

Yes, the building figure and the boat picture too can serve as good illustrations of Christ's Church. But we must make clear that the Church as a building and as a boat must be on the move. It dare not become like the land-locked, powerless, pathetic Queen Mary at Long Beach, a museum trying to arouse the idle curiosity of tourists with nothing better to do after they've visted Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, Universal Studios, and other premier California tourist attractions. We cannot agree with Howard Snyder's recommendations that we abandon or do away with our church buildings, but we surely should see our churches, as Elton Trueblood recommends, as "drill halls" or "launching pads."⁵ We Lutheran Christians should look upon our church buildings not only as peaceful sanctuaries where we can withdraw for spiritually comforting and refreshing worship, but also as drill halls where we can arm ourselves with knowledge of the Truth and sharpen up our understanding of the Sword of the Spirit so that by means of our witnessing of the Gospel the Holy Ghost will win souls who will become "living stones" (I Pet. 2:5) alongside us in the Building of God. From our seemingly fixed and static structure we should launch out into our West Allis community with zealous personal evangelism outreach, always alert for opportunities to be witnesses for Christ.

B. The Church as Body

This surely is one of St. Paul's favorite pictures of the church of Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 1:22,23 Paul referred to Jesus as "the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." In chapter 4 of Ephesians Paul mentions the "one body" in verse 4, "the edifying (Greek: oikodomē, the same word used

⁵As quoted by Alvin J. Lindgren, Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, 1965, p. 191

earlier in Ephesians for building, thus tying together the two metaphors, building and body) of the body of Christ" in verse 12, and in verses 15 and 16 the Apostle likewise has the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, in mind when he mentions "the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." We note again in the preceding verse the intermingling of the body (sōma) and building (oikodome) metaphors. Also in his letter to the Colossians, the Epistle which is so strikingly similar to Ephesians in many respects, Paul refers to our Savior and to us Christians who make up His Church in the following familiar fashion: "And He is the head of the body, the church. . ." (Col. 1:18).

With the use of this "body" metaphor Paul especially wants to impress upon his readers that the Church of Jesus Christ is not a static organization, but a vibrant organism, filled with vigorous life, deriving that life from the Head, Jesus Christ, who is Life (John 11:25; 14:6). The word "body" emphasizes that the Church is meant by our Lord to be a Gemeinschaft rather than a Gesellschaft. These two German language concepts developed by the German sociologist Tonnes are utilized by Lawrence O. Richards to point out areas where 20th century churches needed improvement and renewal. These concepts are particularly appropriate for us to consider at Woodlawn with our predominantly German ethnic background. Too many churches today are locked into the Gesellschaft mold. They are superficial societies or outwardly amiable organizations following a "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" philosophy. The pastor dutifully

does his job and in turn receives his salary; the members contribute their "church dues" and in turn receive what they believe is due them, the services of the organization and of the pastor.

However, the Gesellschaft model, as common and as widely accepted as it may be, especially in impersonal urban areas and in congregations with many hundreds or thousands of members, most of whom remain anonymous strangers to one another, is not the Church as Christ's Body and as Paul repeatedly describes it. The Church as the Body of Christ should be seen as a Gemeinschaft, a community, a family made up of brothers and sisters in Christ. As Richards states:

The New Testament pattern of the church as the body of Christ is basic. Here the idea that each member has a different function within the community (Gemeinschaft) is introduced (Romans 12; I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). But in no way does this idea involve the kind of interdependence that exists in Gesellschaft. The unity of the membership still rests on a common identity, and on their mutually binding ministry to one another. They may have different gifts, but each has the same obligation: to minister.

The church that must come, the New Testament church in tomorrow's world, must be such a community (Gemeinschaft). Each member must see himself and others simply as Christians, and must accept a full share in the common life and purpose which unites them.⁶

In his thought-provoking book, Sharpening the Focus of the Church, Gene Getz stresses the importance of the body metaphor as he reminds his readers: "The church is pictured in the New Testament as a unique organism. Even in its local expression it is more than an organization. . . . The term 'body' appears approximately forty times, directly or indirectly to describe the functioning body of Christ."⁷ A fine statement on the intimate

⁶Lawrence O. Richards, A New Face for the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 52

⁷Gene A. Getz, Sharpening the Focus of the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 112

interrelationship between Jesus and the individual Christians who make up His body is provided by Donald McGavran and Winfield Arn as follows:

The church is the Body of Christ, and the responsible member is part of that body. When the Body functions as it should, each part maintains communication with the head, constantly sending and receiving messages. Christ is the head of the Body; responsible members get directions from him. Their behavior as part of his Body should exemplify how Christ functions in the world. A responsible member would be acutely aware of the unchurched and the unsaved, those who live without knowing Jesus Christ or his power, joy, forgiveness, and love.

A responsible member carries his or her share of the church's work - giving, worshiping, and working happily with other members.

