into the church, where they can hear, or the message of the church must be brought to them. This is the task of the printed word.²⁷ For this important

²⁵"You're a Churchman!" Public Relations Conference Workshop of the Department of Public Relations, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, July, 1955 (mimeographed), p. 14.

²⁶Baus, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁷N. C. Carlsen, A Living Church at Work (Blair, Nebraska: Danish Lutheran Publishing House), p. 68.

work the printed word must be presented in the light of public relations. Words are the instruments of human understanding--and misunderstanding--and as such are perhaps the most vital tools of the public relations man in his role as the engineer of ideas and opinions. Every public relations man or advertising man or publicity man or church man is limited as to the space or time which is granted to tell a story. It is his responsibility to choose with discriminating care those words which will most exactly, most clearly, and most economically establish the understanding which he seeks. Words must be well chosen. The presentation must be neat, attractive and inviting. Unfortunate use of words can spell disaster to good public relations.²⁸ This study will seek to look at the church's use of the public press and parish journalism in the light of good public relations.

By public press, this study refers to the newspaper. The field of parish journalism will be restricted to the Sunday bulletin and the congregation's periodical publications.

Congregational Public Relations

By the word "Congregational" in the title, this study restricts itself to a consideration of public relations as it applies to the public press and parish journalism on the

²⁸Baus, op. cit., p. 121.

local congregation's level. The idea of a Church Universal is wonderful to comprehend but what actually gets across in the community is the church down the street. It is the local church that has to bring the conception of the Church Universal home to the community. It is the local church that has the responsibility and the opportunity of dramatizing the world scope of the Christian message.²⁹ This the local church can do through good public relations and through the printed word.

²⁹Stuber, op. cit., p. 33.

CHAPTER III

THE SUNDAY BULLETIN

Scope and Purpose of the Sunday Bulletin

William H. Leach, editor of Church Management magazine, sees two main motives for the publication of a church bulletin or calendar:

1. The desire to place in an attractive and orderly way the plan of public worship.
2. To provide a dignified and effective way to make announcements relative to the services of the church.¹

Some churches use their Sunday bulletin exclusively for a formal presentation of the order of worship as expressed in number one above. Others use the bulletin exclusively for the second purpose and many combine the two. Perhaps all church bulletins are concerned with one of the two motives. If these motives are basic, then it follows that the well-edited program will: (1) eliminate announcements from the pulpit; (2) encourage participation in the order of service; and (3) assure unity and smoothness in the service of worship.²

¹Roland E. Wolseley, Interpreting the Church Through Press and Radio (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1951), p. 159.

²Stewart Harral, Public Relations for Churches (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1945), p. 69.

The scope of the Sunday bulletin, however, need not be confined to the Order of Service and announcements. It may also serve as a house organ and a miniature newspaper. Some pastors include an outline of the Sunday morning message, which enables those attending to recall the trend of thought in speaking to others, and it often acts as a drawing card for those who do not attend.³ Whether or not the bulletin will serve as a house organ or miniature newspaper will depend upon the size of the congregation and whether it publishes any other periodical paper.

The Sunday bulletin can become a definite influence, a valuable propaganda medium, more than an announcement sheet indicating where men can meet the Master, but a guide to thinking, judging, choosing, and living as He would have them do. It can serve to stress Communion attendance, stewardship, synodical matters, a Bible study guide. It can encourage prayer life and Christian witness. The bulletin can effectually supplement preaching and teaching. It can ask for names and addresses of prospects. It can teach the congregation that the most important event during the week is the meeting of the adult instruction class. It can bring the pastor closer to his people and the people closer to

³Carl F. H. Henry, Successful Church Publicity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1943), p. 191.

their pastor.⁴ It can spread enthusiasm.

The bulletin can do much toward changing the attitude of people. It can point out the satisfaction in living now for eternal accomplishments. It can show how our faith in God's power and in the Savior's love is deepened as this power and love are observed at work in others. It can record a godly pride, "What a thrill for several in our midst last Sunday when the adult class was confirmed . . . to know angels sang and the Lord Jesus smiled. And they had first led these by the hand to the class."⁵ In this way the bulletin can serve as a missionary challenge.

The bulletin can help fight down snobbishness and break down the wall of coolness among members. It can welcome and encourage members to welcome visitors. It can suggest that the member share his hymnal and show concern that the visitor find the Order of Service. Although dignity is always in place, the bulletin can say, "Did you greet anyone at church today?" It can tackle a problem as though it knew its readers a long time, "Even if he isn't your uncle, you don't know her maiden name, you didn't go to school together, you can

⁴George Beiderwieden, Jr., "Church Bulletins Will Work for You," Proceedings Second Institute of Public Relations July 25 and 26, 1950, edited by Herbert Knopp and Roberta Ihde, pp. 5-8.

⁵Ibid., p. 8.

nod, smile, say 'Good Morning.' 'Glad to see you.'⁶

The scope and purpose of the Sunday bulletin is boundless, limited only by the pastor's imagination.

Makeup and Style of the Sunday Bulletin

First impressions are important impressions also with regard to the bulletin. The first impression which the bulletin offers comes from its cover. The cover may be pictorial or liturgical. It may reproduce a picture of the church or it may offer no more than a simple mimeographed design.

Of greatest circulation in Missouri Synod circles is the pictorial cover distributed by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. This bulletin folder when folded in book form offers an attractive frontispiece which provides space at the bottom of the page for the name of church and pastor. Page four is either blank or printed with religious advertising as preference may dictate.

A liturgical cover is offered by Morse's Liturgical Bulletin Service of Medford, Oregon. The frontispiece features the theme of the day in art as inspired by the pericopic system. Page four explains the art design of the frontispiece and also offers other liturgical information, prayers, litanies, etc.

⁶Ibid.

Many larger churches prefer to print their own bulletins, which usually feature a picture of the church on the cover. Often this type of home produced cover includes the congregational officers and regularly scheduled meetings on page four.

Some churches, due to lack of funds or other reasons, produce their Sunday bulletin with mimeographed cover. The result can be neat and orderly.

Whatever the cover, it must be worthy of its important task of creating the good first impression. It must serve as the invitation to the worshipper. It must set the mood for the bulletin.

If the cover has set the good example the content of the bulletin must follow with uniform quality. It should be as dignified and worshipful as the service itself. At its best it may be more so, providing a standard as well as a guide.⁷ It will be neat and orderly. It may be wise to have the bulletin printed professionally rather than on the church's mimeograph machine. But there is also a danger. Bulletins that are printed professionally may be neat, but they often leave one feeling cold. They lack the personal touch. They often lack warmth and friendliness.

If funds permit, a six page bulletin might be valuable. The three outer pages might include the permanent frontis-

⁷Wolseley, op. cit., p. 161.

piece, a written welcome, and the church directory with the inner pages explaining the Order of Worship and offering the announcements. Cost for such an item might well be defrayed by a private businessman with the name of his business printed neatly and clearly, yet inconspicuously at the bottom of the church directory page.

The four page bulletin, however, is more popular and more economical. It is wisely folded in book form and often appears with the inner blank divided into two pages. This adds to neatness and readability and is as easily produced as the single page interior. Even a long carriaged typewriter, which will hold the stencil lengthwise, is not necessary for a two page format since the stencil can easily be cut to fit the standard typewriter carriage and then glued together again for use on the mimeograph machine.

It will be well to keep the text of the bulletin simple and readable. Usually such publications are too crowded with material and marred by many heavily boxed paragraphs or filler quotations.⁸

Recognize the value of white space in a publication. Keep margins on all sides. Variety in content is important. Fill the bulletin with people. Use the language of today. Keep church visitors and prospects in mind in writing the text of the bulletin. Make sure of a clear, neat mimeographing job.⁹

⁸Ibid., p. 161.

⁹Beiderwieden, op. cit., p. 9.

The bulletin might well include occasional remarks on how to worship. The Order of Service may be explained but need not be listed in the bulletin when the service follows the order of the hymnal.

Prayers are always in place in a bulletin. Litanies, for use at the family altar, might well be suggested as well as special litanies for the summer vacation season, prayers in preparation for church festivals, etc.

A children's page is even a possibility in the Sunday bulletin. The page might include a listing of the Sunday School staff, a Bible quiz with answers up-side-down on the bottom of the page, the month's birthday roll, recognition to "star" pupils (those present and on time for a month), short Bible stories and explanations of Baptism, Communion, etc. Such a page might appear monthly.

If the Sunday bulletin is to promote congregational public relations, it will be a publication that exacts much time and effort.

If your Sunday bulletin is to be more than an announcement sheet, you will pay the price. If it is to be an influence, pulling minds of men and women out of the ruts of materialism and secularism, rendering them more spiritual and Kingdom-conscious, you will not be able to turn the bulletin over to your secretary to write. Nor will you dash it off on the typewriter in 15 minutes. It will exact sweat. You will be writing it all week, jotting down items. You will make a conscious effort to keep it interesting.¹⁰

¹⁰Beiderwieden, op. cit., p. 9.

