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A Practical Program of Adult Evangelism

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A PRACTICAL PROGRAM OF ADULT EVANGELISM

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper has been to present a unified program of adult evangelism on the congregational level. The need for such a program became evident to the writer during his vicarage year in West Portal Lutheran Church, San Francisco, California. Located in a beautiful suburban area, this congregation was active in its evangelistic outreach to the community. The evangelism program was organized and effective. It became apparent that the effectiveness of the mission program was due largely to its organization and methodology. The importance of methodology in evangelism stimulated interest in discovering exactly what methods had proved most effective in adult evangelism.

Statistics of the unchurched population in the United States reveal the urgent need for an effective evangelism program. The total unchurched population is increasing annually about six million. In the United States alone there are ten thousand villages without a church. An estimated 13,500,000 children are not receiving a religious education.[1] "The steady succession of death and birth is constantly removing Christians from the world and replacing

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[1] Roland Leavell, Evangelism (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 15.

them with unbelievers. . . . Humanly speaking, the Christian faith is just one generation from being lost from the earth."[2] As soon as a church is standing still it is slipping backwards.

The scope of this study treats especially the methods used in adult evangelism. It is assumed that the reader understands the theology of evangelism which must undergird any method used. Furthermore, this study has limited itself to the evangelism of adults. For this reason a definition of evangelism as it is used in this paper is necessary. A group of representatives from seven Lutheran bodies prepared a definition which best suits the purpose of this paper:

> Evangelism is winning men for Jesus Christ. It is bringing people to a consciousness of their sins and to acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; instructing them, and sending them forth to bear witness to their faith, especially among the indifferent, the unchurched, and the unsaved.[3]

Many books have been written on the methodology of evangelism. Since the methods of adult evangelism are changing rapidly many of the books on the subject are soon out of date. Little contribution has been made by members of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod to the literature available. Many excellent periodical articles and reports have been written, but no concentrated effort has been made

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[2]George Sweazey, Effective Evangelism (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1953), p. 29.

[3]William Avery, You Shall Be My Witnesses (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 13.

to combine the methods suggested into a workable plan. The closest step in this direction is an unpublished report of an evangelism workshop held in May, 1955. This thesis shall endeavor to make use of all current articles written about the methods of adult evangelism being used in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod today. The other major source from which material was gathered was available literature concerning methods used by the major protestant churches.

The history of the problem on how best to reach the unchurched adults of the community is as old as the church. Many different methods have been used. The most popular approach to the unchurched in the past century has been mass evangelism. In the past few years the trend has increasingly been in the direction of a program of adult evangelism. As a general rule, congregations have been slow to accept this new concept of responsibility for evangelism. It is the purpose of this paper to increase that sense of responsibility, especially for the pastors who will serve as leaders of the individual congregations. To this end the methods are here delineated and conclusions drawn where data and experience prove they are warranted.

This study does not attempt to include the many methods to be used in reaching the unchurched. It is hoped, however, that the methods given will be of some assistance to the local pastor in leading his congregation to reach out to the unchurched souls of the community. The writer has attempted

to discuss the adult evangelism program in all its phases. Its beginning, that of motivating the congregation toward evangelism, is carried through to its logical end, which is to establish the convert in the congregation.

CHAPTER II

THE CONGREGATION AS THE CENTER OF ADULT EVANGELISM

The Congregation Motivated Toward Evangelism

One of the most refreshing aspects of the modern trend toward adult evangelism is the emphasis placed on the local church as the center of evangelistic activity. A study of the New Testament reveals the functional position of the local congregation in the spread of the Gospel message. The New Testament does not speak of an evangelism program apart from the church. The Book of Acts gives perhaps the strongest testimony to the power of a group of believers witnessing for Christ. The trend away from mass evangelism gives the congregation the central position it deserves in the program of evangelism.[1]

A proper understanding of the purpose of God's church on earth makes clear the place of the local congregation in evangelism. The church was brought into existence to reveal the glory of God. The glory of God does not refer to some praise or honor offered to God, but it rather means that God is revealed through His church.[2] The purpose of His church is to bring men to faith in Christ and cause them to grow in

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[1] Paul Rees, Stir Up the Gift (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1951), pp. 77-79.

[2] 1 Peter 2:1-10.

faith and fellowship in the body of Christ. The church is to be the one center of human society through which God's love and light are to shine.[3] "The true worship of God and successful evangelism stand or fall together. We are thus forced to conclude that our comparative failure in evangelism indicates a comparative failure in church fellowship."[4]

If the local congregation is to be the center of adult evangelism, then the church operating without an active program of evangelism lacks essential meaning or purpose. O. A. Maech, the Executive Secretary of the Home Missions Board of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, states:

> Every single aspect of the church's life and activity must have evangelistic significance. Either evangelism is ultimately at the center of the congregation's program, or it is nothing at all. The local congregation is at its best when it is a nerve center of evangelism, and churches are usually living churches in exact ratio to their missionary activity. The great evangelist St. Paul would have characterized a congregation minus an evangelism program as "tinkling brass and sounding cymbal." The New Testament knows no evangelism that operates independently of the local congregation. It is at its best when on Sundays and weekdays, through clergy and laity, the unconverted are confronted with the convicting power of the law and the faith generating power of the Gospel.[5]

The success of personal evangelism has been felt in the church. Any program of effective evangelism in the church,

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[3] 1 Peter 2:9

[4] Daniel Lamont, "Evangelism in the Modern World," Evangelical Quarterly, XV (July, 1943), 206.

[5] O. A. Maech, "Making the Local Congregation the Center of Evangelism," Home Mission Helps, edited by William Hillmer (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod), p. 29.

present or future, must grow out of concern for those in the community in which that church is found. The church must visualize the plight of those that are living in sin. It must agonize, praying constantly that the Holy Spirit might come with power. The church must organize. Hit or miss methods must be replaced by careful planning and effective organization. Finally, the congregation is to evangelize. With a practical, consecrated, and ongoing program the church will effect the harvest.[6]

One word explains why the church has not been more active in adult evangelism. That word is "unexcited." Too many people in the church aren't enthusiastic about their faith. They can get far more excited about a new car or a presidential election than about sharing their faith in Christ. Christ knew He would need witnesses. He never doubted the importance of His mission, but He feared that future generations would find it unimportant. We need not fear those who are antagonistic to Christ nearly as much as those who are merely uninterested.[7] America has produced a generation of self-confident and satisfied people. This attitude has spread also to the church, with the result that many are complacent and satisfied with things as they are.

Why are not Christians the soul winners that they

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[6] Eugene Harrison, How to Win Souls (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, c. 1952), p. 142.

[7] Henry Luffberry, Thy Mission High Fulfilling (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1954), pp. 76f.

should be? One reason is that they lack passion. They have a tendency to become cold, visionless, and indifferent. This attitude is as difficult to understand as would be the indifference of the rescued man to those yet struggling in the sea. This lack of concern might have its roots in the type of training received by some members of the church. It is a strange paradox that it has been possible for a church member to develop an excellent character without witnessing to Christ. Lack of courage has kept some from becoming soul winners. Social custom has kept religion from being a popular topic. People are afraid to speak even to their friends about Christianity. It is easier for the church member to consider the pastor as the soul winner of the congregation. Even many ministers doubt their own ability and argue that a trained evangelist should be called in.[8] Though there will be many fears, yet the congregation motivated by love for Christ will abound in soul winning.

It must be emphasized that it is the whole congregation involved in adult evangelism. Normally there should be a special committee for the evangelism campaign, this being the most practical way to carry out the work. However, this group dare not be considered apart from the congregation. All the members of the congregation must be encouraged to participate in some way. Dawson Bryan argues for the

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[8] William Ayer, Flame for the Altar (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c. 1952), pp. 174-76.

participation of each member:

> Visitation evangelism ought not be the property of a little group in the church. It ought to be the responsibility of the entire membership. All of the church members will not be a part of the selected group definitely called to evangelize, but every active member of the congregation should have a share in the movement. Not only should they look for prospective members and welcome them when they unite with the church, but also they should be a part of the spiritual preparation. The pastor and organized leaders should give the members a chance to undergird the movement with prayer.[9]

Scripture clearly places the responsibility and privilege of witness upon the Christian congregation. The fact that many congregations are not sharing in this responsibility and privilege may be due to lack of proper motivation. While this thesis is concerned primarily with methods, it must be understood that a practical and effective program of adult evangelism needs basic Scriptural motivation.

A loving concern for people is the basic motivation in any program of evangelism. To have the mind of Christ is to display the same concern for our neighbors that Christ revealed to all sinful mankind. Furthermore, to give purpose to the loving concern of His followers, Christ appointed them as messengers of His Word. The good Shepherd, our loving Savior could not rest until one lost sheep was back in the fold of the hundred. Christ was concerned about one per cent of His flock. Are His followers as concerned about

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[9]Dawson Bryan, Building Church Membership Through Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1952), pp. 36f.

the fifty per cent of unchurched families in the United States?

The missionary field is a motivation in itself. A great percentage of the community around the church is outside the influence of the Gospel. These souls are doomed if the saving knowledge of Christ and the cross does not reach them. The fact that these prospects live within the pale of the local congregation places the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the members of that congregation.[10]

It might be well to mention man's need of the church as a motivation toward evangelism. Mass evangelism did much to detract from the importance of the local church. The purpose of evangelism is to bring man into the church. It is in the church that man can serve as a functional part of the body of Christ, as Paul speaks of the church in Ephesians 4:13-16. St. Peter does not speak of the church as individual members acting separately. Rather he speaks of the church as a building fitted together with lively stones.[11] Every period of church history has had some particular heresy. It might be that the heresy of this generation is the belief that there can be Christians apart from the church.[12]

In pointing out different factors in motivation toward

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[10] Paris D. Whitesell, Basic New Testament Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949), pp. 178-80.

[11] 1 Peter 2:5-10

[12] George Sweazey, Effective Evangelism (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1953), pp. 27-30.

evangelism, it is important to mention the Holy Spirit as the converting power behind the witness of soul winners. The knowledge that the Holy Spirit is operative through Christian witness gives courage and conviction to the message of the soul winner. The object of evangelism is to make the dead live. Only the Holy Spirit can accomplish this. Man alone is weak and helpless. Man with the Holy Spirit can carry out His charge to evangelize the world.[13]

A final motivation for adult evangelism can come through an earnest use of prayer. Evangelism can fail for an individual, as well as for a whole congregation, if prayer is not used diligently. The disciples of Christ once failed to heal an epileptic boy because they did not make the proper use of prayer.[14] If evangelism is failing on the congregational level, then in public and private prayer that church should plead for the Lord's guidance. Jesus prayed often during the years He spent on this earth. Soul winners of today should follow His example. Let them pray for themselves, that God would give them a concern for souls and the strength to witness to them. Let them pray for those whom they would win for Christ. Perhaps a prayer list would help. The prayer

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[13] E. T. Heyne, Jr., "The Holy Spirit and Power in Evangelism," Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955), pp. 29-33.