A responsible member discovers where he or she fits in the Body, which is composed of many parts, each having its place. The Apostle Paul wrote that when each part works as it should, the whole Body grows."⁸

John Stott similarly stresses how practical and important it is to have the proper understanding of the church as the body of Christ. He observes that the body metaphor is Paul's favorite representation of the church and in that connection he provides us at Woodlawn with the following good food for thought:

. . . the traditional image of the local church is of an overworked pastor, assisted perhaps by a small nucleus of dedicated workers, while the majority of members make little or no contribution to the church's life and work. It conjures up the picture rather of a bus (one driver, many drowsy passengers) than of a body (all members active, each contributing a particular activity to the health and effectiveness of the whole . . . nothing is better calculated to deliver a local church from clericalism (domination by the clergy) or to promote the mobilization of its membership than the recognition of the simple biblical truths that the church is Christ's body and that every member of the body has a function to perform."⁹

In closing out our comments on the "body" metaphor which Paul used so often in describing the church, we should perhaps clarify the comment

⁸ McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth p. 51

⁹ John R.W. Stott, Baptism and Fullness (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1976) pps. 105-107.

made above about Paul's use of the Greek word "oikodomē" both in connection with the "building" metaphor and the "body" metaphor. We surely did not mean to imply that Paul or the Holy Ghost, by whose inspiration the Apostle wrote, was guilty of mixing his metaphors. The late orthodox Lutheran Bible scholar R.C.H. Lenski had this to say about Paul's employment of "oikodomē" in Ephesians 4:12 - "'Upbuilding' and 'body' are not a mixing of figures, one referring to the construction of a building, the other to the growth of a living body. To this day we speak of body building; the development of a body from childhood to manhood is very properly likened to the building of a house or temple."¹⁰

C. The Church as Bride

Moving on from Lenski's apt reference to body building in the quotation above, we now consider the third "B" metaphor for Christ's church. The word Bride is another very meaningful term to clarify how we at Woodlawn along with all other Christians are His workmanship. While the two aforementioned metaphors, Body and Building, are specifically mentioned in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the reference to Christ's Church as His Bride is less direct; it is drawn particularly from the familiar verses in Ephesians 5:22-33 where the relationship between husband and wife (bridegroom and bride) is compared to Christ's relationship with His Church. The concept, however, is not uncommon elsewhere in the Scriptures. In Isaiah 61:10, for example, the truth is stressed so beautifully that believers in Christ, the saints who make up the membership of the Holy Christian Church, should be the happiest of all people, overflowing with heartfelt joy, as the Prophet, speaking as Israel's representative, declares: "I will . . .

¹⁰R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philipians (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1946), p. 531.

greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." The note of joy is also struck by the Prophet in Isaiah 62:5 as he makes the point that ". . . as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

In John 3:28,29 John the Baptist employs the bridegroom-bride metaphor to clarify His God-appointed role as the promised Messiah's forerunner and John also refers to the joy that comes to him through his contact with Christ and as he realizes what the great Bridegroom will accomplish and provide for His beloved Bride, His Church: ". . . I am not the Christ, but . . . I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom (John the Baptist), which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

In addition to joy, love also immediately is suggested by the Bible's use of the Bride metaphor. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25 - "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." Surely we at Woodlawn who are so conscious of what Christ has done for us out of love, giving Himself to be crucified for our sins on Calvary, should reflect that love toward one another within our congregational life. We are His wonderful workmanship and while we bask in the boundless love He bestows on us as His bride, we should gratefully and eagerly pass along His love to one another and to every precious soul with whom we come in contact. For we can be certain that Christ's love is all-inclusive and that He wants everyone everywhere to be ready for His return

on Judgment Day and to be wearing the appropriate wedding garb (His holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death) that will enable them to be admitted to the marriage of the king's son, which will be celebrated forever and ever (St. Matthew 22:1-14).

The Bride metaphor surely makes us think of the glorious future that lies ahead of us Christians. In Revelation 19:7-8 St. John shares with us his God-given vision that heaven will be the place where we shall "be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him (the Lord God omnipotent, v. 6): for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife (Bride, Holy Christian Church, namely you and I and all other Christians) hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Here on this earth marriage celebrations eventually end and honeymoons too often are over before they've really begun. However, at the marriage of the Lamb we Christians, the Bride, will experience with our perfect Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, what the Psalmist described: ". . . in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). As we are given this glimpse in God's Word of our everlasting future in glory, we surely must wholeheartedly agree with John's words in Revelation 22:17,20-" . . . the Spirit and the bride say, Come . . . Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Steeped in the Scriptures as he was, it is not surprising that Dr. Martin Luther often used the Bride metaphor in his many statements and writings about the nature of the Church. In a sermon on 1 June 1539 Luther stressed how important it is for Christ's Church to stay with the Scriptures to avoid spiritual adultery. He declared:

You and I are to hear nothing except the Word of God, lest the devil speak, or men, reason, philosophy. Here nothing must be preached, nothing heard but the Word, so that we may say: To be sure, I am speaking; but you are hearing the Word of God. . . Since Christ is the Bridegroom, the Father gives the bride, the Holy Spirit beautifies her, and she should hear nothing and no one except the Word of God and her Bridegroom and should not turn harlot. . . If a man had a bride and another were to associate with her, it would cause bad blood and bloodshed. That is why the church is called a bridal chamber: only the bride and the bridegroom are to be there; parents and members of the family are to leave.¹¹