The bulletin--good, poor, or indifferent--is a public relations item. People will read and reread a good-looking bulletin and perhaps send it to friends. But an unattractive bulletin will be thrown away and will detract from rather than add to the morning service.¹¹

The writing style of a bulletin is important. News stories in the church bulletin should be as brief as good newspaper copy requires but be couched in language somewhat less cold, objective, and formal than that of the secular newspaper or even the parish publication.¹² The language of the bulletin should not be overly formal nor too colloquial. It should be friendly, yet dignified. Nothing should be in the bulletin which the minister would hesitate to say in making announcements from the lectern or pulpit. The bulletin is an adjunct of the worship service and not basically an advertising or publicity leaflet.

Most common faults of the bulletin are the waste of space in repetition of directories or routine material, undue proportion of space devoted to the Order of Worship, and an unnecessary restriction of circulation.¹³ Lists of names of congregational officers might appeal occasionally, but as

¹¹Stanley I. Stuber, Public Relations Manual for Churches (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., c.1951), pp. 53-54.

¹²Wolseley, op. cit., p. 165.

¹³Henry, op. cit., p. 192.

weekly reading they soon lose their value.¹⁴ Rather than a listing of congregational officers it might be well to tell what the church stands for, to present a series of points on doctrine, etc.

The circulation of the average bulletin falls far short of its potential. If possible a copy should be mailed to each family which is not represented at the Sunday service. As a result the people will be better informed. The pastor will be on the lookout for people every Sunday. He will be awakened to the room for improvement in church attendance. Letting the people know that they are expected in church every Sunday will be a constructive step toward bettering attendance.¹⁵

The potential of the Sunday bulletin is unlimited. Of primary importance is its value as a public relations representative. The bulletin goes to the public as ambassador of the church. It can attain great heights of diplomacy or fail in its mission.

¹⁴Wolseley, op. cit., p. 163.

¹⁵Beiderwieden, op. cit., p. 9.

CHAPTER IV

PARISH PUBLICATIONS

Scope and Purpose of Parish Publications

If there is anything that lends prestige to a religious institution and serves to keep its program and activities before its members as well as non-members, it is a well edited and attractively printed church paper.¹

The Sunday bulletin has an important function in congregational life but it is not enough to keep the church well informed. It is also poorly timed as far as worship preparation for the church service is concerned. The weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly church paper is therefore utilized to inform more fully and to remind members of the congregation and potential members that certain important events are taking place at the church.²

Despite current conditions and regardless of the fact that there exist excellent national religious and denominational publications, every church will find it profitable to have its own individual paper or pamphlet. Only the

¹W. Austin Brodie, Keeping Your Church Informed (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1944), p. 57.

²Stanley I. Stuber, Public Relations Manual for Churches (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., c.1951), p. 235.

local congregation can keep its members informed about the local congregation. It is the congregational publication that can inform and generate warmth and unity of purpose among members. The publication in many instances serves as an assistant pastor. It will increase church activity, keep the sick and shut-ins informed, and increase church attendance.³

The potential of the well edited church publication is almost unbounded.

It will (1) advertise your church, (2) increase attendance and support, (3) reach the sick and shut in, (4) increase the prestige of church and pastor, (5) aid the church financially, (6) give an overall picture of the divisions and activities of the congregation, and (7) keep non-resident members in touch with their home church.⁴

The alert congregation will do all in its power to keep the standard of its publication at the highest possible level. It is highly advisable to get the very best equipment that the means of the church will permit. Under no circumstances is it wise to compromise with quality.⁵ Poor reproduction defeats the purpose of the publication. If it is smeary, so faint that the words are difficult to read, off center, or carelessly assembled, it is worse than no

³Brodie, op. cit., p. 57.

⁴Stewart Harral, Public Relations for Churches (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1945), p. 60.

⁵Brodie, op. cit., p. 90.

publication at all.⁶

Since all members of the congregation share in the shaping of public opinion, it is important that all be aware of their responsibility and obligation. Healthy public relations attitudes can be fostered through parish publications. If produced according to the principles of good public relations the publication will become a useful servant as well as a welcome guest in the homes of members. Once the production schedule has been set the paper should appear regularly. Issues will never be omitted except when unusual conditions make it impossible to publish.

Type and Makeup of Parish Publications

The Parish Letter

Beyond any single medium, the letter can be a powerful instrument in the interest of religion. Next to the personal presence of the writer, it is the most direct approach that one individual can have with another. Wisely used, an effective letter can influence a person just about as strongly and affirmatively as a personal visit or a powerful sermon.⁷ Any person enjoys receiving mail and the parishioner

⁶Roland E. Wolseley, Interpreting the Church Through Press and Radio (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1951), p. 144.

⁷Brodie, op. cit., p. 11.

is no exception. But there is no joy in receiving "junk" mail, and too many church publications fall into this category. Anything produced in mass quantity must be of exceptional quality to merit the readers' attention.

Remember that a reader will allow you only four or five seconds in which to convince him that your letter is worth reading. Say something easy for him to understand at a glance, say something interesting, or say something worthy of emphasis. And say it quickly!⁸

When matters of importance are at stake a letter may be as long as the story to be told, but they must be interesting and written in a simple, straightforward manner. Never underestimate the value of blank space on a page. A two and one-half page letter is better than two full pages--the white space on the third page makes the entire letter look like easier reading. Similarly, it is better to have a letter one and one-half pages long than to have one page that is too crowded.⁹ But although a long letter is sometimes a necessity the principle of brevity still holds. An outstanding clergyman has stated that most letters would be "ten times as good if they were half as long."¹⁰

The capable writer will start his letter with something that acts as a common denominator between himself and the

⁸Harral, op. cit., p. 117.

⁹John L. Fortson, How to Make Friends for Your Church (New York: Association Press, c.1943), p. 95.

¹⁰Brodie, op. cit., p. 18.

reader. He will then tell the story in simple and clear language and follow up by generating action. Important to the success of a letter is the attitude from which it is written. It should be logical and sincere. Above all, it must not be lacking in the quality of humanity. Cold and formal letters bring no response. The tone will be friendly, but not disrespectful. It will be cordial without being presumptuous. It will be sincere without being over-enthusiastic. The writer's warmth must be felt in every line of the letter.¹¹

As a precaution the pastor should be warned not to use letters only for desperation drives for soliciting funds or trying to increase membership and attendance. This is quick suicide. These angles have been overplayed and consequently the layman's reaction is negative when he sees a letter from the church.¹²

An important item in letter writing is the stationery. The importance of an attractive letterhead for a religious institution is quite obvious. Churches, beyond any other type of organization, must be particularly careful to create letterheads that are dignified without being gaudy, rich without being showy, and impressive without being dull. A letterhead represents an institution. It shows how it

¹¹Brodie, op. cit., p. 23.

¹²Ibid., p. 18.

dresses.¹³ The letterhead might well advertise the church. Let its make up be inspired by some outstanding characteristic of the church. For example, the tower, the door, or the altar might be reproduced on the letterhead.

Use quality stationery!¹⁴ A letter must be correct in sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, detail, and mechanical layout, but no less important is the quality of stationery employed. Cheap stationery will receive a proportionate response whereas quality stationery will demand attention.

The use of color, a very effective attention-getter and retainer, is also an important consideration. Color serves to identify a particular institution when mail is competing with others for attention.

An attractive envelope also means, in all probability, that a letter will be read. "Too many deadpan church envelopes provoke an, 'Oh, it's just another letter from the church' attitude and consequently find themselves in the waste basket."¹⁵

In many congregations the mimeographed letter serves as the regular parish publication. More ideally the letter will serve as agent of special importance, supplementing a

¹³Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 34.

regular publication. Where it is used regularly it might well serve as the initial step toward the mimeographed periodical paper.

The Mimeographed Paper

The most inexpensive method of getting started in the publication of a church paper is mimeographing it. If the church does not have the personnel or money for issuing a printed paper and wishes to introduce a periodical news bulletin, a small duplicated publication provides the solution. Such a publication provides the answer to getting congregational news to the members. It keeps members more closely in touch with one another by treating interesting and relevant news items which, for lack of space, could not be included in the Sunday bulletin. Such a mimeographed publication will also relieve the Sunday bulletin of its news load and enable it to be devoted to a greater extent to the worship service.

The main advantage of the duplicating machine is that it is far less expensive than printing. The time element is also important. Mimeographed work can be turned out almost at a moment's notice. It is very handy. Still another advantage is the vast variety of work it can turn out--multi-colored jobs, cartoons, graphs, etc.¹⁶

¹⁶Stuber, op. cit., pp. 185 ff.

Mimeographed material need not be cheap or commonplace. There are tricks in every trade. Little gadgets can be ordered from any mimeographic catalogue which will improve the work. Such items might include: shading screens, circle, oval and square guides, border and other decorations, music guide, type cleaning brushes, lettering and shading wheels, various lettering guides, scope, celluloid rulers and triangles, and church art books.¹⁷

The mimeographed paper might well take the shape of a regular newspaper. Headlines can be drawn in by hand or cut in regular type style. In using the standard 8½ x 11 inch size paper it will be well to divide the paper into two columns for neater appearance and easier reading. The first impression which the appearance of the paper offers will determine to a great extent whether or not the paper will be read. A neatly designed paper might well attract attention, whereas the untidy and uninviting paper will defeat rather than serve its purpose.