[14] Mark 9:14-29.

list of the congregation is its prospect list. The prayer list of the individual includes those for whom he has a special concern.[15]

In the local church the organizations of the congregation have become leaders in adult evangelism. The societies of the church are valuable for two reasons. First, they offer excellent opportunities for training members in adult evangelism. Secondly, the societies are often an ideal bridge between the church and the world outside the church. Many people have a connection with some organization of the church, like its Sunday School or Parish school, and are not brought into a closer relation to the church itself. If the church is to remain a church, it must depend on its members and its organizations to draw people toward it. Churches need a long range approach to evangelism. A sudden burst of visitation evangelism now and then is not enough. Evangelism through organizations gives the church the opportunity to carry on a continuous evangelism.[16] George E. Sweazey states:

> Church organizations die of dullness. Without clearly worthwhile aims, they lose the respect of busy people. When an organization begins to think of itself as a door into the Church, it has an

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[15] Arthur Knock, Personal Evangelism (Minneapolis: Bible Banner Press, 1953), pp. 49-51.

[16] Sweazey, op. cit., pp. 183-85.

> exciting purpose. In a program to win others it finds the stimulus of dramatic service and the satisfaction of a definite accomplishment. Moreover, many a frivolous and therefor feeble church group has found itself in its trying to show Christianity to others. For an organization as for an individual, the evangelist is his own first convert.[17]

The societies of the church are to be leaders in evangelism. The question remains, however, as to how this can be accomplished. It often seems that the societies are organized to the point that they lose sight of their major objectives. It is the opinion of many writers that the task must be accomplished through the leaders of the respective organizations. One plan is to promote the spirit of evangelism among the leaders by bringing them together once a quarter for prayer, planning, and fellowship. At first there may be reluctance to participate, but bit by bit the enthusiasm will grow. The purpose is not to improve the methods of the organizations so much as to provide the leaders with a common aim, that of training their fellow-members to witness for Christ.[18] In some churches pastor and members of the official board meet early in the fall with the officers' cabinet of each organization. Each new set of officers must be instructed early for the spirit of evangelism. A group in a local church might also be stimulated by a speaker from outside the church.

Sweazey has suggested a three-point plan by which

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[17] Ibid., p. 185.

[18] Bryan Green, The Practice of Evangelism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 68f.

societies of the church can practice evangelism. First, church organizations must realize that they cannot compete with secular organizations in providing entertainment. Their basic purpose is for edification of the members by Christian fellowship and witness. Secondly, the society should make an effort to invite unchurched members to attend its meetings. Starting out with a prospect list drawn up by the members themselves, callers might be sent out to secure new members. Finally, the new members are drawn toward church membership.[19] Churches active in evangelism often gain half their new members in this way. In some instances, a study group in Biblical doctrines might be formed among unchurched members of one organization.

As was mentioned earlier, it is sometimes felt that the lack of evangelism is caused by over-organization. It is against this very complaint that G. S. Dobbins maintains:

> Not many churches, in fact, are over-organized. They are under-motivated. The organizations may have lost their chief reason for existence. Let the pastor lead his organized forces in fruitful evangelism, and instead of being "machinery" they will become living organisms in vital union with Christ.[20]

A word might be said here about the evangelism committee, which should be the guiding force in organizing the evangelism program of the local congregation. There is at times a

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[19] Sweazey, op. cit., pp. 186-89.

[20] G. S. Dobbins, "Pastoral Evangelism," Review & Expositor, XLII (January, 1945), 53f.

hesitancy to effect any kind of missionary organization in the congregation. It is said that evangelism is the work of everybody. Experience has shown that everybody's business is nobody's business. The best way to get the whole congregation interested in evangelism is to have a smaller group work closely with the pastor in promoting evangelism. The by-laws of Holy Cross Congregation in Portland, Oregon, furnish an example of an evangelism committee:

> Committee on Evangelism: The pastor, one deacon and three communicant members shall constitute a committee on evangelism. It shall be the duty of the committee: 1. To promote personal evangelism within the congregation, 2. To guide and initiate local mission projects in or for the congregation, 3. To awaken and sustain interest in Synodical mission projects, home and foreign, 4. To supervise the welfare program of the congregation.[21]

The evangelism committee of some churches is enlarged to the point that it includes all those acting as visitors to the unchurched prospects. The various types of these visitation committees and their duties will be discussed in the chapter dealing with "visitation evangelism."

Preaching Evangelism

The proper place for preaching in a program of congregational evangelism has been much debated in the past few years. Mass evangelism had placed almost its sole emphasis on the evangelistic sermon. In reaction to the errors of

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[21] William Hillmer, "Suggestions for the Local Evangelism Committee," Advance, I (June, 1954), 22.

mass evangelism the tendency has been to relegate the sermon to a position of insignificance. This practice has almost eliminated the Sunday morning sermon as an evangelistic tool.[22] It seems that a position between the two extremes would prove most acceptable.

What is the purpose of preaching? It is often questioned whether preaching should be more of an emphasis on evangelism or teaching. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has had a combination of both in most sermons delivered by its pastors, with perhaps an emphasis on the teaching. The New Testament usage might throw some light on the meaning and purpose of preaching and teaching. According to C. H. Dodd, "preaching" originally referred to what we now term evangelism. The apostles used other terms to describe the instruction of the believers.[23] However, preaching and teaching are so intermingled in the ministry of Jesus and the early church that no real technical distinctions are possible. Teaching applies mainly to those already believers. Evangelistic preaching must also teach. Evangelistic teaching must also preach the Gospel. All preaching and teaching is evangelistic at least in part.[24]

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[22]The words "preaching" and "sermon" are to refer to the Sunday morning sermon unless definitely designated for a special service.

[23]Andrew W. Blackwood, "The Call for Evangelism," Pulpit Digest, XXIV (January, 1947), 49.

[24]Whitesell, op. cit., pp. 102f.

A simple brand of "evangelistic" on preaching is not definition enough in this modern age. The term has been used in too many different ways. Bryan Green narrows it down for our purposes when he explains evangelistic preaching as:

> the statement of the message of salvation, the setting forth of what God has done in Christ to make possible this salvation to all who will receive it. It is not any special type of sermon or method of preaching necessarily; it is certainly not talking about conversion or the special needs of men; most decidedly it is not the making of appeals or the issuing of powerful challenges that men should surrender to God. These elements or topics may properly find their place within the evangelistic message, but at heart it is the presentation of the good news of what God has done to bring men back to Himself, a presentation which carries with it the imperative that those who hear must either accept or reject what God has done.[25]

When should pastors use evangelistic preaching in their pulpits? The obvious times are during preaching missions or campaigns of visitation evangelism in the congregation. At such times there should be an unashamed use of the sermon to preach Christ and the cross for the express purpose of gaining a believing response in those who are yet in their sins.

Besides such an obvious use of preaching evangelism, the minister can use the Sunday morning sermon as one of his best tools for evangelism. A possible reason why the Sunday sermon has not been an evangelistic tool is because pastors do not expect to convert people in a "regular" service.[26]

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[25]Green, op. cit., pp. 74f.

[26]Heyne, op. cit., p. 25.

It is not necessary to make a direct approach to the unsaved in every sermon. The goals of preaching are many, and the chosen objectives should receive the full force of the preacher's effort and utterance. But even when the sermon message is specifically for the edification of the saints, there should be in the pastor's heart a compassion for a lost world, which will increase the urgency of every sermon. Furthermore, every sermon will contain the gospel. Thus it is evangelistic to the extent that it brings the gospel to any unchurched listener. If the spirit of evangelism is absent from the pulpit, it can hardly survive in the church.[27]

Preaching evangelism can be a year around process. Each season of the church year provides a suitable occasion and text. The nativity, resurrection, and ascension all have a prominent note of evangelism. Epiphany speaks clearly to the evangelistic theme. Pentecost is the celebration of evangelism as the church's singular task.[28] Andrew Blackwood suggests a practical three-month preaching plan centered around evangelism. He has chosen the book of Matthew as the source for texts to be used in this series between Christmas and Lent. The theme of the series might be "Conversion." Suggested sermon topics are:

a. The Meaning of Repentance. Matthew 3:2. John

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[27] J. B. Weatherspoon, "The Evangelistic Sermon," Review and Expositor, XLII (January, 1945), pp. 60f.

[28] Oscar Carlson, The Church's Singular Task (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950), p. 82.

the Baptist, as the evangelical preacher, emphasizes repentance.

b. The Faith of an Army Man. Matthew 8:10. The masculine Christ converts the soldier of Rome.

c. Faith that Conquers Fear. Matthew 8:26. Faith that overcomes fear gives courage to witness.

d. The Conversion of a Business Man. Matthew 9:9.

e. The Religion of Restfulness. Matthew 11:28-30.

f. The Home Church as a Family. Matthew 12:50. The family of God reaches out to the unchurched.

g. The Cost of being a Christian. Matthew 16:24. After faith comes service.[29]

Some pastors revolt against evangelistic preaching as an element to be included in their regular parish preaching. Personal evangelism will always be the most effective method, but the success of evangelistic preaching must not be diminished. The fellowship that exists in joint worship contains a warmth that sometimes cannot be matched in personal fellowship. God uses this means too to reach the souls of the unconverted. "A method which, from the day of Pentecost, has been of incalculable effect in spreading Christianity throughout the earth is not likely to have become outmoded in our generation."[30]

The Lutheran Church has been very hesitant to use any form of preaching evangelism on Sunday morning. It must be

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[29]Blackwood, op. cit., pp. 49-54.

[30]Sweazey, op. cit., pp. 160f.

said to the credit of the Lutheran Church that it has been among the leaders in congregational evangelism. It has stressed the personal approach. It has stressed method and organization. Unfortunately, preaching has not been an important part of the program. Preaching in the Lutheran Church has been in general of good quality, especially as far as theological content is concerned. Yet the evangelical sermon needs to be more Christlike, or more as Christ preached. In Christ's preaching there was always a great warmth of love. Perhaps Jesus chose human instruments rather than angels to spread His Word because He wanted His message to come from warm hearts aglow with heavenly love. Lutheran preaching almost always shows the love of Christ, but it is often lacking in Christlike love for men.[31]

There are some general qualities that are important in an evangelistic sermon. These qualities are difficult to define because they differ greatly with individuals. One of the most important qualities is simplicity. Though the sermon is to remain simple, it should also be interesting, using the language of the people and attention devices. The sermon must instruct. There must be light as well as fire. The sermon must contain both sympathy and humility: sympathy to understand the problems of the hearer and humility to know God alone can help. Above all, the sermon must be full of

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[31]C. A. Gaertner, "Let Us Strive for More Christlike Preaching," Today, V (December, 1950), 9-11.

Christ to win souls. There must be a note of urgency in the message so that the listener is not permitted to postpone his decision any longer.[32]

An important quality of evangelistic preaching that is often lacking is zeal or emotion on the part of the pastor. The delivery of the preacher may not be effective. His interpretation of the text may not be too scholarly, but if he is consumed with a great passion to lead his listeners to Christ his message will be inspiring. Criticisms of preaching are frequent, especially among church members. Yet God chooses to save man through the foolishness of preaching. It is to be a constant tool of evangelism.[33] The emotional appeal is also mentioned by Sweazey:

> There will be no great religion without great emotions. Jesus did not argue philosophy with people--He won their love. The heart is the antenna, the brain does the tuning. Anyone who thinks that this generation is not emotional has never been to a football game. Emotions which are not rightly used will be perverted. It was the sophisticated youth of the European universities whose emotions were exploited by fanatic leaders. The youth of America will be saved from the emotional appeal of false religions only by the emotional appeal which is the Church's birthright.[34]

Preaching evangelism is essential. The qualities of good evangelistic preaching are important. Nevertheless, there would be no tangible results without the converting

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[32]Rees, op. cit., pp. 136-41.

[33]Arthur M. Kernaham, Adventures in Visitation Evangelism (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1928), pp. 114-17.