On another occasion (30 April 1525) Luther employed both the Bride and the Body metaphors to emphasize that our Lord Jesus communicates all that He is and has to the church:

When a man loves his wife, she is most beautiful and lovely to him as long as she is pious and honorable. For love communicates all honor to her and devotes body, possessions, and all, name and title, to her so that she may have whatever the man has. So she enjoys possessions and honor in common with him. And the language which a wife may use toward her husband a Christian may also use toward his Lord Christ. For apart from the fact that the man is the head and the master or ruler, the wife possesses all the authority in the house. Therefore she attends to everything and lays her hand on the property as if it were her own. A Christian also acts like this toward the Lord Christ, except that He, the Lord Christ, is the Head, the Man, and the Master from whom he gets all good things and honors, which is the only difference between them. For Christ's innocence, life, and righteousness are mine, just as the kingdom of heaven and the Holy Spirit; and all He has, has won, and is able to do, all is mine, mine. For the church is His flesh and blood; the two are to be one body; they enjoy possessions in common. Thus Christ is to be recognized as the Husband and the Head of Christendom and the church as His wife and bride.¹²

May we who are members of Christ's body at Woodlawn, who strive to function in West Allis as "living stones," drawing vitality and direction from the Church's one foundation, who gratefully recognize the love which led our Lord Jesus to give His life to make us His Bride, may we vigorously sing out with rejoicing and thanksgiving the hymn composed by Samuel J.

¹¹Ewald M. Plass, compiler, What Luther Says, 3 vols. anthology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), Vol. I: #840, p. 286

¹²Ibid; Vol. I: #805, p. 274

Stone (1866) on the basis of Ephesians 2:20 -

"The Church's one foundation Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation By water and the Word
From heav'n He came and sought her To be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought her, And for her life He died."¹³

¹³Hymn #473:1, The Lutheran Hymnal, (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1941).

CHAPTER FOUR

PROMISING PROPOSALS FOR RENEWAL AND TRAINING THE LAITY FOR MINISTRY

Our study so far has been devoted to a church-school survey which has briefly reviewed the history and past performance of Woodlawn Ev. Lutheran Church-School as we approach our 50th anniversary in 1979; we have taken a look at the City of West Allis, the close-in suburban community in which Woodlawn is located, to detect problems and challenges which may confront our congregation in the coming years due to an aging population in West Allis and a serious shortage of housing units for young families. In the previous chapter we tried to show from the Holy Scriptures, especially from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, in what way Woodlawn is the Lord's workmanship and what we have going for us as we face our formidable problems. Surely we cannot fail as long as we keep in mind that the Christians at Woodlawn are members of Christ's body, living stones in the building in which He is the cornerstone and foundation, and the beloved bride of our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus.

Now we should be able to pull things together from the preceding three chapters and offer several proposals that hold promise of renewal and much needed training of the laity for ministry. As the Lutheran educator, Oscar E. Feucht, has declared:

An adequate ministry is not a one-man ministry. It is not even a corps of associate pastors. It is the whole church, congregation by congregation, mobilized and trained for mission. . . . The recovery of the ministry of the laity can come only as the church revises its structure by training its people not to be institutional maintenance

men and women but God's messengers in everyday life.¹⁴

In this chapter we intend to highlight a few of the structural revisions we are experimenting with at Woodlawn to make renewal and the ministry of the laity more of a reality in our congregation. We agree with Francis O. Ayres that "the renewal of the church will take place in and through the development of a ministry of the laity",¹⁵ that "the first step of the church is to encourage as many laymen as possible to see themselves as ministers,"¹⁶ and that it is the pastor's responsibility "to see that the church becomes a training center where laymen can prepare themselves for their service to God in the world."¹⁷

A. Self-Study

More than a year ago the Woodlawn Church Council (9 members) and Stewardship Committee (9 members) decided to study some materials written by Donald A. Abdon, head of the Parish Leadership Seminar, Inc. His booklets, Organizing around The Great Commission and Training and Equipping the Saints, as their titles indicate, highly recommend greater use of the ministry of the laity and offer Lutheran churches in particular a model constitution which would give lay evangelism efforts the top priority position on a congregation's agenda. Prior to the study of these booklets each of the 18 church officers was given a copy of Feucht's excellent paperback, Everyone A Minister, and several meetings began with a 30-45 minute study and discussion of that lay ministry-oriented work.

¹⁴ Oscar F. Feucht, Everyone a Minister (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974) p. 80 and 82.

¹⁵ Francis O. Ayres, The Ministry of the Laity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962) p. 20

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 20 ¹⁷ Ibid., pps. 38, 39.

Our self-study, based on Abdon's booklets, is continuing at this time and although no fundamental changes (such as a full-scale revision of our constitution) are anticipated in the near future, we have developed some job descriptions recommended by Abdon and by Gary Demarest in his presentation at Fuller Theological Seminary on 9 January 1978. We do not intend to make sweeping dramatic changes in our church structure overnight since Abdon himself recommends a five year leavening process to introduce his concepts of lay ministry and organization. We want to avoid the pitfall of imposing a program from the top without permitting or soliciting input and helpful suggestions from our laypeople.