Extreme care must be exerted in the production of a mimeographed paper. It is easy to produce a poor paper and very difficult to produce a good paper. Of fifty samples of church mimeographing submitted to a group of advertising men for criticism, only two were found to be excellent. Most of the others were unattractive. Comments for improvement

¹⁷Ibid., p. 189.

included the following:

1. Use better ink, better stencils.
2. Use aids from mimeographing companies.
3. Better lay out. Tendency is to crowd.
4. The copy material itself should be better written.
5. No sparkle. Use imagination.¹⁸

So many persons in a church can operate a duplicating machine that there is a tendency to turn the production of the parish paper over to almost anyone willing to take the trouble to produce it. The pastor is often happy to be relieved from the chore when the Walther League takes it as their project. The pastor serves as advisor or editor-in-chief, but leaves the production of the paper up to anyone capable of typing and operating the duplicating machine, in which case the cause of good public relations is sometimes defeated. The paper will give evidence at a proportionate rate of the labor that went into its production. The good paper will demand many hours of hard work and it will also further the cause of the church toward good public relations.

The Printed Magazine or Newspaper

Unquestionably, a printed paper receives more respectful attention than one that is mimeographed or hectographed or similarly produced.¹⁹ But with the superior quality

¹⁸Brodie, op. cit., p. 99.

¹⁹Stuber, op. cit., p. 143.

comes increased price. Often the price difference, however, can be covered by advertising. Even if there is no financial advantage through advertising or even a slight deficit, the advantages of the printed publication over the duplicated will be well worth the investment.²⁰

In the field of the printed publications, two formats come to the fore for consideration--the magazine and the newspaper. The former is perhaps the more attractive but also the more expensive. The matter of expense, however, in the production of the magazine format has been largely overcome by syndicated services. Various companies print a magazine carrying advertising and allowing space for a particular church's information in the quantity printed for each cooperating institution. This plan gives the church member a more substantial publication than he might otherwise receive, with possibly valuable religious news, features, and pictures, as well as service from advertising.

One such firm prepares a six by nine inch magazine containing articles of general religious interest and church advertising. Two or four pages are left blank so that the church buying a stipulated number of copies may insert its own material. Covers are imprinted with the church name and other special information. Since this publication is produced on a mass basis, it is cheaper to use such a plan

²⁰Wolseley, op. cit., p. 147.

than to pay for the printing of an issue entirely filled with original material.²¹

Various types of church magazines in use are illustrated by the following:

Several group production schemes similar to the All-Church Press plan for newspaper style parish publications, are available (for magazines). Typical of that method is the eight-page magazine issued by Grace Methodist Church of Catasauqua, Pennsylvania. A two-color cover is used on the 8½ by 12 inch publication, with a plate that enables the printer to insert the name of a different church for each run of the presses. About one and a half of the pages carry advertising, all of it local in origin. Little general material is printed; the bulk of the copy pertains to the church using the edition.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Savior, Neva and Cornelia Avenues, Chicago, issues a smaller magazine, 8½ by 5½ inches produced almost entirely by mimeograph. The cover carries a little printing. Three of the twenty-eight inside pages are printed advertising, bought mainly by neighborhood shops.

One of the most professional and impressive magazines issued by single churches is that coming from the Riverside Church of New York City, The Church Monthly. Seven issues cost the subscriber two dollars annually; for this he receives a periodical of polished appearance and professional treatment. The issues contain sermons preached at this famous church and several full-length articles on Riverside activities, supported by carefully selected and reproduced photographs. Size 10 by 7 inches, it is free of advertising, printed on heavy stock, and a model of churchly dignity.

Bethany Evangelical Church, 2878 N. 54th St., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, issues a monthly magazine. Size 9 by 6 inches, The Bethany Community Messenger is a letterpress product, and highly successful as an advertising medium, a typical issue carrying about fifty per cent advertising, or virtually half the sixteen-page edition. Its editorial content is in contrast to that of the

²¹ Ibid., pp. 143-45.

Riverside magazine, for it is almost entirely news material.

Identical in size is The Sherman Park Lutheran, another Milwaukee publication, issued by the church bearing that name. Thirteen of the twenty-two pages, including covers, in a sample issue, were advertising copy; the remainder was standing directory material and news stories as well as a little general religious information of a feature type.

A hybrid printed publication is The Mt. Olive Lutheran, of the Milwaukee church thus named. This institution, at Washington Boulevard and 54th St., issues a six-page combination newspaper and magazine, self-cover type, with the odd size of 12 by 6½ inches. Supplementing the monthly, which also is an innovation, is the Mt. Olive Reporter, a two-page duplicated weekly containing the most recent news, promotional material, and reminders of activities.

One hundred and fifty thousand circulation a month is claimed for The Church Bulletin, a Roman Catholic group magazine circulated in the New York City area. Measuring nearly 6 by 9 inches and containing twenty pages of advertising and news material, this publication is in part particularized to the subscribing church; it is commercially produced. Catholic churches in all the New York boroughs as well as parts of New Jersey, Connecticut, Long Island, and some Hudson River shore line communities, distribute it to their members.²²

The program of the syndicated services is also available in the newspaper format.

In most instances a newspaper is preferable to a magazine. It is doubtful whether there is any adult in the United States who does not read a newspaper, whereas the magazine public is limited. Add to this the item of production and mailing costs, and the decision in favor of a newspaper comes easily. . . . The final criterion of any institution's publication must always be measured in terms of effectiveness rather than in

²²Ibid., pp. 155-56.

terms of beauty.²³

The simplest paper, produced by the local printer, is a four page publication. The most economical page size, to begin with, measures six by nine inches. An alternate size, to allow more space, is an all-over page measurement of nine and one-half by twelve inches. The first mentioned page will accommodate a maximum of three columns of type, while the second will take four columns.²⁴

The following are examples of newspaper format:

Ascension Lutheran Church, 1236 S. Layton Boulevard, Milwaukee 4, Wisconsin, has for a number of years issued Ascension News, a four-page monthly newspaper, size 12 by 9 inches. An editorial board of five persons fills it with news.

The Tulsa Herald is issued by the All-Church Press of that Oklahoma city. It is a six- to eight-page standard-size newspaper printed for many participating churches. On its first page is material only about the church buying its own edition; included are the order of service, a pastor's editorial and miscellaneous news. The inside pages are similar for all churches; advertisements share the inside pages with general religious news.

One of the most widely known parish publications in the United States is The Wesley News, issued by Wesley Methodist Church, Marquette and Grant, Minneapolis 4, Minnesota. This 8-page, 17 by 11½ weekly tabloid has achieved a circulation of 7,000. Its slogan is: ". . . a liberal, tolerant, progressive Christian paper devoted to peace and goodwill among men." Issued

²³Herbert W. Knopp, "The Organization of a Public Relations Office," Proceedings First Institute of Public Relations July 20 and 21, 1949, edited by Herbert W. Knopp and Roberta Inde (Valparaiso, Indiana: Valparaiso University), p. 27.

²⁴Brodie, op. cit., p. 59.

for one of the larger Methodist churches, with a downtown city location, it is financed partly by advertising and partly by a dollar-a-year subscription charge. Generous use is made of departments, cartoons, and special articles.

From the First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia, comes a four-page monthly, size 8 by 11 inches, on slick paper. It is characterized by many short news stories. The Friendly Visitor carries a picture of the church building as part of its heading, a familiar trademarking device.

Typical of the papers issued by the larger Hebrew temples of the nation is The Bulletin of Temple Beth El, Detroit, Michigan. A four-page business letter size weekly on enameled stock, its photographs reproduced with exceptional clarity on the all-too-rare occasions that they are used.

For a quarter of a century the First Methodist Church of Evanston, Illinois, has had either a magazine or a newspaper. Most of that time The First Church Review has been a 7½ by 11 inch weekly newspaper ranging from four to eight pages and obtainable for fifty cents annually, just as is The Bulletin noted above. Also like The Bulletin it does not solicit advertising. News is emphasized but there also are such general materials as a pastoral prayer, a motion picture guide, book reviews, and short general religious articles received from outside sources.²⁵

The comparative value of the parish newspaper and magazine has been summed up thus:

The Parish Newspaper

Advantages

Inexpensive to publish
Quickly produced
Cheaply mailed
Timely and up-to-date
Emphasizes news angle

Disadvantages

Ephemeral in appearance
Limited in space
Emphasizes only short copy

²⁵Wolseley, op. cit., pp. 155-56.