[34]Sweazey, op. cit., p. 172.

power of God's Holy Spirit. Mass evangelism had erred in basing its emotional appeal on the personality of an individual. The message of preaching evangelism is important, and it is through the message that the Holy Spirit is operative. In preaching evangelism the Holy Spirit must motivate both the preacher and the listener.[35]

A final word needs to be said concerning one of the biggest problems for the pastor in evangelism, and that is the loss of variety and freshness. It is easy to condemn this as a lack of enthusiasm for evangelism. The problem often runs deeper. Conceivably the best solution for the pastor would be for him to emphasize mission calling. Regular calls on mission prospects help the pastor recognize the problems and the processes of thinking in the minds of the unchurched. Through personal knowledge of actual people the preacher will discover that there are many different approaches for his evangelistic message.

Another advantage of regular calling on prospective members is the discovery of particular maladies. The pastor will no longer be like a hunter shooting at random. He will be able to point his preaching directly into the lives of his hearers. As Weatherspoon has said: "A recognized defect of much evangelistic preaching is that it attempts in every sermon to be comprehensive at the price of meeting no particular

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[35]Heyne, op. cit., pp. 26-28.

case."[36]

Public Relations for Evangelism in the Local Congregation

The public relations program is a vital factor in the outreach of the local congregation to the community. The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has been separatistic in some communities. It has earned this reputation partly because the church tended to operate only among the Germanic peoples, and partly because doctrinal viewpoints had the effect of divorcing the church from the community around it. Fortunately the modern trend of evangelism has faced the church with its opportunities for witness. The result has been the renewed emphasis on public relations. It is obvious that the best public relations work of the church is done by its individual members. Without their witness any planned program of public relations would be doomed. However, our purpose in this paper is to study the methodology of public relations on the congregational level. It might be well to begin by posing the questions of W. Crossland:

> What standing and reputation has your church in its neighborhood? What does your town or city know about your program of service? What does your church do to build good will toward it? How effective are the announcements of your Sunday services? Does a steady stream of interesting information concerning your church's activities and achievements

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[36] Weatherspoon, op. cit., p. 66.

> flow into the mind of your community through the public press? Is the general attitude one of admiration or indifference?[37]

The church does not always have to reach out to the community to evangelize. Sometimes the community comes to the church. The most fruitful work in public relations is done when members of the community come as visitors to the church. Yet the majority of congregations have no organized plan for greeting their visitors.

A planned program would not be necessary if the members of the church were friendly, but there are many churches where not a single soul will take the time to greet a stranger. A stranger in such a church is surely going to feel "out of place." Many will leave fully determined never to return. O. A. Woech says:

> Only God knows how many souls have been lost for want of a gallon of paint and a hearty handshake. There must be genuine hospitality in our sanctuaries. All pompousness, a holier than thou attitude, a fain condescension repels. Our people must be trained to be truly friendly and to learn how to extend a genuine welcome in the name of the Lord. They will have to learn not to be discouraged in their work, but to work patiently and persistently, leaving the results up to the Holy Spirit.[38]

The church should be the most friendly spot in the community. Friendliness need not be crude or insincere. It must never be loud or overdone. It need only be a sincere,

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[37]Weldon Crossland, <u>How to Increase Church Membership and Attendance</u> (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), pp. 145f.

[38]O. A. Woech, "Making the Local Congregation the Center of Missionary Activity," <u>Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop</u> (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1955), pp. 46f.

kindly type of friendliness. A quiet smile, a firm handshake, and a pleasant greeting can do much to make a visitor feel at home in a church. A word of greeting from the pulpit or in the bulletin will help the stranger to feel that he is recognized. The whole congregation can transform the meeting place to the House of the Lord. The friendly church, above all else, must open its doors to all types of people, despite race or social class.[39]

The pastor and the ushers of the church must be especially conscious of the presence of visitors. The missionary pastor must be concerned about his person and behaviour in order to make the best possible impression on the unchurched. The older members of the church can be expected to differentiate between the eccentricities of the pastor and his message, but the prospective members cannot be expected to do so.[40] The ushers have one of the finest opportunities for personal evangelism. The ushers are the reception committee for the congregation. Much of what an outsider will think about a worshipping congregation depends on the efficiency of the ushering staff. By showing a dignified, warm, and natural friendliness they help to provide the atmosphere for good worship. Both visitors and members appreciate such a

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[39]Stanley Stuber, Public Relations Manual for Churches (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1951), p. 54.

[40]William H. Eifert, "Mind Your Mission Manners," Today, II (March, 1947), 7.

reception.[41]

Some of the more mission-minded congregations of the church have organized a special committee to greet visitors. This special committee not only creates a friendly atmosphere for visitors, but it also aids the pastor in getting the name and address of all visitors. Such a committee is almost a necessity on special festival days as Easter.

The greeting committee has a very specialized job. They should recognize the importance of their office and receive instructions about their position. If possible, the greeters are to be on hand about twenty minutes before the service begins to offer a friendly greeting to all visitors, though this is no time to visit. Greeters should sit toward the back of the church. As the congregation leaves, they should station themselves immediately behind the pastor. There should be a greeter on hand for every visitor that leaves the church. The greeter will immediately take charge of the visitor, asking him to sign a guest card and then proceeding to introduce him to other members of the congregation.[42] The main difficulty with this system has been the tendency to concentrate completely on the first-time visitor to the exclusion of those that have returned for their second or third visit. Another

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[41] William Avery, You Shall Be My Witnesses (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 55.

[42] Arnold F. Meyer, "Instructions for Greeters," Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955), pp. 54f.

difficulty encountered is the tendency for greeters to be overanxious. Good judgment on behalf of the greeter is needed. If a visitor seems shy and retiring, then much damage can be done by the greeter that acts too wolfish.

The local church must also reach out to the community. Again its best approach to the community is through the personal witness of each member. The most effective outreach on an organized basis is probably the public press. The press is again beginning to recognize the importance of religious news, as C. Henry says:

> Quite remarkable has been the change during the past quarter century in the attitude of the secular press toward religious news. It is a transition that has come slowly, encouraged by the economic crisis of the late twenties, by the moral collapse of the thirties and by the dark war clouds of the forties. It promises to be a permanent change, because the conviction that Christian copy holds a widely satisfying appeal has made itself felt too gradually to be only a temporary reaction.[43]

It is true that until recently religious news has been given very poor treatment. It has been given a secondary rating, down with the market reports. The format has suffered, most of the section being only religious ads. The clergy has been quick to condemn the newspapermen for this attitude when most of the blame belonged to the ministers. They have sent in materials that are lifeless, such as the Sunday sermon. The clergy has made no attempt to cultivate the

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[43]Carl F. Henry, Successful Church Publicity (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1943), p. 91.

friendship of the press.[44] A study of the Lutheran Reformation reveals the importance of the written word. It was because of the press that the Reformation succeeded in gaining a firm hold in Germany. Luther's own remark was: "A drop of ink makes millions think."[45] Brodie brings out most clearly the distinctive position of clergy and laity:

> Never have the various fields of publicity been more fruitful for religion. Never have newspapers, which represent the most important single adjunct of publicity, been more willing to lend their co-operation to the furtherance of religion. But only if clergy and laity, alike interested in religious publicity, understand newspaper publicity method and background can they take advantage of it to the fullest extent.[46]

Evangelistic services and campaigns of visitation evangelism provide excellent opportunities for special newspaper coverage. No campaign in visitation evangelism can be complete without a planned publicity campaign. The planning behind good publicity is at the very base of all successful and worth-while publicity. Furthermore, the publicity must be systematic and continuous. Any lapse in publicity means a breakdown in continuity and the necessity to begin the program all over again.[47] To keep campaign

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[44] John L. Fortson, How to Make Friends for Your Church (New York: Association Press, c.1943), pp. 145f.

[45] Erwin G. Tieman, "Your Church Needs Good Publicity," Today, III (April, 1948), 10.

[46] W. Austin Brodie, Keeping Your Church in the News (Philadelphia: The Blakiston Co., c.1942), p. 7.

[47] Ibid., pp. 72f.

publicity both organized and continuous a publicity committee is needed, or at least one qualified layman. The pastor is too busy to care for all the details, though he is still to remain in control of all releases. The ideal head of the publicity committee is a trained professional newspaper man.[48]

From the moment the dates are designated and the speakers selected until the closing day of the campaign, the publicity chairman can find many news possibilities. Emphasis should be placed on the popularity of the appeal that can be created. Straight news will not count heavily, but a human interest aspect might cause a fine public response. It is not enough to state the facts, but the facts and a striking theme can be placed in an attractive setting. All publicity must be geared to interest not only those persons directly concerned, but the general public as well.[49]

In all the publicity of the church, whether it be in connection with a campaign of evangelism or not, there should be the invitation "Come and See." The people of the community should be aware at all times that the church is offering opportunities for informally discussing the basic teachings of the Bible. These should never be advertised as membership classes, or else they will be connected only with

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[48] Ibid., pp. 74-79.

[49] Ibid., p. 80.

membership campaigns and pressure to join the church. Rather they might be named religious information classes or adult study groups. The community should be aware of the fact that the Lutheran church has something to offer, and that it is willing to discuss it with anyone interested.[50]

A word needs to be said about the possibilities of using radio and television in the field of public relations. Much has been done in using local stations to reach the communities. Much more can be accomplished by associating the local church with the radio broadcast of "The Lutheran Hour," and the television program of "This Is the Life." Many different ideas have been used. All the prospects for church membership are sent a letter with news covering the coming broadcast. Personal letters are even better. Thus an alcoholic would be directed to one program, while a girl dating a Roman Catholic would be directed to another. The Sunday bulletin, the parish paper, newspaper announcements, mission calls--all these can be used to direct people of the community to the brief thirty minutes of the telecast.[51]

There are other methods which can be used in public relations. A display of tracts in an appropriate place makes available messages that might win men to Christ. The church's co-operation in community projects is important. A pastor

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[50] George H. Mueller, "An Effective Program of Public Relations," Today, VI (April, 1951), 4.

[51] Herman W. Gockel, "A Homemade Telemission Program," Advance, II (April, 1955), 22f.

that is interested and active in the community will prove of invaluable service in cementing relations between the community and the church. But above all, one fact remains certain. There must be a planned, organized program for all forms of public relations, and the pastor of the local congregation must be its firm leader.

CHAPTER III

THE PASTOR AS LEADER IN ADULT EVANGELISM

Personal Qualifications

The local congregation is to be the center of adult evangelism. However, to organize a functional program of adult evangelism it is necessary for the local congregation to lean heavily on its pastor for guidance and leadership. Christ Himself ordained it so as He appointed ministers to lead His church on earth. The weight of responsibility and leadership laid upon the pastors of the church is overwhelming. On the basis of their leadership lies either the success or failure of the adult evangelism program of the church. It is the purpose of this section to point to some pitfalls that face the missionary pastor, as well as to suggest basic qualifications for pastoral leadership.

There are many pitfalls facing the modern pastor, and almost every pitfall detracts from his personal witness and leadership in adult evangelism. At times the pastor is faced with the lack of a present, vital experience. His heart grows cold and he loses the fervor of an evangelist. The end result of the "cold" pastor is the professional pastor. Religion becomes routine. The home church is a machine. Money looms large. The pastor begins to consider

personal prestige.[1] This suggests the most dangerous pitfall facing the pastor. His position of leadership can cause a sanctified conceit in his own abilities. He can become so satiated with the compliments and gratitudes of his parishioners that he forgets there are some who cringe at his mediocrity.[2] Another pitfall that the missionary pastor faces is his lack of professional training as a pastoral evangelist. Most of the fault lies with the seminaries. Only recently have they been awakening to the need for better training in evangelism, and at a present most of them are still not adequately training pastors for this fundamental task of the ministry.