B. The Budget

In their Ten Steps to Church Growth McGavran and Arn describe a church which sounds suspiciously like Woodlawn:

A large church with a budget of one hundred thousand dollars wasn't growing. It was designating only a few hundred dollars a year for evangelism. It had not structured evangelism into its organization, perhaps because it didn't have convictions or perhaps because it hadn't made them a part of the structure. But that was the chief reason it was not growing. Make sure that Church Growth thinking is reflected in your budget. Conviction should be backed up with dollars.

A study of growing churches indicates that approximately 10 percent or more of their gross budget is used to tell who they are, what they are, and where they are to people within their ministry area, and to tell them about Jesus in ways that really communicate. The budget is an excellent indicator of a church's priorities. Church Growth concerns are reflected in the budget. What are your church's real concerns?¹⁸

Woodlawn's 1978 budget of \$150,674 reveals the congregation's deep concern for Christian elementary education and mission work since \$55,104 and \$38,220 are designated for those two categories of church work respectively. Surely we should not begrudge the sizeable amounts

¹⁸ McGavren and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, p. 113.

being spent on missions and education, but it is a sobering fact that Woodlawn spends nowhere near 10 percent, possibly not even one percent for programs, personnel, or projects that could be classified as related to evangelism, getting the Gospel out into the area around our church-school. If more money, time, and lay talent and leadership were invested in evangelism, not only would more precious souls be brought to the knowledge of their Savior, but we would be able to accomplish even more in the areas of education and missions.

Lyle Schaller urges churches to wrestle with the following question when they make out the budget.

What proportion of current and proposed expenditures are for financing program activities, and what proportion are for increasing the future capability of the organization to accomplish its purpose and fulfill its mission?¹⁹

We at Woodlawn, especially those responsible for making out our annual budget, would be well advised to think more than a year ahead when budget time rolls around. Surely Schaller is right on target when he maintains that

. . . the budget represents the greatest unrealized potential for those congregations seeking an effective beginning point in the planning process. If the discussion about the budget can be shifted from money to ministry, from economy to effectiveness, and from means to purpose, there may be no ceiling on what Christians will do to fulfill their calling.²⁰

C. The Small Group

At Woodlawn we have generally thought big and have believed that big is always best. Most of our Bible study efforts, for example, have been lectures by the pastor and we have measured their effectiveness by the number of people who have showed up to hear the lecture. Usually

¹⁹Lyle E. Schaller, Parish Planning (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971) p. 41

²⁰Ibid, p. 46.

there would be 20-30 people who would come for these Bible lectures. Generally the size of the group inhibited fellowship (Koinonia) and in depth discussion. I knew there was something lacking in our Bible study groups and committee meetings too, but I was unable to accurately diagnose the malady.

My reading of books like Growth through Groups by Clemmons and Hester and Cosby's Handbook for Mission Groups helped me to pinpoint the problem. In the life of the church it is often very advisable to think small! The presentation by Roberta Hestenes for the "Church Renewal and Training of the Laity for Ministry" seminar on Wednesday, 18 January 1978 was very helpful in making me more aware of some of the advantages in the use of small groups in the church. Hestenes offers the following list of rules to get the most out of small groups and to avoid some of the most common pitfalls that can occur in their use:

1. Covenant or Contract: A shared understanding of the group's purpose and the general means that will be used to achieve that purpose.
2. Commitments: The disciplines which the group is willing to adopt in order to accomplish its purpose.
3. Caring: The quality of life together in which members learn how to love each other and develop caring in all of life.
4. Content: The growing edge of study and reflection usually (as a Wisconsin Synod Lutheran I would say always) centering in the Scriptures in order to know God and ourselves better.
5. Communication: The glue which binds all relationships together and which connects members with each other and, through prayer, with God.
6. Crying, conflict and congruence: Feelings are an important part of life together and need not be denied, delayed or despised.
7. Jesus Christ: The center of community without whom good meetings can be held (what about John 15:5b?) but life will not be transformed.²¹

²¹Roberta Louis Hestenes, "Small Groups and the Revitalization of the Church," Theology, News and Notes of Fuller Theological Seminary (October 1977): p. 33

A few weeks after my return to West Allis from the January seminar at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena I contacted 10 ladies, members of Woodlawn, who I felt might be interested in experimenting with the small group koinonia concept. After an initial organizational meeting in which the concept was discussed, personal histories were shared, and the importance of a contract and certain commitment was stressed, the group began meeting weekly for the study of "The Holy Ghost and His Work," a Bible study course available through the Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, and written for 8 one-hour sessions by Prof. Siegbert Becker of our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. At the end of this study the group seemed to have gained some very positive blessings, primarily in greater knowledge of the Holy Ghost and His work, but also in closer koinonia, Christian community and friendship. We hope to expand this small group Bible study program this fall.