The Parish Magazine

Advantages
 Dignified and appropriate
 Reproduces pictures well
 Greater permanence
 Accommodates more advertising

Disadvantages
 More expensive to produce
 Low news value
 Infrequent in appearance²⁶

As far as popularity goes, the parish newspapers or quasi newspaper-magazines, rather than the standard magazine, rank first among American churches. The primary function of a church publication of this type is to inform the church constituency.²⁷ Both newspaper and magazine, if well done, can go far to spread good public relations for the church.

Financing the Publication

Various methods can be employed to finance the production of a parish publication. One method is to place the entire burden upon the congregational budget. In this way, with a designated amount set aside in the budget the publication will experience no financial difficulties. In few cases, however, will the congregational budget be able to stand the strain of such a procedure.

Special offerings are another possible solution to the problem. A project of this scope, however, can never con-

²⁶Ibid., p. 142.

²⁷Ibid., p. 143.

sistently rely on special offerings.

Much is to be said for the subscription basis. A publication for which individuals have paid directly is likely to gain their loyalty and reading time. But churches usually are not equipped to keep accurate records on subscriptions in any quantity. The bookkeeping may cost more than the parish publication can bring in.²⁸

Another possibility is to finance the publication through advertising. In such a case the pastor should first consult the chamber of commerce of his community. Such a body often has an agreement with business concerns that no organization may solicit advertising for a publication issued locally without a permit from the business group.²⁹

Too often a merchant purchases advertising space out of kindness and with a feeling that this procedure is simply a disguised method of obtaining an additional contribution to the annual budget. This unsound basis for buying advertising space will lead to embarrassment later, for when financial conditions are more stringent these merchants will withdraw their support and the paper will not survive. Only solicitation of valuable and profitable advertising will make the transaction sound and businesslike. Solicitation should be done by someone who is competent. He or she

²⁸Ibid., p. 146.

²⁹Ibid., p. 146.

should know how to schedule and place the advertising on the pages, handle the proofs, prepare bills, and other such jobs. He must know what is seemly and unseemly for the church. Every transaction must be completely honest.³⁰

Rates for church advertising of this type are usually low because circulations also are low. In setting rates the church should consider what other institutions are charging for similar space and circulation, the cost of production and the types of advertising to be carried.³¹

No one method will solve the financial problem of the publication. A combined support from advertising and the congregational budget will offer one solution.

Style and Content of Parish Publications

If the format of the publication is that of a newspaper, it will do well to imitate a creditable newspaper and not a technically ineffective one. Headlines will be as professional in caliber as possible, copyreading will be careful, style will be observed, and the writing will be concise and, although human, not sentimental. If it is a magazine the pages will be planned and pictures selected with care and properly cropped and reduced, with adequate cutlines.

The purpose of a publication will determine its content.

³⁰Ibid., p. 147.

³¹Ibid.

If its purpose is to keep the congregation up to date on church news, the publication will obviously emphasize that type of content. Depending upon the postal arrangements, a proportion of the content may have to be what is known as general material. This will include general religious news, book reviews, prayers, and the like. This is advantageous financially, because through it the mailing cost is reduced to a fraction of what it would be otherwise.³²

Content of the publication might well include:

1. Routine news--regular meetings and activities.
2. Community and church news--interdenominational work, community interests, religious and national observances.
3. Special events--guest preachers, etc.
4. Holiday observances--Lenten services, Easter, etc.
5. Summer services--VBS, outdoor services, mission festival.
6. General activities--Every-member canvas, adult evangelism.
7. Pastor's program--sermons, visitations, out-of-town calls.
8. National interest--mission work, national religious news.
9. Worship--preparing the people for Sunday's worship.³³

It is wise to use inspiration messages, sermons, prayers and the like sparingly. A parish paper or magazine that becomes merely a propaganda or publicity organ is soon neglected and disrespected. It must have news and other religious information.³⁴ The story of the church is important--

³²Ibid., p. 149.

³³Brodie, op. cit., p. 60.

³⁴Wolseley, op. cit., p. 152.

as news and as history. It should be accurately written on a current week-by-week or issue-by-issue basis. Accounts not written at the time of occurrence are often lost largely because facts are forgotten. The writing of a good publication will always be in good taste and on as high a standard of craftsmanship as possible.

Knowing at what level to focus a publication is a tremendously important and knotty problem. It is as easy to underestimate the intelligence of a group as it is to overestimate it. In dealing with mass opinions, it must be remembered that over the last few decades the American public has become one of the best informed in the world. All, of course, are not of the intelligensia either, but the writer will do well not to focus his efforts at too low a mental level. But, regardless of the mental level of the people, "you cannot insult the intelligence of any person by using simple words in preference to involved words."³⁵

In parish journalism, the writer will be appealing to all age groups--to senior citizens, to the family relationship, to the teen age group, and to the children. This calls for a wide variety of topics, especially to hold the interest of the teen ager. They need:

1. Clear, understandable religious material.
2. Interpretation of the nature of the church,

³⁵Benjamin P. Browne, Christian Journalism for Today (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, c.1952), p. 66.

- doctrine, the Bible, Christian history.
3. Interpretation of the young person's place in society and how he may bear witness to his Christian faith.
 4. Youth-adult relationship know how.
 5. Comment on boy-girl relationships, sex, recreation, social drinking.
 6. Interpretation of religious experience.³⁶

The church editor will strive to make the paper look good. The attractiveness of a paper does not depend altogether upon a large printing budget. Layout is one of the weakest points of most church-printed material. Good layout is mostly a matter of eye appeal. A study of advertisements appearing in magazines will present ideas for use in the parish publication.

It is amazing what a good layout, well chosen type, and lots of white space can do. If you want your paper read do not present page after page of solid type. Even the most faithful church member will not wade through that. Make your paper a public relations force.³⁷

It is unwise to select the cheapest printer unless there is reason to believe that he is good. The wise editor will utilize the printer's heart as well as his head. The better acquainted the editor is with the printer the better job he will receive. "Expect good service and do not be afraid to reject bad work."³⁸

"Any good story can be improved a hundred fold with a

³⁶Ibid., p. 77.

³⁷Stuber, op. cit., p. 121.

³⁸Fortson, op. cit., p. 99.

good picture."³⁹ Pictures are valuable in telling stories, in preaching lessons and in recording historical data. Pictures in any form are a concern of public relations because they offer one of the best means of getting an idea across. But it is not enough for a photograph to be an accurate picture of a scene or a person. It must also communicate a feeling or an idea, depict a dramatic situation, suggest a story, or indicate action. Pictures are interesting when people are included. A stained glass window may be outstanding but the quality can best be told by the look of interest on the faces of those shown inspecting the window.

A capable amateur photographer, who is a member of the congregation, will find a welcome place on the publications staff. He will be assigned to special events and will have pictures of the pastor, teachers, choirs, congregational officers, committees and the like on file.

Charts, graphs, and tables might also serve as valuable story tellers in the parish publication. Colors, too, can be useful. They can be employed to catch the eye and to direct attention to certain spots. But too much is bad. Red should be confined to headlines or decorative pieces. Text printed in red is hard to read. Green is hard on the eyes. Light colors on white paper become almost illegible. Different colors have different reactions. Red, yellow, and

³⁹Brodie, op. cit., p. 108.

orange are warm colors, suggesting light, heat, and cheerfulness. Green, blue, and violet are cool colors. Shades of blue may create the impression of tranquility and calmness.⁴⁰

Whether lighted with color or not, the parish publication has an important mission in representing the congregation to its people and to the public. It is much like the old-fashioned country weekly in that each reader knows almost all the other readers and all the readers know the editor and he knows each of them. It is a private publication, however, and should be neither as cold as the secular paper or magazine nor as familiar as the editor might become with his closest friends.⁴¹ It will find it necessary to steer a middle of the road course to offend no one and to impress everyone.

⁴⁰Fortson, op. cit., p. 97.

⁴¹Wolseley, op. cit., p. 151.

CHAPTER V

THE PUBLIC PRESS

The Church-Newspaper Relationship

The church which is interested in souls is interested in the community and its invitation to the community can be effectively extended through the newspaper. The columns of the community and metropolitan newspapers which carry the Lutheran name regularly are opening doors for the church. Failure in this means, at least potentially, the loss of many a prospective visitor and eventually member.¹

Regardless of other competing mediums of information, notably the radio, the newspaper continues to be, and probably will remain the outstanding medium for influencing public thought. It is therefore of the highest importance that those working in the field of religion learn how to use the newspaper to the greatest advantage.²

Some may question the value of newspapers in this day when television aerials are strung over the city roof tops like so many miniature clotheslines. Surely radio and television can tell the story quicker and more realistically than a newspaper. But neither radio nor television has yet reached the point where it can "bottle up the news until a

¹Manual of Practical Church Work (New York: Lutheran Press, 1945), p. 1.

²W. Austin Brodie, Keeping Your Church in the News (Philadelphia: The Blakiston Company, c.1942), p. 11.

person is in slippers and an easy chair and ready for it."³ Neither can they offer one long accounts on specialized subjects.

Some may think that with the advent of television and continued growth of radio the days of the newspaper are numbered or at least their influence cramped. But yet it is probable that there is more reading done now than ever before. The newspaper is not losing its touch and the church will be wise not to lose touch with the newspaper.