There are certain qualifications that make a pastor an effective evangelist. He must possess holiness of character. People are quick to discern the depth of the pastor's Christian life. An unholy ministry is a derision of the Word and a dishonor to God. It is obvious that he must contain spiritual life to a high degree. God uses a man of humble spirit. Humility is not deprecation of one's own work, but rather an assertion that the glory and success are God's. The pastor must be characterized by a thorough earnestness. If he possesses a living faith, he will witness to God's

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[1]Andrew Blackwood, Evangelism in the Home Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942), pp. 64-67.

[2]Oscar Carlson, The Church's Singular Task (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1950), pp. 19-22.

Word with courage and zeal. The missionary pastor will surrender self to God. As the artist's brush must yield itself to the will of the artist, so the man of God must yield himself to the purpose and will of the Creator.[3] Finally, and as the crown to every other spiritual qualification, the pastor must know the fullness and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The pastor must be cleansed himself and then act as the cleansing agent of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual qualifications are most important to the missionary pastor, but there are physical qualities which play a vital part in the practical approach of pastor to people. Cleanliness and neatness are essential to the missionary pastor. Good grooming includes neatness and good taste in dress. Especially offensive are bad breath and body odor. Professional appearance is a valuable asset in the community. Good posture, a ready smile and friendly greeting gains a position of respect for the pastor. Of utmost importance is tact. The unchurched are easily offended at the tactless approach of some pastors.[4]

All these general qualifications point to the quality of leadership which the pastor should exercise as leader of the evangelism program. As the leader in the program of

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[3]Charles Spurgeon, The Soul Winner (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1948), pp. 27-39.

[4]William H. Eifert, "Mind Your Mission Manners," Today, II (March, 1947), 7-9.

evangelism the pastor must be the best example of giving personal witness to Christ. In every phase of his activity in the parish, the pastor has opportunities to personally bear witness to his Savior. His example is especially important to the members of the congregation participating in a program of visitation evangelism. The pastor has opportunity to bear this personal testimony in his preaching, private counselling, in the regular meetings of the different organizations of the church, and in almost every personal conversation with those with whom he comes into contact. The members of the congregation will be quick to share this personal witness obligation, and with strengthened faith they will speak to others.[5]

If the pastor is to be an example to his parishioners in "doing the work of an evangelist," he is to develop the right attitudes toward mission work. His leadership of the evangelism program must be one of the most joyous activities of his work. His pulpit work will show forth the burning zeal he has in his heart for those not yet saved. Most important, the pastor will train himself to be mission minded in his pastoral activity. It is taken for granted that he will do much mission calling, but the calls to his own parishioners will be reminders to them concerning their mission opportunities. It is a good practice to pray together with the

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[5]R. R. Caemmerer, "The Pastor and His Personal Witness," Today, II (August, 1947), 5-8.

families for more mission zeal.[6]

A strong emphasis must be placed on the pastoral leadership of the lay evangelists. Though the pastor is to be the example of the evangelist, it is certainly impossible for him to do all the work himself. This will be discussed more fully in a later chapter. Suffice here to say that a basic quality of a pastoral evangelist is that of an "overseer," a term which St. Paul uses frequently. As Moody said: "It is better to put ten men to work than to try to do the work of ten men." The church is like a filling station where people go to fuel themselves for their main task--witnessing. Too often the pastor looks upon lay people with suspicion, and the laity confirm his opinion with a reluctance to assume their responsibilities. Actually the laity is the greatest untapped resource for power in the church today. "After all, when a pastor calls on a prospect, he is a salesman; but when a consecrated layman calls, he is a satisfied customer."[7]

The pastor, as leader of adult evangelism in his congregation, must constantly point his members toward the goal of their program of adult evangelism. The theoretical goal of adult evangelism is conversion and church membership. The method of accomplishing this end might be termed the practical

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[6]C. A. Gaertner, "Enlistment and Training of Workers," Today, II (September, 1947), 7f.

[7]C. A. Wuech, "Making the Local Congregation the Center of Evangelism," Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955), pp. 42f.

goal of adult evangelism, or membership in one of the pastor's adult study groups. To this end he is to be the active leader of the visitation evangelism that should be going on inside his church.

However, it still remains true that the most effective method for bringing adults together to study God's Word is the personal calling of the pastor on the best prospects for church membership. To this end we mention another quality which has enabled pastors to become more effective evangelists. The mission calls of the pastor can become teaching calls. Many pastors have the practice of making their mission calls very short, consisting of a social visit and an invitation to attend services and the adult membership classes. The call on the prospect could rather be the important initial step toward bringing a new member into the class. It is during the well-planned mission call that the pastor can lead the prospect into a discussion of one or another of the great teachings of the Scriptures. The discussion is to be easy and natural, growing out of the immediate conversation. Pastor A. H. Haake, a member of the Home Missions Board for the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, gives further guidance to the mission teaching call:

> It is important that the missionary pastor guide the discussion. As soon as possible, he will want to speak of those truths which are unknown (and are, therefore, news) to his prospect. Thus, for instance, he is sure to get his prospect's attention when he asserts that, in reality, there are only two religions in the world. His prospect will suddenly be "all ears,"

and the pastor can then proceed to show the difference between the religion of works and the religion of faith. It is quite probable that his prospect never heard, or at least never clearly understood, that salvation is wholly by grace through faith in the shed blood of our divine Redeemer.

Such discussions challenge further thought on the part of the previously indifferent. They establish a relationship of mutual respect between the pastor and the prospect. They open the door to future visits. And they have an excellent effect on the pastor himself, deepening his personal faith and giving him more and more courage and more and more joy in personal witnessing.

In some instances we have been able to give sufficient instruction during our first visit to awaken in our prospect a desire to continue his study in the company of others--either in our formal membership class or in a small group. In other cases two or three visits, lasting from one to two hours each, may be necessary. We have found that there is great value in making these "teaching calls" in close succession, preferably weekly.[8]

All ministers are not equally gifted in the winsome appeal to make mission calls, let alone mission teaching calls. It is unfortunate that some use this excuse to avoid their part in an evangelism program. They pride themselves on being good organizers or powerful preachers. Others look with pity and intellectual contempt at the "evangelistic ministry."[9] As ministers, they are responsible for the evangelism program. It is almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of the leadership that is necessary. The leadership of the

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[8]A. H. Haake, "From House to House," Today, V (October, 1950), 2-4.

[9]Arthur Archibald, New Testament Evangelism (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1946), p. 30.

pastors will largely determine whether the evangelism of the future will remain with the local congregation.

Selection of a Visitation Committee

Most churches admit that adult evangelism is the main task of the church today, but many of the same churches are not properly organized for the central project. A great percentage of churches do not have a committee organized for visitation evangelism. Churches are organized for almost every essential activity of the church--worship, music, education, and social activities--and the effect is a valuable and functional program. But the central project of the church is neglected. Evangelism may be emphasized in every phase of congregational activity, and still lack the organization to make it effective.[10] Fortunately visitation committees are becoming more popular. Where visitation evangelism has been a success, it has almost always been the pastor who has guided and developed the organization of the central committee.

The need for a visitation committee is obvious and will be mentioned only in passing. Growing communities and an ever moving population make it impossible for the pastor to call on all the prospective members in his community. Many of the prospects that he does call on are not home on the

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[10] Ibid., p. 44.

first or second call. The pastor cannot handle the job alone.[11] This situation makes it almost a necessity that the congregation have a special group of trained laymen to do the work of the Kingdom in visitation evangelism. The organization of a visitation committee is hardly setting a precedent. We would but follow the example of Jesus. He was the first religious leader to use a group of lay people to proclaim His coming. The group of seventy that He chose were given instructions and sent out on their first assignments.[12]

It is taken for granted that the congregation has approved the organization of a visitation committee, and the pastor is now faced with the problem of selecting the members of his congregation that are best suited to be visitors. The first rule that he might follow is to select the most capable laymen in the church for visitation evangelism. Few of them will feel well qualified for the task, but the pastor must use his judgment in selecting the best of his flock. Most ministers prefer to have a visitor list composed of seventy-five per cent men and twenty-five per cent women, with one or two teams of young people. One of the most popular team combinations is husband and wife. Experience indicates that if fifteen workers are selected for every

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[11] Paul Kavesch, "Trained Laymen Are Effective Evangelists," Advance, II (May, 1955).

[12] Dawson Bryan, A Workable Plan of Evangelism (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945) p. 17.

hundred prospects, each team will have not more than ten or twelve calls to make.[13]

The visitation committee should consist of more men than women. This often presents a problem, for in many a parish today there is a lack of man power. Christ appealed to strong men to gather around Him. Christ Himself was the ideal man. Now He is looking to the local congregation for men to support His church in visitation evangelism. But instead He sees churches that are filled with women and children. The men have become "curb-stone Christians," taking the family to church and picking them up later. Of course, the pastor must be constantly on the lookout for able women to serve as visitors. Housewives make especially good visitors because they are available during the day. Often a helpful Christian housewife has served as her church's best ambassador by simply being on the lookout for moving vans and offering kindly assistance to the new family as it is getting settled. Such kindness leaves a wholesome impression about the strange church around the corner.[14]

The pastor must remember that soul-winning is an art, for which reason he should not ask for volunteers for the visitation committee. Some people do not have the proper

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[13]Weldon Crossland, How to Increase Church Membership and Attendance (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), pp. 51f.

[14]Blackwood, op. cit., pp. 41-43.

personality for this type of work. Some are lacking in tact, others in the ability to read men. There are some who would simply not be able to benefit from the best instruction because they lack the psychological skill to be visitors in the name of the church.[15] This does not mean that the personality of the extrovert is needed. Some of the best visitors make up in sincerity what they lack in aggressiveness. But it does mean that the pastor must be very selective of the members he chooses to serve on this particular committee. "Enlisting laymen to win the unchurched is important to the pastor, as the selection of the twelve disciples was to Jesus."[16] Jesus gave careful thought in the selection of the seventy disciples that were to carry on His work. The pastor too must give his choice much thought. As the pastor seeks God's help in choosing the right people, he might well expect that there will be many eliminated until the right persons are found.

What type of personality should the pastor look for when choosing visitors? Sweazey makes a point of the fact that there is no one type for visitation evangelism.

> The extrovert who can go into a home radiating friendliness, talk and ask questions with a disarming frankness and close the call with a hearty

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[15] Dwight Pratt, The Master's Method of Winning Men (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., c.1922), p. 59.

[16] Dawson Bryan, Building Church Membership Through Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1952), pp. 60f.

"This has been wonderful--let's pray about it," has a gift that can be greatly used. But the simple earnestness of the person who finds words difficult is sometimes even more convincing. There is no one type for evangelistic calling. . . . On this subject, John Timothy Stone has well said, "Is there a lass who would want a man to indulge in fine phrase-making while proposing, as if he knew how to propose? It is not a matter of experience or form. No one would be impressed by the mere word or manner of expression, unless the heart revealed itself."[17]

After the pastor has chosen those whom he thinks will make an active and effective visitation committee, he is often discouraged that so few of them are willing to serve on the visitation committee. This problem is especially acute when a pastor initiates a program of visitation evangelism in a church that has not been active in this work in the past. But always he will find at least a few, and soon the spirit of evangelism will spread and others will join the group of personal workers. It is initiating the fearful into the work that is difficult. Once they have experienced the joy of soul-winning, they will be eager workers.[18]

Those who are unwilling to serve on the visitation committee will offer many varied types of excuses. Each excuse has a history of fear behind it. Perhaps the typical excuse used by prospective visitors is not knowing how. The best answer to this excuse is that there will be a training period

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[17]George Sweazey, Effective Evangelism (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1953), p. 105.