However, we are well aware that small groups are not a panacea for problems in the church and indeed have the potential for creating some serious problems. In the excellent article cited above, Hestenes concludes that small groups can be awful, fostering groupthink, navel-gazing, and the preoccupation with personal feelings and self-fulfillment as promoted by humanistic psychology. Hestenes is to be commended for warning us against

. . . the danger of stressing feelings and personal fulfillment at the cost of minimizing the importance of clear thinking and the authority of Scripture . . . Often the crucial question is not 'What do you feel about that?' but 'What does God say about that?' While feelings are important, they are not the whole person and need to be placed in biblical perspective before decisions are made.²²

²²Ibid., p. 33

Alvin J. Lindgren in his Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration has some helpful suggestions about the functioning of small groups in the church. He stresses that people should not be pressured into groups and that even after joining, if they find this tool for koinonia is not for them, they should be given the opportunity to withdraw gracefully.²³ Lindgren also warns that small groups can do much more harm than good if they take over the church leadership, indulge in amateur group or grope psychotherapy or degenerate into self-righteous cliques infected with closed-circle elitism.²⁴

D. Lay Ministry and Leadership

About a year ago I became more and more conscious of the fact that Woodlawn was suffering at least to some degree from the one-man ministry syndrome and that the gifts and abilities of our laypeople were not being utilized as they should. Accordingly we called together laypeople who were interested in visiting the sick and shut-in members of Woodlawn, as well as those confined to various nursing homes. Now we meet every two months to share experiences, to learn more about visitation of the sick, and to set up a two-month schedule of visits which serves as a welcome supplement (not as a substitute) to the pastor's visits. This lay ministry effort has been especially helpful to a 30 year old member of Woodlawn who is mentally ill and has lived since his late teens at the Milwaukee County Mental Health Center-South Division. Although his long term prognosis is not promising, he has shown some significant improvement as his brothers and sisters in Christ visit with him regularly and show sincere in-

²³Alvin J. Lindgren, Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration, p. 174

²⁴Ibid., p. 175

terest in his spiritual welfare. This is a program that shows great promise and should be expanded.

For several years we have had what we call a volunteer transportation service at Woodlawn. To make certain that no one misses out on worship merely because they have no way to get to church we have recruited a good number of volunteer drivers (no driver has more than two turns a year) who offer themselves and their cars to their fellow members and friends of Woodlawn who need a ride to church and/or Sunday School due to advanced age, distance from church, or inclement weather. Without any great inconvenience to anyone we thus have made it possible for people within reasonable driving range of our church to worship regularly with us at Woodlawn even if they do not own a car. We think this service should expand as the population of West Allis becomes steadily older as the projections in Chapter Two indicated. Indeed, we probably should publicize this service more widely to reach that 27% of the West Allis population that is in the retired category. For very often I encounter people at West Allis Memorial Hospital who dropped away from the church when advancing age inhibited their mobility. Lay transportation volunteers can be very helpful in serving such people.

Woodlawn has been blessed through the years with a high degree of harmony, a warm spirit of cooperation, and good fellowship among the elected leaders of the congregation. However, these are blessings that cannot be overdone. A congregation cannot ever have too much harmony, good Koinonia, and cooperation. Therefore, when I returned to West Allis after my two weeks of study in Pasadena I resolved to make a good thing even better, after I had enjoyed the sharing groups I participated in at Fuller Seminary, by inviting the leaders of our congregation

and their spouses to the parsonage on several Sunday evenings. The evening's format was very simple. It was primarily a personal history exchange with three or four couples taking part. The two hour sessions were intended primarily to get the pastor and lay leaders better acquainted with one another and closed with light refreshments. The church council, board of education, and stewardship committee members and their wives were unanimously in favor of this activity and agreed that it would be very worthwhile for the pastor to continue this practice annually, inviting newly-elected officers and their wives to the parsonage for get-acquainted fellowship evenings. Plans are also being made to conduct a week-end retreat for the church officers and their wives in September. The retreat would be devoted to Bible study, fellowship and fun, the drafting of a tentative budget, and some prayerful brainstorming and idea sharing.

E. Survey-Questionnaire

In his May 1977 thesis, "Nurturing Family Life within the Household of God," a Fuller Theological Seminary post graduate student, Edwin E. Girod, utilized a survey that I felt would be worthwhile if it were adapted and revised for use at Woodlawn. Accordingly, I drew up the four-page survey-questionnaire which is found in the Appendix of this paper.

It was submitted to the communicant members of Woodlawn by placing copies in each family's information box, a communication system used at Woodlawn to save on mailing costs. The members were encouraged to fill out the surveys and to offer their candid opinions and constructive criticisms as grass roots feedback and food for thought for the congregational leaders, both lay and clergy. Easter Sunday, 26 March 1978 was the deadline and after about seven weeks of reminders by means of church bulletin

articles and after service announcements some 270 surveys were returned, representing just under half of our 560 communicant members. Although we had hoped to receive a greater response, we were pleased overall with the results and the many thoughtful comments that were submitted. We learned that Woodlawn, as His workmanship, is blessed with a solid nucleus of concerned communicant members who have for the most part very positive and optimistic feelings about Woodlawn Ev. Lutheran Church and School and the great work which the Lord has assigned to us, not only in West Allis, but also around the world through our membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Woodlawn Stewardship Committee under the direction of their capable chairman, Lionel Ames, (who also drew up the graphs used in connection with Chapter One), went through the surveys and discussed them at their meeting on 11 April 1978. The results are included in the copies that appear with this paper. The numbers for each question take on meaning as we keep in mind that 270 survey-questionnaires were returned.