The first step toward good press relations is to understand what goes on inside a newspaper office. It is necessary to study a paper because each paper has its own peculiarities. Some concentrate on long stories with details. Some prefer flashy news, while others specialize in news features.

Establishment of cordial press relations is by far one of the most important steps toward achieving success in religious publicity. By arranging for an interview and meeting the editor-in-chief personally one may discuss problems and learn the newspaper's policy regarding copy, deadlines, use of pictures, and the newspaper's particular style.

Another member of the staff of interest to the churchman

³Roberta Ihde, "Newspaper Rechniques," Proceedings First Institute of Public Relations July 20 and 21, 1949, edited by Herbert W. Knopp and Roberta Ihde (Valparaiso, Indiana: Valparaiso University, c.1950), p. 14.

is the city editor, who heads the news department. All local news is cleared through his hands. He can offer helpful assistance and advice to the religious writer. But it will be wise to strive to impose neither on his time nor on his good nature, to insure a lasting and helpful friendship. Best visiting hours for the city editor are as early in the day as possible, because he has most time at his disposal when he arrives for his day's work. News material should be brought to him personally, if possible. It is profitable to pay an occasional friendly visit to keep contacts fresh.

Religious news is of such importance to newspapers that most of them have a religious editor. The church page on most newspapers runs on Saturday. This department handles all routine religious stories concerning the week's program. The churchman should know the church editor or the person in charge of this page intimately. The relationship should be friendly and reciprocal in nature. Cooperation is sincerely appreciated by the church editor and often leads to preferred consideration.⁴

Relationships between the church and press bring obligations also. If a clergyman has a story, he is expected to share it with the press. This relationship also results in publicity sometimes being forced on a clergyman when he might rather not have it. His attitude in such circumstances

⁴Brodie, op. cit., pp. 41-50.

is important. No newspaper can compel a minister to impart information he does not care to reveal. The reporters are, however, entitled to courteous and reasonable treatment. When the church is involved in an embarrassing news incident, the press is entitled to have the story. It is wise, in such a case, for the pastor to cooperate with the reporter, else he will obtain the facts from less reliable sources and thus do greater detriment to the name of the church.⁵

There is a great deal of misrepresentation and misunderstanding about "contacts" and "knowing the right people" in newspaper circles. Of far greater importance is production of valid news copy which wins the right to publication on its own merits. Good copy is the best press relations there is. To obtain more and better news for your parish:

1. Make use of available talent in your parish. If a layman is not capable, train him.
2. Cooperate with the press.
 - a. Be of help to the newspaper. Help reporters. Aid them in use of church terminology.
 - b. Anticipate the newspaperman's needs. Help the photographer.
 - c. Regarding important statements, speeches, sermons: prepare mimeographed copies in advance for reporters so they can report more accurately what you actually said.
 - d. Let newspapers know they can rely on you.
 - e. Don't be too busy for reporters.
3. Establish friendships with the staff.
4. Observe newspaper mechanics and ethics. Be prompt,

⁵Carl F. H. Henry, Successful Church Publicity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1943), p. 127.

courteous.⁶

Unfortunately the relationship between church and press is not as cordial as it might be. The church complains that it does not get enough space and that the press warps the news about church and religion. The press complains that the church does not help it get the news and does not understand why it handles the news as it does.

Although the gathering of church news is a routine job and fundamentally simple, few newspapers do it competently. Too often the church editor is a person not well informed about church history, denominational differences, church architecture, and the viewpoint of religion. The church editorship is not considered one of the prize assignments, hence the most ambitious, vigorous newsmen are not patient with its requirements.⁷

Newspapers are in business first of all to sell papers. To do this requires a news content that will interest readers because of its timeliness, freshness, or novelty. An editor cannot afford to print a statement just because it is important. It must also be interesting. The success experienced in getting releases published is determined by

⁶Willard Augustus Pleuthner, More Power for Your Church (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, c.1952), pp. 311 ff.

⁷Roland E. Wolseley, Interpreting the Church Through Press and Radio (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1951), pp. 203-4.

how well the events that are important are made to seem interesting to the general public.⁸

A newspaper that prints much church news in a community not interested in church news, at the expense of whatever copy the public is interested in, cannot survive financially without subsidy. The history of American journalism is full of instances of well-intentioned publications that failed because they misinterpreted public taste or were unwilling to gratify it.⁹

Churches, in their attitude toward the newspaper, can be divided into three classes.

1. The Unaware. They are unaware that there is any relationship between church and newspaper.
2. The Criticizer. With this class the newspaper is all wrong. It overemphasizes crime, sex, and scandals of all sorts. It is commercial and untrustworthy. It has no conscience. It gives columns to actresses, prize fights and horse races. It is to be avoided and denounced.
3. The Cooperator. He recognizes the evils and shortcomings of the newspaper as judged by Christian ethics, but he also sees in it a mighty instrument for good. He cooperates in every way possible. He visits the newspaper plant and becomes acquainted with the personnel. He commends the paper on its fine points. He exhibits charity towards it.¹⁰

It does not pay to complain about the newspaper. But it does pay to make constructive criticism to the paper.

⁸John L. Fortson, How to Make Friends for Your Church (New York: Association Press, c.1943), p. 130.

⁹Wolseley, op. cit., p. 204.

¹⁰William Bernard Norton, Church and Newspaper (New York: The MacMillan Company, c.1930), pp. 1-2.

They appreciate it. Often the church's criticism, however, is not constructive. The church finds many points of error in the newspaper's coverage.

1. Instances of confusion are frequent.
2. Newspapers err frequently in the use of the word pastor. (A pastor is a minister in charge of a church.)
3. Ecclesiastical distinctions are confused.
4. The church expects a newspaper to understand the nomenclature of its differing classifications among different denominations.
5. The church expects the press to give recognition to the sincere and honorable purposes of the church.
6. The church is sensitive over stories regarding the reputation of a minister.
7. The church expects the press to be faultless in expressing the truth.
8. There is a constant temptation for the newspaper to exploit criticism of the church, its weaknesses, failures and departures from the highest standards. If a speaker lauds the church, he is very apt to get less newspaper space than if he finds fault with it.¹¹

Equally at fault in church-press relations is the church. One viewpoint of the daily newspaper is that the church often seems dull in understanding newspaper psychology and practice. The church seems to prefer to instruct the newspaper rather than to learn from it. Deadlines also cause misunderstanding. The newspaper regards the time element as highly important, a fact many ministers and churches find hard to understand.¹²

Editors' biggest complaints against clergymen seem to

¹¹Norton, *op. cit.*, pp. 226 ff.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 206 ff.

be twofold. The clergy will not cooperate and they do not know the difference between a good news story and a poor news story.¹³ According to the reports of the editors, it seems that the clergy either fails to learn the simple steps in the process of presenting and preparing of news or misinterprets the functions of the news story so that valuable publicity space is lost.

Newspaper editorial department employees who handle church news say that churches too often fail to send in copy about their activities or to keep the paper informed in other ways; that much of the copy coming in is badly prepared, showing not the slightest idea of the newspaper's way of doing things; and that frequently newspapers are scolded for the way they handle church news when they do not deserve such treatment.

Various small town editors complain, "The churches seem unaware of the value of publicity." "We publish all church notices but the ministers seldom bring us anything for publication." "Could use more church material if church leaders knew how to work with us."¹⁴

There is no select road to effectiveness in a church leader's relationships with the press. Only experience, study, observation, and a critical evaluation of his own

¹³Brodie, op. cit., pp. 117 ff.

¹⁴Wolseley, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

tactics can bring proficiency. He will seek to understand the functions and problems of editors, so that he will be able to judge church coverage from the editor's viewpoint.

Effective press relations cannot be reduced to a formula, but it is evident that mutual confidence is the soundest foundation for improved relationships between the church and the newspaper.¹⁵

If a clergyman can present himself to an editor as one familiar with news writing, he will receive ready cooperation and will enlist special interest in his ministry. When the church editor is on friendly terms with a news minded clergyman he will not hesitate to call him for intelligent comment on current news.¹⁶ Pastors who enjoy the best relationships with the press often inconvenience themselves to give reporters feature stories. The pastor, as well as other members of the staff, should never be too busy to see a reporter. The newsman may have a deadline to meet in thirty minutes. It pays to keep excellent relations with the newspaper even if it means inconvenience at midnight.¹⁷

Newspaper space is limited. The editor has the task of trying to please hundreds of readers, each of whom has

¹⁵Stewart Harral, Public Relations for Churches (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1945), pp. 54-55.

¹⁶Henry, op. cit., p. 126.

¹⁷Harral, op. cit., p. 51.

different interests and desires. The editor's first duty is to his readers. If a newspaper has betrayed the confidence of its readers, it has lost everything. If the editor has been generous in giving space to news of religious affairs, it is not wise to strain this relationship by continually demanding more.

The churchman might do well to remember that the editor is human enough to appreciate words of praise. But it is wiser to compliment too little rather than too much. Editors are allergic to too much backpatting.¹⁸

The Church in the News

What is News?