[18]G. S. Dobbins, "Pastoral Evangelism," Review and Expositor, XLII (January, 1945), 52.

provided, and that visitation evangelism, like any other skill, must be learned from experience. Another excuse is lack of ability. The great men of God all feared for their lack of ability. Moses, Jeremiah, Gideon: all were afraid, but God uses those who apparently lack ability to do great things. David had only a sling. The disciples were only fishermen. Some Christians fear that their own Christian lives have not been perfect enough for them to serve as visitors for the church. But there have never been perfect saints. David, Peter, Moses, and many other great saints of the Bible had glaring faults. Finally, there are always those who will not serve as visitors because they are afraid of failure. However, the results of our witnessing are not dependent on us, and so the best soul winners fail at times. Even Jesus failed to win Judas, the Pharisees, and the rich young ruler.[19]

It is a general consensus of opinion among all authorities on visitation evangelism that there is only one method of securing the ablest workers for the visitation committee. The minister must personally interview them and persuade them to share in the important work of evangelism. He who uses the telephone or the mail will discover that only about one third will respond. By talking to each one personally the

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[19]Roland Leavell, Evangelism, Christ's Imperative Commission (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), pp. 162f.

pastor should be able to secure close to ninety five per cent of the prospective visitors.[20]

It would seem safe to say that there is no phase of the parish program of evangelism that is so dependent upon the wisdom, initiative, and judgment of the pastor as the organization and selection of the visitation committee.[21] It is therefore important that the pastor give much prayerful thought and consideration to the selection of this committee. Into the hands of this committee is given the awesome responsibility to cultivate precious prospects for the church of Jesus Christ.

Setting Up a Prospect List

As leader of the program of adult evangelism in his congregation, the pastor is directly responsible for setting up a prospect list, though it may be a group of laymen that does most of the work. The keeping of the prospect list is a sacred task, for each card represents a human soul.

The keeping of the prospect list is an attempt to keep in contact with those in the community who have shown some interest in the church. These are the real evangelistic prospects. You cannot evangelize people in general. There

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[20]Crossland, op. cit., p. 52.

[21]The pastor, as leader of the program of adult evangelism, is also responsible for training the visitation committee. This phase of his leadership will be discussed in Chapter IV under the heading of "Training in Visitation Evangelism."

is no such thing as a person in general. Personal contact is the answer, but personal contact is impossible unless the prospects are known.

Pastor and people should both be educated to build up the prospect list. There are many who think that the prospect list should be larger than the congregational membership list. Systematic endeavors are necessary to build up that list and to get the names of interested people, for the prospect list is the congregation's "acre of diamonds, its green pastures."[22] Arthur Archibald relates a personal experience to show the disastrous effect on evangelism if there is no prospect list available.

> I went to assist a brother minister in Ohio. I was to give him one week. The night I arrived I said, "Brother, where are the names of those we are going after for Christ?" "Oh," he said, "They are around in the church and community." "But just where are they and who are they?" I insisted. "Time is short. We have not a moment to waste. We can't drift about. Where are these people we are to approach?" He then confessed, "I have none listed. I have trusted the Lord to lead us to them." And there he confessed a common sin, pushing over on the Lord the inefficiency due to our laziness and stupidity; going out after souls and not knowing where he was going. It is a common fault of many churches. Every church should know at the beginning of its effort just who it is going to seek, as truly as a ship captain knows what harbor he is sailing for on leaving port.[23]

A big and well-classified prospect list will usually assure a success. One can expect to win ten per cent of the

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[22] Weech, op. cit., p. 44.

[23] Archibald, op. cit., p. 73.

prospects contacted, even if the first results are not that promising. The list is to be compiled by the pastor and then placed on duplicate cards for the visitor and for the church file. All pertinent information should be on these cards, such as age, job, previous church connection, previous contacts by the church, etc.[24]

Dawson Bryan argues that this file should actually be divided into three parts: the live file, the postponed file, and the dead file. The live file is for those who should be called on at once. The postponed file for those that are "almost persuaded." The dead file is for those who do not intend to unite with this particular church, such as some parents of the children of the Sunday school and the parish school. It also might contain names of unchurched prospects who have proved impossible to work with.[25] Still other pastors keep a list of prospects in a small notebook that can be carried around while making calls. The advantage of the latter method is having the addresses handy in case the pastor is calling in the neighborhood of a prospective member.

The keeping of the prospect list demands time and care. In fact, the job never ceases for pastor or layman. Building the list is to be the responsibility of all members. It is

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[24] Ibid., pp. 73-75.

[25] Bryan, Building Church Membership through Evangelism, pp. 58f.

good for the pastor to think up many ways to keep his members prospect conscious. Secular organizations encourage their members by enclosing a prospect card in each mailing. The church might follow the same procedure. In each mailing some reminder might be given to keep them on the alert for prospects.[26] Another fine suggestion for keeping the congregation "prospect conscious" is to provide statistics in the weekly church bulletin. The principle is for the pastor each week to publish the number of prospects he has available for his own use and for the use of the church. An example might be:

MEMBERS OF TOMORROW

Prospects on record as of _____ (date) (number)_____
Goal of prospects on record.[27]

The number of prospects that the pastor receives from the members of his congregation, though important, are few in comparison to the names obtained from the other varied sources which are available to the pastor. There are, of course, the names which he gathers from his personal calling and contacts. The pastor has other special opportunities to gather new prospects. The pastor's interview with a couple he is going to marry deals with the deepest issues of life. It is an incomparable evangelistic opportunity. Baptism offers an excellent opportunity to make prospects of the parents.

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[26]Henry Luffberry, Thy Mission High Fulfilling (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1954), p. 81.

[27]John Huss, Ideas for a Successful Pastorate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1953), p. 104.

Funerals are often a legitimate tool for evangelism, since the pastor has an opportunity to witness to the survivors. Often, too, the pastor is sought out for counseling by non-churchgoers. All such people might prove to be excellent prospects for the church. The pastor must be on the lookout for them.[28] Other obvious prospects to be placed on the active list immediately are all visitors of church services. These prospects usually prove to be among the best.

An excellent source for prospects that is not always used by pastors are such organizations as the "Welcome Wagon." This organization was founded to stimulate business for the local merchants by calling on newcomers. The plan calls for having a hostess contact all newcomers in the town to distribute samples for the local merchants. Besides this, the hostess dispenses information about the services of the community, and also gathers information about the new family. In this way the hostess acts as an "assistant pastor," because she invariably asks the church denomination of the family and requests permission to have the local pastor call there.[29]

Among the best sources for adult prospects have been the educational agencies of the church. Unchurched parents of the Cradle Roll Department, Sunday school children,

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[28] Sweazey, op. cit., pp. 203-05.

[29] Daryl G. Meyer, "Get on the 'Welcome Wagon'," Today, III (December, 1948), pp. 1-3.

children attending Vacation Bible School, and children of the parochial school are prospects that should stand high on the list. Experience has shown that in a growing community the parochial school is the means of bringing many prospects into the church.

There are, of course, many other sources from which the pastor will obtain names of prospects. Only one more such source will be mentioned in this paper, and that source is the religious canvass. The tremendous mobility of Americans today makes a religious census necessary about every three years, especially in urban communities. In the last ten years sixty-five million Americans have changed residence. Most of these have settled in a different community. In some cities and towns all Protestant denominations co-operate in taking a church census every two or three years. Many Missouri Synod churches join in this effort, because it is co-operation only in externals. It gives them a more complete coverage of the city, and they receive a fair proportion of the prospects. The purpose of the canvass is to provide each church with the name, the address, and the church interest of every unchurched person in the community.[30]

The value of canvassing is obvious. It keeps the church from working in the dark by providing many excellent prospects

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[30]"A Religious Census of the Community," Unpublished Monograph (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955)

with which the church can work. Secondly, canvassing is good public relations work. Even if few prospects are unearthed, the community is still made more conscious of the fact that the church is concerned about them.[31]

After the pastor has completed his prospect list, it would be well for him to get an overview of the type of people that are contained on the prospect list. The list should contain neighbors and friends of the members, leading citizens of the community, wage earners--the rank and file of the community. Any prospect list that does not contain names or prospects from each class of society in the community is departing from the evangelistic approach. Few on the completed prospect list will be openly antagonistic to Christianity. More often there will be people who are critical of the church. The prospect list should provide ample witnessing opportunities for both the pastor and members of the visitation committee.[32]

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[31] Sweazey, op. cit., p. 14.

[32] William Avery, You Shall Be My Witnesses (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), pp. 75-77.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROGRAM OF VISITATION EVANGELISM

The Function of Visitation Evangelism

The program of visitation evangelism has been one of the natural outgrowths of centering adult evangelism in the local congregation. Congregational motivation toward evangelism, as discussed in chapter II, provides the impetus toward the program of visitation evangelism. The genius of the movement lies in the fact that qualified lay workers are trained to witness to people where they are. These trained workers are the strength behind the planned program of the church. Even more important, they are an important link to the tens of millions of Americans who never enter a church, who are cold to the regular worship services and ignore the preaching mission. These lost souls can only be reached effectively by Christians trained to speak of their faith. "Most of the periods in Christian history that have recorded the largest spiritual growth and the greatest numerical advance have been those in which devoted laymen took the gospel to the people."[1]

The need for visitation evangelism has become apparent

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[1]Weldon Crossland, How to Increase Church Membership and Attendance (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 43.

through the weaknesses of the mass evangelism which preceded it in the popular approach to unchurched persons. The old method was the appeal of one man. The evangelism campaign depended upon his personality and his methods. It failed in many respects because there were too many different personality types to which the mass evangelist addressed himself. It was impossible for him to make a comprehensive appeal to the unsaved people whom he attempted to win. This lack of personal concern resulted in mass indifference and even contempt toward evangelism, for which it suffers to this day.[2]

Because of this background visitation evangelism is well suited to our times. If personal contact is needed, as efforts at mass conversion seem to indicate, then visitation evangelism is the answer. Recent statistics seem to prove this assumption. Jehovah's Witness, relying mostly on visitation evangelism, has increased its membership from 44,000 to 425,000.[3] Other church bodies that have used this type of evangelism have reported similar increases.

Many different types of visitation evangelism have been employed very effectively. All of the modern methods can be traced back to the original type of visitation evangelism, that employed by Christ Jesus. Jesus gathered to Himself a

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[2]A. E. Kerhahan, Visitation Evangelism (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., c.1925), pp. 39f.