Question #20 on the survey confronts the pastor of Woodlawn with a real dilemma. The communicant members seem evenly divided at best about whether Woodlawn needs more full-time, salaried staff members. I strongly feel there is such a need, especially in the areas of evangelism outreach and the guidance and Scripturally sound supervision of small group Bible study if we succeed in expanding that program. For me to make dictatorial demands for more staff members surely is not the way to resolve this apparent difference of opinion between pastor and lay people. If we cannot demonstrate the need for added full-time staff through calm dialogue, Christian discussion and persuasion, and a review of the goals and purpose of the Christian church as the building, body, and bride of our Lord Jesus, then we do not deserve to receive more help in carrying out the

Lord's work at Woodlawn.

The results of this survey-questionnaire will be carefully studied by the leaders of Woodlawn in the months ahead. We are especially interested in the comments which can be classified as criticism, constructive and even the other kind. When people have gripes about their church, too often the pastor and lay leaders are the last ones to learn about their dissatisfaction and complaints. Lack of space in this paper does not permit us to list the comments made on their survey-questionnaires by our communicant members, but we assure every member who included suggestions and criticisms that they will be carefully and prayerfully considered by Woodlawn's leaders. We want to retain, or perhaps more accurately to establish, a healthy flow of dialogical, two-way communication within our congregation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To close out this paper we now intend to pinpoint some specific recommendations which we believe would be very worthwhile for Woodlawn to carefully consider and possibly to put into practice. These recommendations flow from extensive reading of the books listed in the bibliography and are the fruits of my two weeks of study in the aforementioned seminar at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California from January 9-20. They also took form in my mind as a result of the research and organizing of material for the preceding chapters of this work.

A. Small Group Bible Study

In April 1978 we completed our experiment with a small group Bible study. Although about half of the participants are experienced Sunday school and parochial school teachers, they have expressed concern about teaching other adults. They seem worried about getting in over their depth in doctrinal areas and wonder whether errors and false teachings might not easily worm their way in if the pastor is not constantly present to combat them. I believe their concern has some validity. Doctrinal supervision over small group Bible study is essential. Well-meaning Bible study leaders unwittingly could promote heresy if they are totally untrained and unwilling to admit their ignorance when tough theological questions come their way. Nevertheless, I recommend that in August 1978 we make plans to

expand our present single small group Bible study to three, four or five groups of ladies. The decision to work first with the female members is somewhat arbitrary, but I feel the ladies of Woodlawn are more receptive to the idea at this time. By early September we propose to have these 3-5 Bible study groups, with 10-12 members each, meeting weekly. Also in September we intend to begin a small group Bible study for teens under the direction of our 5th & 6th grade teacher, Mr. Jay Schwall, who also serves as Woodlawn's Youth-Teen Leader.

B. Leadership Retreat

As we indicated in the previous chapter our congregation's Stewardship Committee has been charged with the responsibility of exploring the feasibility of a week-end retreat for the leaders of Woodlawn and their spouses. I herewith recommend that we go ahead with a special retreat, on an experimental basis, on a week-end in early September. The time would be devoted to worship, work on our budget, Bible study, brain-storming kept under control by contemplation of our Lord's Great Commission, and all of these activities carried on in the framework of Christian fun and fellowship.

C. Outreach-Evangelism Task Force

As noted in Chapter One the outward progress of Woodlawn took great strides forward after January, 1954 when a special Building and Planning Committee was organized. This committee was given extraordinary authority. It was not answerable to the Church Council, but reported directly to the Voters' Assembly. Its members were elected to open-ended terms, in essence, for life, unless one would choose to resign. This arrangement worked well. The purchase of our 3 acre property, the building of a new school in 1960,

the erection of a fine prefabricated Wausau Home parsonage in 1965, the construction of our present house of worship, dedicated in 1972, all of these vital actions having to do with our physical property and buildings were planned and carried through to completion by the capable, faithful laymen who served on this select committee, chaired over the years by Mr. Howard White, who several times during the period also served several terms as congregational president. In recent years, however, except for a preliminary study of the feasibility of building a multi-purpose-gymnasium connected to our school, the committee has been mostly inactive, meeting infrequently. Unless there is a groundswell of interest among our members for a gymnasium or expansion of our school or church, it would appear that this committee could disband with heartfelt thanks from their fellow members for their past faithful time-consuming labors carried out for the welfare of Woodlawn and the glory of our God whose workmanship we are.

For the past quarter of a century Woodlawn has been very much preoccupied with church-related buildings of wood, blocks, bricks and steel. Fund drives and special contributions for the construction of visible, tangible, physical buildings have been commonplace in the past 25 years. As of May 1978 we still owe some \$115,000 to the West Allis Savings and Loan Association for our church mortgage and every month our treasurer writes a check for \$1513 to meet that mortgage obligation.