For the small town paper any church news is worth printing. No matter who the editor may be, he is favorable to religious news. In the majority of communities the church is the most important social fact.¹⁹

In determining the news of the future, churches will find a calendar to be of service. It will enable the reporter to plan in advance for press releases. News items worthy of press release might be gathered from the following:

- a. Religious Services. Excerpts from sermons, future

¹⁸Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁹Theodore R. Sills and Philip Lesly, Public Relations (Chicago: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., c.1945), p. 243.

- sermon topics, visiting speakers, the good choir, talented organist, an increase in attendance, future communion services, church holidays, special events, and anything that is of general interest.
- b. **Activities of the Pastor.** His visits, sick calls, post-graduate studies, activities of his family, returns from vacation, what he has done to improve the church, preaching at neighboring churches, future plans.
 - c. **Parish Worker Activities and Deaconness Projects.**
 - d. **Activities of Individual Members.** Each member should lead a Christian life and so be a symbol of Christianity in his neighborhood, should have religious books in his library (see Concordia Publishing House list of books), its veterans in service--men and women--away or home on leave, recipients of valedictories or special honors in schools of higher education.
 - e. **Sunday School News.** Show advantages of Sunday School attendance for children, stress the fact that your teachers are well trained in Christian doctrine and in the handling of the children entrusted to their care.
 - f. **Church Societies.** Activities, meeting highlights, such as what went on, who spoke, who was elected, future plans for the good of the local church body and the community, future convention plans. Local, district and national LLL, LWML, Walther League, Ladies' Aid. Fellowship groups, athletic teams.
 - g. **Voters' Meetings.** Elections, new mission stations, reports of delegates from district and national conventions, budget news, surpassing of budget quotas for past year, new quotas, building program, happenings of community interest.
 - h. **Special Services.** Christmas season, Lenten season, Easter, Mission Festival, Reformation Festival, Lutheran Hour rallies, church anniversaries, weddings, baptisms, deaths, confirmations, social affairs of church societies.
 - i. **Activities of District and Synodical Boards** as related to local churches, new churches, larger budgets, benefit to community.

- j. Church Institutions. Academies, colleges, orphanages, homes for the old people, blind and deaf missions, crippled children activities, activities of missionaries. All of these exert a definite human interest appeal and readily find their way into the various religious and secular publications.²⁰

Human interest stories are front page news. They are terse, to the point, and interesting. But only on rare occasions does someone recognize religious news with a human interest background. "These little 'headliner' human interest stories are of such immense value to religion that one must learn to recognize them on sight and rush them right into print."²¹

The "feature story" is also news. It lends itself easily to the interests of the reader. Some unique phase of an institution's program, some uncommon type of a church service, beautiful liturgical music--these make for the best type of the "feature story." Also a good news item is the historical sketch.

Ministers also make good news stories. They are likely to be too modest and to shrink from publicity. This attitude is a mistake. They are public leaders, appointed to influence the thought of the community. Content to address hundreds from their pulpits, they are overlooking the oppor-

²⁰ Alfred J. Kreft, "What to Write About," Bettering Our Public Relations, St. Louis: Pastor's Workshop, July 29, 1955 (mimeographed manuscript).

²¹ Brodie, op. cit., p. 64.

tunity to reach thousands through the press. A preacher may be humble, earnest, and conscientious, but in retiring from the press he is thinking only of himself rather than his cause.²²

Sermons, too, can be news items.

If a sermon is good for a local congregation, it is also worthy of a larger hearing. A good sermon should have as wide a hearing as possible. Those portions of a sermon, relevant to the public, should reach the public press. Friday is the time to send in a Monday morning sermon report. If it is newsworthy, properly prepared, and arrives at the newspaper office in plenty of time, it stands a good chance of getting into type.

Make everything clear. Use words which the average reader can understand. Be prepared to support every statement that you make. You will be judged by what you put into print. Be humble. Be brotherly. You are representing not only yourself but also your church. Here the public relations responsibility cannot be overlooked.

In preparing the sermon material, (1) use ordinary 8½ by 11 inch white typewriter paper. (2) Double space. (3) Use only one side of the sheet. (4) Allow at least an inch margin on either side. (5) Begin typing a quarter way down the page. (This allows for editor's caption material). (6) Begin with lead paragraph, explaining the release. This may include two paragraphs.²³

An editing problem which a good public relations man can turn to his advantage is the slack news season. The Christmas and Easter seasons are crowded by all Christian denominations. But the Lutheran Church has its particular

²²Robert Cashman, The Business Administration of a Church (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, c.1937), p. 53.

²³Stanley I. Stuber, Public Relations Manual for Churches (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., c.1951), pp. 50-52.

holidays, such as Reformation Day; it also holds services on Ascension Day, when few other groups do. These are slack religious news seasons and can be used to advantage by the Lutheran Church.²⁴

Clergymen persist in handing in trite items about their sermon topics and hours of worship, feeling that this, in itself, constitutes good newspaper publicity. Or, since by nature of their calling they are propagandists, ministers are too often interested in getting propaganda into the newspaper rather than the news, in which they should be interested. News actually is the best propaganda.²⁵

If the local pastor wishes to let the unchurched know that his parish is not just the Gothic pile at the corner of State and Main he can best do so by trying to make the religious news in the local press reflect the vitality which is being shown in these days by a working Christian faith. If the religious news is vital, if it shows the emerging social strength of modern Christianity, then the unchurched will seek out the local church. They will never seek out a religion represented to them by a flock of one-paragraph announcements of rummage sales.²⁶

Good church news is news that shows evidence of the Gospel in action.

What do I mean by spreading the gospel through the news? I mean that every week there are events which show how the Christian churches are trying to solve the social and allied problems that dominate the lives and inter-

²⁴ *Ihde, op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

²⁵ *Norton, op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁶ James O. Supple, "Church and Press--Enemies or Allies?" *The Christian Century*, August 17, 1949, pp. 960-61.

ests of millions. The local pastor needs to grasp the fact that telling about these events is doing a better job of evangelizing the indifferent millions than would be the listing of 25 sermon topics in the same space. If it's publicity for his church that the pastor is after, this evidence that the church is really accomplishing something somewhere relevant to men's actual difficulties is the best publicity conceivable.

At an American Press Institute seminar at Columbia University I was asked to analyze for editors from all over the country the church pages in their papers. It was gratifying to see that most of them gave considerable space to the churches, but it was appalling to see how the space was used. I waded through column after column of agate-type announcements of meetings and sermon titles. One paper contained three solid columns of sermon topics draped around four columns of advertisements listing the same sermons! And in all this expanse of space there was precious little to indicate that anywhere the church was really doing something.²⁷

The reason that more church news does not reach the newspapers is the fault not only of the paper but also of the church. Many religious news writers fail to estimate the point of interest of the newspaper reader. They often feel that the work of their church or sect is not important enough to warrant newspaper space. They fail to realize that the news of their church is of interest to other denominations, too.

The church writer need not be afraid of overcrowding the newspaper with copy and news. They will decide whether or not they will print it. If a name has appeared in the newspaper ninety-nine times, it is easier to get it in the hundredth time than it is the first time. The more familiar

²⁷Ibid., p. 961.

the name of a church and of a minister is the more it appeals to a wide constituency. The law of the newspaper is not to make the small great but the great greater.²⁸ News, in the final analysis, is whatever the city editor says it is.²⁹ The churchman must learn the policy of a newspaper. Who is its public? This public must be satisfied. The city editor knows who his public is. All newspapers print church news (news of the institution) but few print religious news (philosophy of the church). The latter is considered too abstract or controversial. The former is general and safer.

The church may be in the news when it has no intention of creating news. Such items as the marriage of the minister to a wealthy widow in the congregation is news, although all involved would rather not have the item appear in the press. Internal church strife may serve as excellent news material. In such instances the press will be out in search of the news. The first thing for the churchman to do is to see the city editor and treat the matter frankly and openly. The city editor, not the reporter, judges what is newsworthy and for that reason he should be consulted. In many instances he will drop the news item. But if he plans to print it, the churchman will find it to his advantage to cooperate in the gathering of the news, lest the reporter seek unfriendly

²⁸Norton, op. cit., p. 114.

²⁹Wolseley, op. cit., p. 206.

sources for his information. The reporter in search of information is representing an organization. The interview is as unpleasant for him as it is for you. But he has an assignment. No reporter and no newspaper can compel a minister to give out information he does not care to reveal but the press is entitled to fair and reasonable treatment. The minister can at least state, "I have nothing to say."³⁰

Covering the News

When the local congregation has a special event, a special invitation should be sent to the press. A note to the editor or a telephone call will bring a reporter and perhaps a photographer. The news staff is the church's friend. It offers free publicity and so it is well if the churchman is acquainted with and knows how to get along with the reporter.