[3]George Sweazey, Effective Evangelism (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1953), pp. 94f.

group of disciples to carry on the work of evangelism after He had ascended. He trained them well, living with them and moving about in Galilee so that they might learn from His example and their own experience. Furthermore, Jesus organized another group of seventy people, trained them, and sent them out two by two. To all His lay workers Christ promised His constant presence and assistance.[4] That the early Christian church followed the pattern of Christ is seen clearly from Acts 5:42:

"And daily	Every day evangelism
in the temple	Church evangelism
and in every house	Visitation evangelism
they	Lay participation
ceased not	Continuous evangelism
to teach	Education evangelism
and to preach	Preaching evangelism
Jesus Christ."	Christ-centered evangelism[5]

Among the modern methods of visitation evangelism there are many different types. One of the most popular varieties is called the "Group Plan." The plan is to operate a visitation group that functions for a six-week period. At the end of this period a new group is organized, and so on throughout the main part of the year. This method has also been called rotational evangelism. The purpose of this plan is to include all the membership in the program.[6] Another author

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[4] Arthur C. Archibald, New Testament Evangelism (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1946), pp. 42f.

[5] Eugene Harrison, How to Win Souls (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, c.1952), p. 141.

[6] Arnold H. Grumm, "Practicing Evangelism in Shifts," Advance, II (September, 1955), 6f.

suggests a variation of the plan, in which ten workers visit for ten weeks, making two calls each week. Thus a total of 24,000 contacts can be made throughout the year.[7]

Another popular method in the church has been appropriately called the "Block Plan." One member of the congregation is assigned to a specific block of homes, and he is responsible for any unchurched families or any family which has recently moved into the community.[8] An elaboration of this type of plan is called the "Shepherding Plan." Each member of the church council is responsible for a number of the families in the congregation. Each one of these units operates as a separate evangelistic group.[9]

The plan which seems to be the most popular and the most effective is called the "Zone Plan." The plan calls for a division of the parish into a group of zones or districts. For each zone there is a committee of visitors which functions independently of the other zones in the congregation. These lay visitors are trained to keep in contact with both the active and inactive church members in their zone, as well as to visit the shut-ins and any unchurched prospects. In

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[7]John E. Huss, Ideas for a Successful Pastorate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1953), pp. 17f.

[8]A discussion of the technique of the visitation will be discussed later in this chapter.

[9]O. A. Maech, "Advancing in Evangelism," Advance, II (September, 1955), 22.

some churches this committee functions as one large body, rather than being separated into zones. The advantage of meeting on the zone level is the possibility of sharing experiences, plus the opportunity of discussing the particular needs of the zone. The advantage of one large committee meeting each month is the closer contact between the pastor and the committee, since the pastor would find it impossible to attend each zone meeting. The two plans have been coordinated by using the zone meetings and arranging a bimonthly supper meeting of all the zones. The leaders of the zones would meet with the pastor one hour before the bimonthly meeting.[10]

When visitation evangelism first became popular, only one method was advocated. This method called for a one-week campaign of concentrated visitation evangelism, for which a guest evangelist was called in to guide the program. Dawson Bryan is still a strong advocate of this type of visitation evangelism:

> Experience all across America has proved that the largest results are obtained by a one-week campaign, with meetings each night Monday through Thursday. Its advantage is its brevity. One intense week! Visitors can be induced to lay aside other matters for this short time. The experience of one night is not lost before the next meeting. Discouragement is caught

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[10]"The Zone Plan," unpublished monograph (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955)

> before it crystallizes. Encouragement comes with success before the week is over. The totals become impressive. An atmosphere of victory and achievement is obtained. Scriptural joy of heavenly triumph commits the workers to future endeavor.[11]

Though this method is not so widely used today because it lacks the emphasis on continuous evangelism, it definitely has not passed from the picture. The current "Area Evangelism Mission" of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has many of the same characteristics as this type of program.

A word might be said here concerning the schedule of the meeting night characteristic to almost any of the different types of visitation plans. The time schedule for such a meeting night is suggested by O. A. Waech:

7:00 - 7:30	Devotions and instructions
7:30 - 9:30	Visitation
9:30 - 10:00	Report back meeting
10:00 - 10:30	Fellowship hour[12]

Others suggest beginning the evening with supper, which should begin about 6:00 P. M. Experience has shown that it is important for the visitors to make the calls on the night of the meeting.

A specialized program of visitation evangelism known as the "Area Evangelism Mission" has been advanced by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. This program has been used

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[11] Dawson Bryan, Building Church Membership Through Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1952), p. 74.

[12] O. A. Waech, "Making the Local Congregation the Center of Missionary Activity," Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955), p. 46.

in the larger cities until now, but it is easily adaptable to almost any area. An "Area Mission" can comprise a group of congregations separated by fifty to sixty miles and still be effective, for the visitation program is still on the congregational level. There have been as few as four and as many as 105 congregations participating in the mission.

The guest pastors are selected by each participating congregation. The evangelism office sends out the invitations. The responsibility of the guest pastor is to conduct a preaching mission in one of the congregations Sunday morning through Thursday night. He also conducts briefing sessions of visitation evangelism for the lay visitors in the congregation that he is preaching. The lay visitors are made up of willing workers in each of the congregations. These visitors pave the way by increasing the prospect list through neighborhood canvasses, etc. The actual visitation program takes place Monday through Thursday during the mission week.[13]

The purpose of the program is explained as follows:

> The program is an effort to emphasize various phases of evangelism to be worked in a given area in a concentrated period of time, usually Sunday morning to Thursday. The total program includes Preaching--every congregation sponsors a preaching mission each evening; Teaching--the pastors meet in a School of Evangelism Monday through Thursday morning; Reaching--lay visitors are instructed before or after the

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[13]"Crusade for Christ" (St. Louis: tract released by the Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955)

> evening services and sent forth to witness of Christ and His Church; praying members are motivated to make this united effort a matter of personal prayer long before it takes place.[14]

The results of these "area missions" have been very encouraging. There has been a wonderful demonstration of united Christian witnessing. Congregations are stirred to a new sense of responsibility. Christians are strengthened in faith. Some congregations that would never have participated in an evangelism campaign of their own have been drawn into the experience of effective evangelism. These statistics are given for the pilot project in Alton, Illinois:

> In the nine congregations of the Greater Alton (Ill.) Area, an average of 219 lay people witnessed of their faith daily, completing 1073 calls, enrolling 36 in their pastor's class, finding 39 who were "live prospects," 33 for baptism; and 89 for Sunday school. A total of 6950 attended the special evangelistic services, and 633 visitors were brought under the influence of the Gospel.[15]

The PTR mission program, as it has also become known, actually harks back to the old "Preaching Mission" in its use of nightly evangelistic services. After years of disuse because of limitation and abuse, it is now being used effectively. Its advantages are significant. Non-members will come to special services more readily. The intensity and exhilaration of something fresh and different brings with it a feeling set free from the sameness. Services each evening

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

have a cumulative effect. Finally, a pastor who could not leave his church on Sunday could help out for a week in the evening.[16]

It is significant that the FTR program has worked effectively even in the "old" congregations of the church. Rev. Paul Trumpoldt, a Lutheran pastor in Western New York, speaks of the new life that became evident in his congregation. New members were won. Fringe members were revitalized. But above all, the existing membership was knit more closely together. In the future its members will be more prospect-conscious than ever before.[17]

The results of almost all types of visitation evangelism on the congregational level have been encouraging. Perhaps the most practical quality of visitation evangelism is the fact that it can be put into use wherever a congregation is in operation. The use of lay visitors is equally effective in both rural and urban communities. Country churches, which have been lacking in an evangelistic program for years, have found it effective and workable. Downtown churches find it ideal to keep up with their constantly changing community. Suburban communities have found their prosperous members energetic about sharing the message of Christ with their

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[16] Sweazey, op. cit., p. 163.

[17] Paul Trumpoldt, "How Area Evangelism Affected an 'Old' Congregation," Advance, III (February, 1956), 15f.

neighbors. There will be minor adaptations in each case, but the method remains the same.[18]

There are some specific values in visitation evangelism that make it more usable than other types of adult evangelism in use today. First, no more effective method for reaching the unchurched has been devised. Secondly, visitation evangelism is the best way to clarify religious confusion. Even the best members of the church are often confused about their Christianity, having a tendency among themselves to discuss only the trivial doctrines of Christendom. As they witness they soon learn to emphasize the central message of Christianity.[19] Thirdly, lasting friendships spring up between established church members and the prospective members. These associations are like chains of gold, because they establish a link which holds the new members to the church.[20]

If a program of visitation evangelism accomplished nothing else it would probably be worth the time and effort for the reaction of the workers who participated in the visitation. First, the worker discovers himself. Many Christians are Christians because of custom. They inherit their religion from their parents. They contribute little because little is required of them. The man who engages in

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[18]Sweazey, op. cit., p. 99.

[19]A. E. Kernahan, Adventures in Visitation Evangelism (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1928), pp. 27-38.

[20]Ibid., pp. 72-75.

visitation evangelism goes into the community as a representative of Christ. As the Holy Spirit works through him to convert others, the visitor discovers abilities that he never dreamed existed. Secondly, the visitor discovers opportunities for service. Many a visitor has been astounded at the number of people in his own community who could be won for Christ if they were only approached. Finally, the worker discovers a new Christ. Too many Christians have a conception of Christ that is curiously similar to some of the anemic portraits of Him. If a Christian is to have a conquering Christ, he must see Him at work in the community.[21]

Training in Visitation Evangelism

No program of visitation evangelism can operate effectively unless the visitors have been trained properly. Sincerity and the best of intentions are useless until the visitor understands his purpose and intends to accomplish the same.

Few laymen in the church today have had proper training in visitation evangelism. Many Christians have visited hundreds of families without having one hour of practical training in technique. Secular organizations would never permit this to happen. They train their members from the very beginning in the methods that have been tested and proved

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[21]Kernaman, Visitation Evangelism, pp. 96-100.

effective. What is even more tragic is that many pastors do not see the need to train the people in techniques of witnessing. "It is an indication of the amazing power of the Holy Spirit that the church grows at all."[22]

There are several different types of training programs that can be attempted. Some pastors plan a series of meetings with the prospective visitors. More often the training is combined with the actual visitation program. Thus each training session would be followed by sending the visitors out on actual visitations. The advantage to the latter method is the combination of theory and experience. This paper will not attempt to discuss all the different types of training programs, but will suggest some high lights and methods to be included in such a training program.

The first meeting with the visitation committee is very important. Most of those attending will feel very uneasy about the work that they will soon be doing. An inspirational talk creates the proper atmosphere. Crossland offers an example:

> You have the honor and privilege of sharing in one of the most vital and important movements of our entire church year. You will represent Christ and our church in inviting those on whom you call to become Christians and to unite with our church. This is one of the finest services we can render Christ and the unchurched

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[22] Henry Luffberry, Thy Mission Nigh Fulfilling (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1954), p. 75.

of our community. We shall all have His blessing, presence, and help as we undertake this task for Him.

Many of you are doing evangelistic calling for the first time. It is for you as well as for your fellow workers who have had experience that we hold these periods of training and instruction. Do your utmost to be present at every one of them, and at the end of the crusade you will be utterly amazed at how successful you have been. More than half of you as teams will win one or more people the first evening of your calling, while practically all of you will have secured from one to five or six decisions by the closing evening. Everyone will be grateful for your call, and I promise you that you will enjoy this work as much as anything you have done for your church in many years.[23]

The purpose of the pastor in the training sessions is to suggest basic approaches in visiting prospects. Although it is impossible for the pastor to provide any stock methods, since every situation is different, yet he can suggest several helps to get the visitor started.

Two suggestions are in order before the visitor begins his call. The team of two visitors should pray for the success of their visitation. Prayer will assure God's presence and calm the fears of the visitors. "It is a good thing when callers are frightened by the importance of what they are trying to do--they pray better then."[24] Secondly, it is good to review the information on the family before calling. All members of that family are to be included in

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[23]Crossland, op. cit., p. 59.