I submit that Woodlawn could be standing on the threshold of a very exciting and God-pleasing period in its history. Now that the Lord has provided us with more than adequate buildings to carry out our calling to teach and preach the Gospel, I recommend that we focus our attention more

directly on our community and make a concerted effort to reach the many thousands of unchurched souls that surround us in West Allis. In the months and years ahead we should concentrate on the kind of building referred to in Chapter Three, the building made up of "living stones". Surely we could and should be doing much more to seek out those precious souls now dead in trespasses and sins, and by means of God's Word, they can become "living stones" which the Lord will add on to His building, the Church of Jesus Christ. We at Woodlawn need to heed the following words of Donald McGavran:

. . . God commands an ardent searching for the lost in order to find them. The Church which our Savior bought with His blood is made up of saved sinners engaged in beseeching others to be reconciled to God. The congregation which is not engaged in proclaiming Christ to men and persuading them to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church, may be a religious club, but it is not the Body of Jesus Christ. His Body is filled with His Spirit and engaged in finding lost men.²⁵

Surely Woodlawn could become nothing more than a religious club, a quiet comfortable air-conditioned sanctuary where people habitually gather for an hour on Sundays, turn inward and seemingly care nothing about the lost who live all around us. We need to go back to the basics of our Christian faith and to remember what is our primary purpose in life. We need a reminder like the following one provided by Arthur E. Graf:

Surely there are many worthwhile activities and purposes in the Christian life. However, the primary reason the world still exists and eternity waits is to give the Church the opportunity to carry out the Lord's great commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19): The highest purpose of life is to participate with Christ in that glorious activity of seeking and saving that which is

²⁵Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970) p. 46

lost. It would seem, then, that ministers of Christ would make evangelism the central activity of their own lives and do all within their power and ingenuity to guide every Christian member into some form of work in evangelism.

Evangelism is nothing new in the Church. The holy angels started it on the night in which Christ was born (Luke 2:10). The term is just as lofty as its purpose. Evangelism consists in proclaiming the 'Evangel' (Gk. *evangelion*) the good news that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into the world to redeem lost mankind. In the broad sense, evangelism includes the total preaching and teaching program of the Church. In the narrow sense the term refers to the proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers.²⁶

It is in the narrow sense of the word and work of evangelism that we at Woodlawn and, in my judgment, in most of our congregations throughout the Wisconsin Synod, are weak. Accordingly, I recommend that a careful study of outreach and evangelism be made by Woodlawn in the remaining months of 1978 and if the voters of the congregation agree with my assessment of the situation, that this is an area of our church work that has been neglected and slighted, that is crying out for attention, a special Outreach-Evangelism Task Force of at least nine members should be elected in our January 1979 voters' meeting. That scheduling would be highly significant and symbolic since it would be exactly 25 years after the establishment of the Building and Planning Committee. I believe that this O-E Task Force should be given the same special powers still enjoyed by the Building and Planning Committee. The task force would explore various ways to reach the non-believers in our area: canvassing, telephone surveys, personal-visitation evangelism training sessions, the development of more men who would serve the congregation as, to use the term used by Donald McGavran, Class II leaders, leaders whose main concern would be the reach-

²⁶Arthur E. Graf, The Church in the Community: An Effective Evangelism Program for the Christian Congregation (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965) p. 12.

ing and winning of precious souls outside of Woodlawn with the saving Gospel of Christ. Woodlawn already has a good number of Class I leaders, those whose energies are turned inward to serve the existing church, but we must admit that Woodlawn is woefully lacking in Class II workers and leaders. Chapter Four properly stressed the big part the budget plays in establishing priorities; therefore it is imperative that the O-E Task Force I'm proposing be given the funds to fulfill its responsibility, or at least to get this vital evangelism effort well underway. I believe that a thorough review and reordering of priorities at Woodlawn is called for in line with the following words of Donald McGavran and Winfield Arn in their earlier cited work Ten Steps for Church Growth:

God expects his church to do many good things, but these must be arranged in order of priorities. The church needs to see its various options and then order its priorities. Any church sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, taking the authority of the Bible seriously, praying intelligently and systematically about its mission, will be able to arrange its priorities in a way which will please God.

The church serves in many different ways; however, it must never forget its primary and irreplaceable task - bringing lost children back to the Father's house. Winning the lost is a fundamental function through which the church is re-created. The church, both as individuals and as organizations, is continually dying. Unless it is re-created by winning the lost, it fails in its greatest service to mankind, and soon there will be no church.

Christians often mistakenly assume that their church is always going to be there. They have a beautiful building and wonderful Christian brothers and sisters. Of course, their church is always going to be there! But the church is always just one generation away from extinction. Unless there is continual reproduction, there isn't going to be any church. Evangelism is a top priority. God uses it to create the church. When the church is created, it does God's work in the world.²⁷

By organizing an Outreach-Evangelism Task Force in January 1979 I believe that Woodlawn would be remembering its primary and irreplaceable

²⁷McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, p. 32

task, its fundamental function of winning the lost, and would be placing evangelism in the top priority position where it surely belongs.