1. Be frank and honest. If you cannot answer his questions, explain the reason why.
2. Try in every way to be helpful.
3. Be receptive. Do not delay a reporter.
4. If you expect full publicity at a meeting, invite reporters.
5. If a reporter has garbled facts, take the matter up with him before complaining to his superior.
6. Do not play favorites. On the other hand, if a reporter creates his own exclusive story and comes to you for confirmation, do not divulge it to other reporters.³¹

³⁰Norton, op. cit., pp. 139-40.

³¹Fortson, op. cit., pp. 134-35.

If it is not possible to have a reporter on hand for an occasion, someone with newspaper experience will want to write up the story and submit it promptly for publication. In some cases the pastor is most qualified to do this. But if he is to write news copy he will want to familiarize himself with methods of good news writing.

His first task in writing the news story is to organize an effective lead paragraph. The lead, or opening paragraph, is important in the news story. It represents a quick summary of the story, a necessity in news writing since the reader often scans the news page and expects to get the essential news items from the headlines and lead paragraphs. To include the main items of a story the lead paragraph will answer as compactly as possible the five "W's"--who, what, where, why, and when--and also "how." To keep a paragraph short and interesting, however, it may sometimes be necessary to use a two-paragraph lead.

The only caution in lead writing is to avoid the use of the time element or the "when" in opening a story. The most important item should be first in the story. The day on which an event takes place or the time it will occur is usually not important enough to take precedence over the other essentials of the lead. It may, however, on occasion add interest to the story to open with the time element.³²

³²Brodie, op. cit., p. 33.

The most important element of a good news story is accuracy. The most gifted writer is the worst reporter if he is careless or indifferent to the factual details of his story, no matter how unimportant they may seem. It must be remembered also that every detail should be important to the story; otherwise it should be omitted. The spelling or misspelling of names, the inclusion or omission of initials, and the garbling of dates soon indicate to the city editor whether his news source is trustworthy or unreliable.³³

Following are hints on how to prepare an effective news release:

1. In upper left hand corner, under word From, write your own name, address, and telephone number.
2. One line lower on opposite side of paper, write in date when you want story printed. If it is to be published immediately write For Immediate Release. If the copy is to be printed later, write Hold for Future Release, marking and giving the specific release date.
3. Don't worry about a headline, but a brief phrase pointing up the release is helpful to attract the editor's attention and give him an idea of the main content of the release.
4. Date line. If the release covers a local event no date line is necessary for the local paper. But when the release goes out of town or is written about an event at some other place, then the date line should be used, such as St. Louis, Mo., Jan. 1.
5. The lead. The first and lead paragraph is important. All basic facts should be included in the lead paragraph. Answer in the fewest possible

³³W. Emerson Reck, College Publicity Manual (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1948), p. 25.

words the questions who, what, when, where, why and how. If the lead is no good the release may be thrown away in the busy office.

6. Use double space or triple space. Never single space. Write on only one side of the paper.
7. The body. The following paragraphs constitute the body of the release. Here the entire story can be told. Narrative style must be used. Editors are suspicious of all kinds of propaganda, special pleading, and free advertising.³⁴

When the newspaper wants to print the sermon or portions of it, even if the pastor has no manuscript, common courtesy demands that he write it or dictate it to satisfy the wish of the press.³⁵ It is wise to release to the newspaper beforehand the pertinent sections of a forthcoming address so that the story can be printed when it is still "news" rather than after it is a day or days old.

News can often be covered better with a picture than with news copy. Pictures will at times be printed when the written copy is discarded by the editor. In supplying pictures to the press they should get to the editor's desk while they are still news. They should be glossy prints with sharp contrasts preferably eight by ten inches in size.

Pictures are much in demand. A story two inches long with a half column picture is more effective in attracting

³⁴Stuber, op. cit., pp. 175-76.

³⁵Norton, op. cit., p. 141.

attention than a story three times the length without.³⁶

The Lutheran Church, with its magnificent heritage of a vested clergy, beautiful chancels, and a lovely order of service, is much more adaptable for pictures than other church bodies. Often the very spirit of worship that goes into such a photograph is translated to the newspaper reader.³⁷

It may be advisable at times to telegraph or telephone news to a newspaper from out of town. But it is wise, first, to make arrangements with the city editor. He will inform you as to how much material he needs and he will also authorize you to send the telegram or make the long-distance phone "collect" at the expense of the newspaper.

Some outstanding news events are worthy of broader coverage than the local press will offer. It is then time to turn to the syndicate. United Press, Associated Press, Religious News Service are among the leading news services. It is well for a pastor to know the location of the nearest office. The thoughtful pastor will also pass on relevant news items to the news services of his own church body.

If you are releasing a story throughout a state or a region, it is reasonable to mimeograph it. Although many people believe in typing them individually, editors seldom discard a truly newsworthy story just because it is mimeographed. Sometimes a little note scribbled on the bottom to an editor you have met will make it seem more individual. In the event that your story is of wide importance, releases should be sent to the state office of the United Press. It is unwise to flood papers with stories one knows can't be used.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 121.

³⁷ Ihde, op. cit., p. 17.

That only builds an association between the wastepaper basket and your institution in the editor's mind. When he does receive a valid story, he might obey his reflex action instead of his news judgement.³⁸

Advertising in the Newspaper

A Theory of Religious Advertising

"Advertising has become a basic industry upon which the entire country depends," Wilson W. Condict, advertising director of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, said in addressing the Missouri Historical Society. Throughout the country the sale of newspapers has now reached fifty-seven million copies per day. "Today," he stated, "nothing sells like newspapers, and nothing is more effective than newspaper advertising."³⁹

Mr. C. O. Frisbie, president of the Cornell Food Products Company, told the students of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago:

Organize, systematize, spiritualize, advertize--and the greatest of these is advertize. These four words sum up the secret of success in any serious work in the church no less than in business. Most of you young men will begin your pastoral work in small communities. My advice to you is to get in touch with editors of the newspaper in your town right away. The newspapers are the greatest social force in modern life. They touch the people at many points you cannot reach. Make friends of the editors. Be fair with them. Tell them the truth. Try to help them and try to enlist their cooperation in your work. You will find them willing

³⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁹ "Advertising Now Basic Industry, Condict says," St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 25, 1956, Section A, p. 3.

to meet you halfway in any task you undertake for the public good.

Educate your people to provide an appropriation for advertising in the newspapers so that you can tell the people what is being done in your church. If your work is worth while, it is worth advertising.⁴⁰

Reporting on an advertising campaign for the Roman Catholic Church that used car cards in Chicago buses, street-cars, subway and elevated trains for two months in 1954, Paulist Father Maurice Fitzgerald gave this score: of 5,339 people who responded by asking for information on Roman Catholicism, 150 became converts. Average cost per convert, including textbooks, tests and diplomas amounted to about eighty dollars. "There's nothing wrong with using advertising," said Father Fitzgerald. "It's basic to American life--it's the way we do things."⁴¹

Church advertising is intended to be a means of arresting attention so that God can get a chance to be heard.⁴² It is an effective way of preaching the Gospel. It is a dignified way of approaching people. And it reacts on the church which advertises by making it feel it must live up to its advertisement.⁴³

⁴⁰Norton, op. cit., p. 245.

⁴¹"Words & Works," Time, March 28, 1955, p. 65.

⁴²Norton, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴³Ernest Elliott, How To Advertise a Church (New York: George H. Doran Company, c.1920), p. 86.

Advertising was meant just as much for religion as for any other purpose. The fault with much current church advertising is that it is antiquated as to method, outmoded as to appearance, and old-fashioned in its appeal. It may be true that the Gospel is old-fashioned and never changes but advertising does change. It pays to advertise because it is one way to inform the people of what the church has to offer. And since the church offers eternal life through faith in Christ there certainly is no reason why it should not make use of the best advertising techniques and know-how of the day. If the church does neglect to promote and advertise itself and its message it has imposed a virtual censorship upon itself as far as the masses are concerned.

Church advertising must make its appeal to all classes and ages of readers. The appeal is only to sight but the reader must be made able not only to see the church inside out but to hear the organ and choir, to hear the minister pray and preach, and to feel the touch of neighbors' elbows, if the advertisement is effective.⁴⁴ The church is selling more than professional service and therefore will not want to restrict its advertising to the method of the dentist who uses newspaper space no larger than the size of a calling card. The church is selling the greatest gift given to mankind. It must use the technique of retailers, larger space,

⁴⁴ Elliott, op. cit., p. 16.

attention-getting headlines, and copy which lists the benefits of church attendance.⁴⁵

To be successful in advertising, a person will find it necessary to understand the human mind and its response to different kinds of appeal. The underlying motives of advertising are to gain attention, to win interest, to create desire, to secure conviction, and to get action.⁴⁶

If a church decides to advertise but once in one way or another and then expects to see big results, it will be disappointed. Advertising that pays is continued advertising. The names of many well-known articles of merchandise have become household words simply because the manufacturers are continually advertising them. The church will do well to learn from them not to restrict its advertising to a cheap scale. Any advertising campaign must be planned for a long pull. An occasional ad is not effective. There is an old recognized axiom among advertising experts that to sell an idea, you must repeat, repeat, and repeat. Repetition makes reputation.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Frederick C. Strodel, "Paid Advertising for Churches," Proceedings First Institute of Public Relations July 20 and 21, 1949, edited by Herbert W. Knopp and Roberta Ihde (Valparaiso, Indiana: Valparaiso University, c.1950), p. 11.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 13.