[24]Walter A. Enge, "How to Make an Evangelistic Visit," Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955), p. 61.

the visit.

It is important for the visitor to gain entrance into the home. Usually this is accomplished very easily. If it proves a poor time to call, the visitor can make another appointment. Once inside the home, the visitor can begin the conversation by associating the prospect with the church, whether it be through a mutual friend, children in Sunday school, or through attendance at the church. When beginning the conversation, the visitor should make it a point to secure a favorable environment. Avoid distractions like radio and television. Create an atmosphere in keeping with the subject. Above all, from the very beginning relax and enjoy the call. The more comfortable the visitors are, the more comfortable the prospects will be.[25]

An evangelistic visit is often a failure not because the prospect is antagonistic, but because the visitor makes some fatal errors. Some things for the visitor to avoid are: (a) Avoid a "no." Ask questions that will encourage a "yes."; (b) Don't argue, which will only convince the prospect that he is right; (c) Don't overtalk, a common mistake among eager visitors. The best visitor is often the good listener; (d) Don't waste time in nonessentials. Get to the point as soon as possible; (e) Don't change the subject. The prospect who feels guilty will try this often; (f) Don't risk a refusal

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[25] Ibid., pp. 61-64.

too soon. The natural reaction of the prospect will be to refuse; (g) Don't get discouraged. Often results won't show up until later.[26]

These general rules and precautions are important to remember at all times, but the most important rule to emphasize in visitation evangelism is to preach Christ. Many pastors might be surprised if they knew how few of the visitors speak of Christ. It is difficult for some to speak of their Savior. The tendency is to make the church into some glorified club with many activities. Visitors must be trained to preach Christ. Any evangelistic visiting that speaks of anything else will fail. Americans are already overorganized. If the message of the visitor centers around the "wonderful minister, the best choir, and the right people," he is missing the purpose of the visit. Often the prospect has not had the opportunity to discuss religion. Society still frowns on the subject. But if a visitor from the church broaches the subject, the prospect has the chance to speak of problems concerning spiritual matters which have bothered him for some time. Visitors often are amazed at how readily the people open their hearts.[27]

In directing the conversation to Christ, the visitor can follow some basic assumptions common to all prospects. These

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[26]Bryan, op. cit., pp. 121-23.

[27]Sweazey, op. cit., pp. 91-93.

assumptions, that each prospect will feel, are: (a) the sense of sin, present from the natural law, if not conditioned otherwise by society; (b) the dread of impersonal forces. We live in an era of fear. Citizens are worried about war, the atomic bomb, etc.; (c) boredom, caused by a people with nothing to hope for; (d) inner conflict, caused by the tensions of modern living; (e) love of home and family. People will do what they think is best for the family; (f) need of a Savior; (g) the power of the Cross. The figure of a loving Christ who died for men still has a powerful attraction.[28]

These are only a few suggestions among many for broaching the subject of Christianity and its relevance to the prospect. The question is often raised about the advisability of visitors pressing for a decision on the part of the prospects. Such a practice is often discouraged in Lutheran circles. To secure a decision reminds most Lutherans of mass evangelists and modernist preachers trying to gain members for the church without proper instruction. This is unfortunate, because decisions are very valuable in visitation evangelism. In fact, if decisions are not brought forth by the lay visitor, the prospect is often lost.[29]

It is necessary, of course, to keep in mind the objective

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[28] Ibid., pp. 60-69.

[29] Ibid., pp. 124-28.

of the decision to be reached. If the objective is to bring the family to church services, it is good to press for a decision on the invitation to come to church. The major objective must always be kept in mind, to bring people under the saving grace of the Gospel.[30] To this end it is advisable for the visitor to press for a decision to attend the pastor's adult instruction class. Enrollment of the adult prospects in the class is to be the objective of every visit. It is better not to mention the objective of church membership. Most prospects will resent this approach. The better approach has been to invite the prospect to a group of discussions with other interested people, under the leadership of the pastor.[31] More extended remarks concerning the importance of adult instruction classes are presented in the following chapter.

It might be added here that many prospects remain prospects because of their habit of postponing a favorable decision to come to church or to one of the pastor's study groups. They are apt to be closest to a time of decision when lay visitors call on them. For that reason the lay visitor should be trained in patience and persistence in

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[30] Carl Gaertner, "Pressing for a Decision," Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955), p. 110.

[31] M. C. Carlsen, A Living Church (Blair, Nebraska: Danish Lutheran Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 85f.

pressing for a decision.[32]

If the prospect has come to a favorable decision to attend the instruction classes or come to church the next Sunday it is very effective to close the interview with a short prayer. The prayer should be a simple one thanking God for the decision and asking His rich blessing upon the home. Such a sincere and simple prayer will impress the prospects and bring them closer to a sure faith in Christ.[33]

If the visitor is to be trained to press for a decision, it is necessary that he know the meaning of proselytism. A visitor is proselyting when he approaches a member of another Christian congregation with the express purpose of persuading him to leave that church. However, if the visitor seriously inquires after the condition of a man's soul, and then proceeds to speak Christ as the answer to his problem, he is a witness of Christ and is not proselyting.[34]

The pastor must always strive to produce natural visitors. Lay visitors can be overtrained in the same way that an athlete can be overtrained. One can be drilled and instructed so thoroughly that all the naturalness is lost. The result is that the visitor becomes a copy of the pastor, which is at

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[32]Crossland, op. cit., pp. 85f.

[33]Ibid.

[34]W. H. Hillmer, "The Problem of Proselytism in Evangelism," Essays and Reports of Evangelism Workshop (St. Louis: Board for Home Missions, Lutheran Church--Mo. Synod, 1955), pp. 105-07.

best an artificiality. The most powerful appeal of the lay visitor is his natural and sincere approach. It is always dangerous for the pastor to suggest stereotyped approaches. It is natural for an unsure visitor to request a tested approach, for he feels inadequate for the task. The visitor will learn that his own individual personality will prove more effective in his calling.[35] A. M. Kernahan, too, recognized the danger of being overtrained:

> What we needed was not more services but more service. Our preparation of our members for the work led to their bondage and psychological inhibitions, and not to freedom and the romance of Christian conquest. We were demanding a passion for the work of evangelism as a requisite for service, instead of anticipating a growing zeal from the work, and getting neither. We were being frightened by preconceptions instead of going forward to face real men, women, young people, boys and girls with a "Holy Boldness." What we needed was less discussion and more work. I found that Christ sent His followers out to visit with quick, clear, and simple instructions, and that they returned saying, "Even the evil spirits are subject unto us."[36]

Despite the best training program for the visitors, their most profitable instruction will come as they begin doing the work themselves. This is the instruction given by the Holy Spirit. For more than a natural gift to witness is necessary. A divine illumination comes to the visitor as he is about his work. He will discover that he acquires exceptional skill in

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[35] Ibid., p. 89.

[36] Kernahan, Adventures in Visitation Evangelism, p. 25.

dealing with the problems that arise. He will develop an alertness of mind unknown in any other of his mental processes. An increasing accuracy of intuition, with a corresponding increase of joy in his work are the sure rewards of the soul winner.[37]

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[37] Dwight M. Pratt, The Master's Method of Winning Men (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., c.1922), pp. 80f.

CHAPTER V

THE CONCRETE RESULTS OF ADULT EVANGELISM

The Adult Study Group

It is necessary to keep in mind from the outset that the ultimate goal of adult evangelism is to bring unchurched adults under the saving influence of the Gospel. However, to bring about this desired result adult evangelism points itself toward more concrete goals. The first of these goals is to enroll the prospect in a study group of fundamental doctrines of the Bible.

It is interesting to note that already in 1918 Henry Cope saw clearly the need for education in evangelism. Writing in an era when mass evangelism was extremely popular, he foresaw a church weakened in purpose and doctrine. Cope praises the value of evangelism, but he debunks any program that cheapens the end result of evangelism. The emotionalism of mass evangelism failed to replace the lasting influence of a solid education in Bible beliefs.[1]

The church today has a greater need than ever for study groups to educate the adults of the community in the meaning of Christianity. The church has been active in reaching out

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[1]Henry F. Cope, Religious Education in the Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), pp. 78-89.

to the children of the community to bring them into the Sunday school, but no such concentrated effort has been made to provide the same instruction for the adults, who are often no better informed than their children.

Most Lutheran churches at least recognize the need for proper instruction, even though they do not make it freely available to all in the community. It is unfortunate that many protestant churches are not even educating those that are brought into membership with the church. Sweazey speaks of the fact that churches are not educating adult prospects:

> It is startling to recognize that many churches do more to prepare little boys to become tenderfoot scouts than they do to prepare adults to enter the eternal Church as disciples of Jesus Christ. There is another peculiar paradox--in many churches boys and girls who have been getting training in the church school are required to take special instruction before they join the Church, while older people who have had no training of any sort are taken into membership without instruction.[2]

The need for an adult instruction class that attracts the community is being felt in Lutheran circles also. Persons who joined the Lutheran Church in previous years were almost always immigrants, and in many areas of our land the Lutheran Church has been called the "German Church." But today the home mission field of the Lutheran Church has changed, and the need for a revitalized adult study group has become more pronounced.

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[2]George Sweazey, Effective Evangelism (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1953), p. 224.

More and more adult confirmands are being taken into the church each year. Statistics of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod reveal the general trend in the increasing number of adult confirmands. In 1918 there were 2,492 adults confirmed. In 1934 there were 8,432. By 1953 the number had increased to 26,984. The twins--evangelism and adult education--must pave the way for a stronger church.

The teaching of adults for church membership has a strong New Testament background. It was in the basic commission that Christ gave to His disciples before He ascended into heaven.[3]

Careful instruction was an important preparation for the adult prospects of the early church. A sample teaching method of the early church is preserved for us in the "Didache," or the "Teaching of the Twelve." As the church spread and children were instructed early in life for church membership, less emphasis was placed on adult instruction. It was not until the time of Luther that the need for adult instruction was again brought to the fore.[4]

Adult education was needed in the early church because of the number of adult prospects being brought into the church. Even so the adult study group is the golden opportunity for the church of today. It opens wide the door for

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[3]Matthew 28:19-21.

[4]N. C. Carlsen, A Living Church at Work (Blair, Nebraska: Danish Publishing House, n.d.) pp. 81f.

evangelism. It provides the process by which evangelism can establish solid converts. The adult study group is the only opportunity for the church to reach the men and women of the community. They have grown up in the very shadow of the church, and yet have remained unbaptized, untaught, and unsaved.[5] Evangelism and Christian education are inseparable. The weaknesses that appear when either stands alone are eliminated when the two work together.

Churches active in adult evangelism have become increasingly aware for the need for more thorough preparation for church membership. The adult study group is more personal than pulpit evangelism. It is especially suited to modern minds, and the study group will bring some that would enter a church for no other reason. Intellectual curiosity will bring many to the classes. Adults prejudiced against the church and left cold by preaching are ideal prospects for a study group.[6]

The name given to the study group is important. In former years the only reason for the class was to instruct the members of the group for church membership. Since then the purpose of the class has broadened to provide any member of the community with information concerning fundamental Christian beliefs. In keeping with this purpose there has

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[5] Ibid., p. 80.