D. Staff Study

Closely related to the previous subject of an Outreach-Evangelism Task Force is the subject of staffing at Woodlawn. In recent years I have been calling the congregation's attention to the staff question, especially in the area of outreach. We have five full-time workers at Woodlawn, four of whom, plus a half a day kindergarten teacher, are mostly occupied with Christian education efforts in our parochial day school, Sunday school, and vacation Bible school. Surely Christian education is deserving of a high priority ranking in Woodlawn's work program, but shouldn't at least one staff member be working full-time in the top priority area of outreach and evangelism to make certain that our church and school will continue to have a fresh supply of members and pupils? As we reported in the previous chapter, many of the respondents to our survey-questionnaire were not at all certain that Woodlawn needs more staff. However, after careful, prayerful study of our staff situation and what seems to be somewhat of an imbalance, weighted too little toward reaching unchurched souls outside of our congregation, I respectfully recommend that we add a full-time minister to our staff, if possible by January 1979 when a new budget would take effect. This full-time minister would not necessarily have to be an ordained clergyman; he could be a layman with gifts and abilities in the area of outreach and evangelism, who could work closely with and help to implement the recommendations of the Outreach-Evangelism Task Force.

Wallace E. Fisher describes well what I would like to see take place here at Woodlawn:

Wherever a congregation pays salaries to competent full-time staff members evangelism is underway, because these professionals seek out individuals and families in the community, present the cause of Christ to them, and persuade some to join his church. More significantly, these paid professionals search out and train ten or twenty (in a few churches, several hundred) laymen who acknowledge, accept, and act on Jesus' directive to witness person-to-person in the world. A congregation's economic investment in competent leadership pays dividends in a multiple witness, clerical and lay.²⁸

In Ten Steps for Church Growth McGavran and Arn also stress the fact that evangelism outreach should be given a higher priority position in most churches and that the initial outlay of funds for full-time staff will be paid for in due course by income received from new members who will be gained due to more intensive efforts in witnessing. They have come to the conclusion that

After studying hundreds of churches, it is clear that few are actually structured for growth. In fact many (churches) are structured for non-growth. They give low priority to evangelism. A simple way to discover where a church places its priority is to draw a bar-graph showing how that church spends its money. The budget is usually a good indicator as to what a church thinks is really important. A graph will usually reveal that a static church spends large amounts for salaries, maintenance, mortgages and materials but a small amount for outreach and evangelism (cf. Chapter IV: B. The Budget), especially for local evangelistic ministry. Such bar-graphs usually illustrate how little a church invests in *its own growth*.

Another indicator of priority for evangelism is the church staff. Who is the second staff person chosen after the pastor? A youth director? A religious education director? A music director? Each of these positions is important; but for a church placing priority on effective evangelism, the next person on the staff should work in evangelism/church growth. When a staff person is giving 365 days a year to evangelism, the possibilities for growth increase measurably.

Such a staff person, if he is effective in evangelism and in enabling others, will soon have enlarged the present congregation to the place where his salary is completely underwritten by the income received from new members. This is usually not the case when the second person on the staff is a youth director or a Christian education director.

²⁸ Wallace E. Fisher, Because We Have Good News, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) p. 109

The Pastor must begin thinking about the priority of evangelism and encourage people to see for themselves what it will mean. The congregation will often discover meanings the pastor had not considered. The priority of evangelism has its basis in God's will. We must ask, "What priorities does the head of the church desire?" This is an important question to be asked by every pastor, church, and denomination.²⁹

²⁹ McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, pps. 56, 57.

CONCLUSION

In his Life Together Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the Christian community as "the fellowship of sinners who live by the grace of God in the Cross of Jesus Christ."³⁰ That's the way I believe we who are His workmanship at Woodlawn should think of ourselves. Although we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment from Him, God in His boundless grace has brought us to the knowledge of salvation revealed so clearly in the Gospel message in the Holy Scriptures. Our hearts should be filled with gratitude for the free gift of eternal life which Christ won for us by the shedding of His blood on Calvary and our lives should shout forth a continual "Thank You!" as we seek to share the good news of salvation with as many people as possible. We know this is the best way to express our gratitude to God for He has declared that He wants "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4) and that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9).

Francis Schaeffer has stated that "to live moment by moment through faith on the basis of the blood of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is the only really integrated way to live."³¹ We believe that we can live such a life best within the fellowship of the Christian

³⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together, John W. Doberstein, Translator (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1954) p. 113

³¹ Francis A Schaeffer, True Spirituality (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971) p. 146.

Church, the household and family of God, mutually supporting, encouraging, and assisting one another in the Body. As McGavran and Arn have put it:

The church is absolutely essential. It is not just one organization among many through which God works. It is *the* Body of Christ, not just *a* Body of Christ. It is not just *a* Bride of Christ, but *the* Bride of Christ . . . It is definitely the purpose of God that his church become the instrument of salvation and discipling for the entire world . . .³²

May Woodlawn Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, as the Triune God's workmanship, be an effective instrument of salvation and discipling here in West Allis and around the world as well by tirelessly proclaiming and inculcating the essentials of our Lutheran Christian faith: free salvation by grace through God-given faith in Christ Jesus, revealed clearly in the inspired, inerrant Holy Scriptures! It is my prayer that this paper help every member of Woodlawn to become more conscious of the responsibilities and opportunities facing our congregation. What privileges are ours; what blessings we already enjoy and what greater blessings await us in our heavenly home! Surely we Christians shall be eternally grateful that--

WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP!!

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Eph. 5:20

³²

McGavran and Arn, Ten Steps for Church Growth, p. 30,31.