Makeup of an Advertisement

Planned aggressive advertising campaigns of the church can be just as effective as they have been for business. It is well to plan the ad with the idea of capturing the interest of the reader, and then holding that interest as the story is told. A picture of the pastor or the church or an unusual border will help the reader identify the ad. Perhaps the most important attention-getter is a strong headline. Other ways to attract attention are by using copy that is different from any other on the page, by using enough space to make the ad stand out, or by obtaining a good position on the page.⁴⁸ People do not hunt for advertisements. The advertisement must seek its own readers.

The ordinary church page in our Sunday newspapers is just about the dullest thing on earth. Small box ads kill the page. Yet the potential value of the same space is tremendous. We ought to make our church ads more attractive by using pictures, by using larger print, by using white space.⁴⁹

Nothing helps to get and hold attention so much as a picture. They are also effective story tellers and serve as valuable advertising aids.

Most productive advertising depends on factual, suggestive, illustrative and emotional appeals to the reader.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁴⁹ stuber, op. cit., p. 81.

In preparing an advertisement the writer will find it helpful to imagine himself as the prospect. What would make him want to attend the church service? In preparing the advertisement, then, he will write in terms of the reader he wishes to convince.

In most instances it is unnecessary and unwise to hire an advertising specialist. He is usually unacquainted with the church. It is most practical and economical for the churchman to make out his own advertisement with the help of the local newspaper.

Advertising can cover many phases of the church's life. The church, the pastor, the choir, the Sunday school, the Christian day school and special events and worship services are subjects for advertisement. But first and foremost, the churchman will want to advertise the Christian message. He will want to make the Gospel the heart of every advertisement.

Sometimes it is well for sister congregations to join in a unified endeavor in advertising prominently. This can be done effectively for such joint activities as a Lenten series.

Classified advertising is little used by churches, but it offers an inexpensive medium by which persons who may not read display church copy can be reached.

Newspapers like to interest merchants in a community in paying for the advertising space used by churches. Every church under that plan is allotted a small area regularly.

The merchants' names are listed separately from the advertisements of services and other religious data. If there is no other way to obtain advertising space, this method is also helpful for the church. But it is only an expedient.⁵⁰

The Knights of Columbus have an effective way of advertising the Roman Catholic church. The Christian Century observes:

If the ads are competently written and contain a dependable exposition of Roman Catholic belief--and the hierarchy can be counted on to see to that--it will be a good thing to have them placed before the American people. If it is objected that untrained Protestants and members of the unchurched public will not be able to discern debatable assumptions and non sequiturs, and thus may fall victims of their own ignorance, that but indicates the need for Protestantism to be doing adult education of the same sort. The Knights of Columbus are to be applauded for having "hired a hall" in the advertising columns and there submitting the claims of their church to the test of the open forum. If Protestantism is wise, it will hasten to subject its faith to the same scrutiny.⁵¹

While the Knights of Columbus' advertisements run in the polemical vein, the Lutheran Publicity Organization and the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau offer advertisements suitable to the local newspaper which project the Gospel message. Typical of such an advertisement is one which is headed by a picture of the head of Christ against the cross with the following message:

⁵⁰Wolseley, op. cit., p. 282.

⁵¹"Knights of Columbus to Advertise Catholicism," The Christian Century, January 21, 1948.

There are, in a sense, only two religions in the world--the "do" religion and the "done" religion.

The "do" religion tells a man that he must do this and that if he wants to get to heaven. The "done" religion tells a man that he need do nothing, everything is done.

When Christ in His dying moments on the cross shouted "It is finished!" the redemption of every man, woman, and child ever to be born was accomplished. The payment for men's sin had been rendered. The ransom had been paid.

All we need do now is believe it, accept it, trust it. The Christian message, in effect, is heaven's receipt, telling men "Paid in full!" "It is finished!" In Christ all sins are cancelled.

Of those who have accepted heaven's receipt for cancelled sin through faith in Christ as Savior, the Bible says, "There is now therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." For them all is "done."

(Following here is the local church signature)⁵²

Financing the Advertisement

Poor advertising is expensive. Good advertising is cheap. The well-managed and successful church will always include a fair amount for advertising in its budget. It is difficult to allot any definite percentage for your advertising budget. Some churches spend as much as ten to twenty per cent of their total receipts for advertising. Some spend less than one per cent. Experience shows that churches spending at least five per cent or more of their total receipts for advertising are the ones that are on the church

⁵²"It Is Finished," Preaching Through the Press, September 22, 1949, No. 166.

map.53

One way, then, to approach the problem of financing is to determine how much should be spent for advertising and to make the amount a regular budget item, just as salary, fuel, and insurance.

Other methods are to solicit business houses to undertake the financing of a series of ads, to sell the idea of financing advertising to church organizations, or to get all churches in a district to finance the project.⁵⁴

Precautions in Advertising

The local pastor and his members need to stop thinking of the newspaper primarily as a means of publicizing the individual church program. They need to start thinking of the press as an untried way of bringing to the unchurched, to the skeptical, and, even more important, to the vast millions of the indifferent, the relevance of the Christian gospel in a frightened, chaotic age. They must think of the press as a means not for the announcing of bazaars but for the spreading of the Gospel through news.⁵⁵

Church membership very easily degenerates, for many a

⁵³Leonard Spangenberg, Minding Your Church's Business (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, c.1942), p. 104.

⁵⁴Strodel, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵⁵Supple, op. cit., pp. 960-61.

pastor or layman, into a round of activities centering in advertising the activities of the parish as an end rather than a means. These details become ends instead of means because the flesh always tends to find the tangible means more satisfying than the intangible end. To center the publicity appeal in anything but the church's essentially religious character secularizes its emphasis, trains its prospects to look for special attractions and ultimately defeats its own purpose.

A church advertisement may fail because of the following weaknesses:

(1) platitudes, (2) crowded copy, (3) pious tone, (4) lack of illustrations, (5) wording that fails to interest the readers, (6) resemblance to an announcement rather than to an invitation, (7) poor position on the page, (8) overshadowing by larger advertisements, and (9) sameness of layout.⁵⁶

The church should be able to produce what it has advertised. Failure to "deliver the goods" will ruin the advertising program. If the preacher falls down in delivering a sermon, or the choir falls down, or the special service is only ordinary, the best advertising in the world cannot compel people to keep on patronizing the institution.

Unless church publicity is thoroughly honest as to form, content, and scope, and unless it can be attended by corresponding follow-up work and adequate education, it cannot be said to be legitimate from the standpoint

⁵⁶Harral, op. cit., p. 56.

of sound pedagogy.⁵⁷

"All publicity connected with the Church of Jesus Christ must be in conformity with the dignity and importance of His message of salvation."⁵⁸

Even if advertising alone is able to draw strangers to the church in large numbers, the institution must have a program to retain their interest. Advertising, by itself, is no magician's wand. Like church publicity in general, it must be part of a planned public relations program.⁵⁹

⁵⁷P. E. Kretzmann, "High Pressure Church-Work," Concordia Theological Monthly, November, 1931, p. 842.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 844.

⁵⁹Wolseley, op. cit., p. 277.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE CHURCHMAN

The churchman may draw three conclusions from this study. First: The church is publicly related. This situation the church cannot escape because by its very existence it is related with the public. Therefore the church will do well to make its public relations good public relations. Public relations exist. Poor public relations are the natural thing. It takes an active, promoting interest in public relations to make them good public relations.

This study proposes means through which these good public relations might be fostered. This leads to the second conclusion: that public relations can be promoted through the agency of the printed word. The printed word in the church is utilized in the Sunday bulletin, in congregational letters, in the parish magazines or newspapers. It is utilized in the local newspaper both in news coverage and in advertising. Each parish publication serves its own purpose but all may serve the one purpose of good public relations. By keeping the public in mind in the production of publications, the churchman can break down the barrier of prejudice that often stands between the unchurched and the church. By keeping the public in mind he can avoid placing unnecessary stumbling blocks in the way of the unchurched. He can use

his publication to express warm invitation rather than cold indifference. He can set up his church as the light of the world, rather than as salt that has lost its savor.

To congregations whose publications program is restricted to the Sunday bulletin, this study would encourage growth into a parish magazine or newspaper. It would encourage greater use of the local press both for news copy and for advertising.

The goal of this study, however, is not merely to encourage the use of public press and parish journalism. Rather, its third conclusion for the churchman is this: The church that is already using the aforementioned is not to be the satisfied church. This study would encourage the churchman, primarily, to reconsider his publications program in the light of public relations. Is each publication serving the goal of good public relations? Is each contact with the local newspaper one that promotes good public relations? This consideration is fundamental, for good public relations are a necessity for a church which bears the message of the Savior and poor public relations are worse than no relations at all.

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