[6] Sweazey, op. cit., p. 199.

been an attempt to change the name. Some suggestions are: Adult Instruction Classes, Information Lectures, Religious Forum, Lutheran Lectures, and Sunday Night Doctrinal Discussions.[7]

Some congregations have incorporated the practice of appointing certain members of the congregation to serve as sponsors for the members of the study group. As sponsors, they pray for the prospects, bring them to the class a few times, take them to church and introduce them to other members of the congregation, and continue to serve as sponsor until the prospect is well established in the church.[8]

The number of sessions and units of study in each study group is arbitrary. The tendency has been away from the rapid survey course designed to cover only a four-week period. The course of study usually includes a history of the church, a basic understanding of important doctrines of the Bible, and an understanding of the liturgical heritage of the church.[9] Swenzey thus describes the more thorough educational background being required by churches:

> Recently more and more churches have been increasing their requirements for membership. This is a recognizable movement. One denomination stated as an aim of its three-year, nation-wide evangelism crusade: "To make church joining twice as frequent and twice

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[7] William Hillmer, "Advancing in Evangelism," Advance, I (October, 1954), 24.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Cope, op. cit., p. 98.

as difficult as ever before." Among these new requirements for membership are a course of preparatory classes, attendance at services over a stated period, a financial pledge, the reading of literature, the writing out of a statement of personal faith or experience, a detailed private conference with church officers.[10]

The natural leader of the study group is the pastor, though well-trained lay members can do an excellent job. The most successful leader is friendly, allows plenty of discussion, and makes ample use of illustrations. Good preparation is needed. Content and method will most likely improve as these groups continue to meet. It has proved valuable for the leader to visit those attending the class occasionally for a discussion of any personal problems. The question of church membership should be raised after a discussion of the doctrine of the church.[11]

Some of the best study groups have been started by members of the congregation. A few members may gather the prospects they have secured into one home. They may ask the pastor to lead the discussions, or one of the laymen may take charge.[12] Smaller study groups with laymen in charge have been advocated as a more thorough educational evangelism.

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[10] Sweazey, op. cit., p. 210.

[11] Ibid., pp. 201f.

[12] Ibid., pp. 200f.

The Established Convert

The second concrete goal of adult evangelism is to establish the convert as a faithful member of the church. This is often the most difficult task in adult evangelism. It is at the same time one of the most important tasks of adult evangelism, for it is directly concerned with the ultimate goal of evangelism, that of placing the adult under the saving influence of the Gospel.

Evangelism without conservation is not enough. The history of protestantism in the past few years has proved this. It is estimated that at least forty per cent of evangelistic recruits are lost to the church. This represents the weakest line in the strategy of the church today. Many converts that remain in the church remain only as "dead timber." They have no vital interest in the program of the church.[13]

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, despite its firm educational requirements for church membership, has also experienced a tremendous loss of adult converts. In a recent year, it was discovered that 5,572 members moved without benefit of transfer. 5,469 were removed from congregational rosters for various reasons, not including deaths and transfers. This tabulation was made on the basis of 72 per cent of the congregations. Adding the remainder in just

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[13] Arthur Archibald, Establishing the Convert (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, c.1952), pp. 13-18.

proportion, we have an approximate 14,000 lost by a mysterious process of evaporation. During the same year 25,000 souls were gained. The church lost more than half of what it gained.[14]

As soon as the convert has joined the church, it is faced with the task of conservation. Perhaps a better word might be "developed," for a Christian must grow if he is to remain as one of Christ's own. To emphasize the development of the convert would seem to be the best procedure in conservation.[15] Sweazey speaks of this development:

> "Conversion," from the Latin convertere, "to rotate," is not a leap, it is a turning. It leaves a person about where he was before, but now aimed in a different direction. Change depends on what happens next.[16]

If conservation is to stress the development of the convert, then what can the convert expect of the church? First of all, he can expect that the church will have faith in his sincerity. Church leaders, and especially the older members, are slow to accept the convert as an equal. Leaders have been known to keep new members from active participation in the organization of the church. Souls warmed by the fervency of the spirit have grown cold because of this attitude.

Secondly, the convert can expect an adequate education. The education received in preparation for church membership

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[14] E. C. Kieninger, "Stop Those Leaks," Today, I (November, 1946), 9.

[15] Archibald, op. cit., pp. 26f.

[16] Sweazey, op. cit., p. 17

should be continued in the Bible class. This education is to develop Christian faith and train for Christian service.

Finally, the convert can expect an atmosphere of heartening good will. It is suspected that this is the problem area that has caused the majority of losses to the church. The early church provides an excellent example of the Christian fellowship that should exist in the congregation. The cold, materialistic world of today is the antithesis.[17] Archibald describes the warm fellowship of the church:

> We must in some manner impress upon our converts that in entering the Christian church they have become part of the greatest fellowship on earth. Critics of the church we have had and still have in abundance. But we are prepared to maintain against all comers that nowhere is there to be found so large and so constant a readiness for self-sacrifice, unlegging devotion, and patient fidelity to duty as in the church of Christ. For sheer moral idealism, the membership of our churches will match any group of people. Here is a world-wide fellowship, made up of all races, all ages, all languages, all occupations, all classes. Here is the largest and richest fellowship on earth, the most diversified, yet the most united, fellowship on earth.[18]

Following this general pattern of what the convert can expect from the church, this section of the paper will discuss the function of the pastor, the members of the congregation, and the convert himself toward establishing the new member permanently in the church.

The pastor should arrange a conference with the prospective member at the time of his acceptance into the church.

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[17]Archibald, op. cit., pp. 35-40.

[18]Archibald, op. cit., p. 71

The prospective member will be more at ease if the meeting is held in his home. The purpose of this meeting is not social, but to give spiritual guidance. In this meeting the pastor should speak about: (a) appropriate literature. The convert should read literature to strengthen his faith. The pastor is in the best situation to advise him; (b) the family altar. The pastor can recommend devotional booklets and stress the importance of family worship; (c) attending the adult Bible class. The convert is still a child in his understanding of Scripture; (d) the importance of becoming a member of the church; (e) enlisting him as a member of the voter's assembly.[19]

The pastor can further be of great aid to the convert by his attitude after the prospect has become a member. A warm relationship springs up between pastor and members of the study group. The pastor can keep this spirit alive by a friendly word after Sunday morning services, or when he visits the home. New members will warmly appreciate an occasional call during the year following their reception into the church. The first year is the toughest for the convert. He has had to form new habits, make new friends, and change established ways of thinking. Their loyalty and service are to be commended as high promise for the future.[20]

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[19] Walter C. Boss, "Reaching, Winning, and Keeping," Today, II (November, 1947), 6-8.

[20] Weldon Crossland, How to Increase Church Membership and Attendance (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 112.

There are other things the pastor can do for the convert, depending on the individual situations. Often an impressive church service followed by a congregational dinner in the evening is a good start toward integrating the new members into the fellowship of the congregation. Some pastors plan an informal gathering at the parsonage to acquaint the new members with the officers and aims of the societies of the church. It has also proved valuable to plan a follow-up program to check on the new member's progress.[21]

Though the pastor is responsible above all others for integrating the convert into the program of the church, he is able to accomplish little or nothing without the help of his members. Establishing the new members in the church is as much a responsibility of the congregation as is the program of visitation evangelism. In some active congregations the program of visitation evangelism does not end when the convert joins the church. Calls are made on the new member to make him feel a part of the church. A committee of trained laymen is able to take the responsibility from the pastor. This is advisable for two reasons. The purely functional reason is that the pastor is often too busy to make regular calls on new members. Even more important is the necessity

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[21] O. A. Maech, "Advancing in Evangelism," Advance, II (December, 1955), 21.

to train the members of the congregation in their own essential task.[22] Crossland suggests a method by which congregational members call on all new members:

> All too often new members who have been besieged with invitations to join the church find themselves strangely neglected or ignored--except by the finance committee--after they have united with the church. The assignment of each new member's or family's name to three neighbors, living within a short distance, with the request that they call soon, will result in a broadened acquaintance and a growing friendliness as the circle of Christian fellowship widens.[23]

The circle of fellowship does not always widen as quickly as it might. The members of the congregation are quite happy with the friends they already know. For this reason the convert is usually a very lonely individual. He has made a radical change in his way of living, and now he needs the help of his fellow members. The Christian way of life is not attained easily by a solitary believer. The New Testament always speaks of the assembly of believers. Believers grow by being in the body of Christ, where they can edify and be edified, as St. Paul explains in Ephesians 4:16. Thus the convert who remains in isolation is in grave danger. He is at once to be brought into the fellowship of the church, which is to be <u>one</u> body of believers.[24]

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[22] L. A. Ziemer, "Plugging the Holes in Evangelism," <u>Lutheran Standard</u>, CVI (October, 1946), 7.

[23] Crossland, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 109.

[24] Archibald, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 60f.

Another role that individual members can play in establishing the convert is to serve as sponsors. Sponsors have been used because everybody's business is nobody's business. Though all the members of the church should be interested in the converts, yet it should be the task of a few to see that these new members are properly assimilated. Sponsors are to: (a) greet the new member at church and introduce him to others; (b) try to get the new member into organizations and activities; (c) give an invitation to visit at some specific time; (d) watch for signs of failure and attempt to help. The major job of the sponsor is usually finished in the first three to six months. At times a chairman of sponsors is appointed or a mailing system organized by which the sponsors report their progress.[25]

The best way for new members of the church to get acquainted is through the societies of the church. New members are naturally hesitant to join any new group. The ideal way to get them interested is for a regular member of the group to go with the new member several times. As the new member becomes acquainted here the fellowship quickly widens to more in the church body.[26]

Finally, if the convert is to be established in the

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[25] Sweazey, op. cit., pp. 234-36.

[26] Ibid., pp. 230-33.

church he must be trained in certain fundamentals of church living. Worship, both public and private, is central in the new life of the convert. It is in the worship service that the convert will grow in faith, that he will edify and be edified, that he will receive strength from God and his brother. Worship in the family circle is strange to the convert. Equally as strange is the private worship and prayer life of the convert. Few pastors take time to explain the importance and the blessings of private worship. One way to help the convert to get started is to provide him with devotional material, another to plan a series of interviews with the new members to discuss their devotional life.[27]

Furthermore, if the convert is to remain actively interested in the program of the church, he ought to participate in its functions. Archibald proposes a department in the church which would correspond to an employment bureau. This committee should be composed of some of the most intelligent members of the church, who would be constantly seeking out activities in the church and community. When an opportunity for service is found, it is recorded and put on file. This list would be available when a convert joined the church, and a service corresponding to his interest might be found. According to this system, the preference of all the members would be on file, and corresponding jobs could be assigned as

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[27]Archibald, op. cit., pp. 41-49.

they came up.[28]

The position in the church for which many new converts are best qualified is in visitation evangelism. Converts make excellent soul winners because they are concerned. Concern, more than knowledge, brings people into the church. This deep concern has been channeled into the kitchen, the mailing department, or some other secondary activity of the church. Through the experience that the convert receives in evangelism he will gain an insight into the kingdom of God that mere head knowledge could never supply. Sharing faith is the best way of keeping it. The convert active in evangelism usually remains an established church member.[29]

In closing, it is well to mention that it often takes time for the new church member to learn new habits of living. A goldfish taken from a bowl and placed in a pond will swim in a circle no bigger than the bowl he was in. Similarly, those brought into the church take a lot of time and education to change old habits. The sense of joy in worship and stewardship, plus an abiding attachment to the church will result as the convert grows in faith and love.[30]

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[28] Ibid., p. 75.

[29] Ibid., pp. 89-91.

[30] Sweazey, op. cit., pp. 211f.

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