

STADLER, RICHARD

"LEROY'S

Campus

Ministry"

LT 7/1

"LEROY'S CAMPUS MINISTRY"

Richard H. Stadler

WELS SMB and GBHM- Campus Ministry
Meeting

Plankinton House
Milwaukee, WI
September 26, 1979

"LEROY'S CAMPUS MINISTRY"

Campus ministry can be extremely frustrating. The vast majority of our campus pastors are carrying on their campus ministry part-time. They may often feel caught between a rock and a hard place. Their own congregation may question why they are spending so much time involved in planning and executing campus ministries. Parents and home pastors may be upset that the campus isn't visiting their students more often. The pastor himself may wonder whether the expenditure of time is worth the results.

What are the obstacles that get in the way of an effective campus ministry? Perhaps we can best see some of the problems and some of the solutions by first drawing a picture of the ideal campus ministry. Let us envision Leroy, the ideal, full-time campus minister. Even though the vast majority of our campus pastors are only serving their campuses part-time, they may be able to use Leroy as a therapeutic model for an examination and evaluation.

By July 30 Leroy has received the names of the WELS and ELS students on his campus from home pastors and parents channeling their referrals through the Synod's Special Ministries Board. He sends each of these students a warm personal letter of introduction with a photo of himself and a neatly printed brochure explaining the fall schedule of Bible studies, discussions and activities. He sends this letter by August 15 to their summer addresses. In addition, he gets together with the collegian leadership or core group and puts together and up-tempo, lively cassette recording which introduces the prospective student to the leadership of the Lutheran Collegians group and the program that is waiting for them when they come to campus that fall. In addition, he calls each one of them at their summer address, long distance, and personally invites them to his campus ministry when they arrive. His Collegian core group also calls each of the prospective students.

During the summer his secretarial staff calls all the pastors in the area that might be sending students to his campus and urges them to double check to see if they have sent their names to him. His secretarial staff also gathers all of the names that the university allows him to take through its religious preference cards.

During orientation week he has a booth in a highly visible area on campus which advertises his campus ministry to both WELS students and non-affiliated students. He purchases ads in the campus newspaper that is being handed out during orientation week. He and his collegian core group send out tracts and talk to students passing by and add additional names to the mailing list of students who want to receive information about their fall program. He is also available during orientation week simply to counsel students who want to talk about Christ. He also gets himself interviewed on the campus radio station in order to explain his ministry and what he is offering. He gets himself interviewed with a photo story in the local campus paper. He also has himself interviewed on a number of local radio stations so that parents and non-students might know of his ministry and refer students to him.

During the first week of classes before the first meeting of the collegian group, he runs ads in the campus paper announcing the schedule and he also announces he is offering six different Bible studies or discussions at

different times during the week to make himself accessible to students no matter what their schedule. He may offer classes on Old Testament Books of the Bible, New Testament Books, a general Biblical history overview, and issue-oriented discussion series, or some workshops on dating and marriage. He sets aside twenty hours a week simply to be available at an easily accessible location for counseling. He offers a mid-week devotion which the students help plan and execute.

His secretarial staff collects all of the names of WELS and ELS students and sends them to the Milwaukee office for the Special Ministries Board to have. His secretarial staff sends letters of thanks to pastors, teachers and parents who have referred names of students on his campus. His Lutheran Collegians core group calls each of the WELS and ELS students on his mailing list prior to the first mass meeting and invites them to come.

At the first mass meeting the Lutheran Collegians leadership have a very aggressive, friendly reception waiting for the prospective students as well as a clearly outlined list of opportunities for the students to get involved in the work of the campus ministry (as members of the newsletter staff or on committees to plan and execute retreats, events, devotions, etc.).

Leroy has a campus ministry center located in an ideal strategic location close to the campus where students can easily drop in. He has arranged a comfortable, cozy study area in the center with a wide assortment of devotional reading materials and reference works. There is also room in his center for lounging, talking, ping pong, foosball and assorted recreation.

His secretarial staff then enters all of the names of students who want to be on the mailing list into the addressograph machine so that they can pull out those who are married to prospective members of an adult class, those who might be able to serve as Sunday School teachers, those who might have children who are potential Sunday School students, etc.

During the course of the quarter, Leroy conducts six different Bible studies or discussion groups throughout the week in order to make himself accessible to students no matter what their schedule. He clearly posts and publicizes his hours for accessible counseling. He offers a Sunday morning worship service on campus or very close for students who do not have transportation to nearby churches. He makes rides available to students who need transportation in bad weather or who live a distance away from the worship services. He publishes a map with all of the churches of our fellowship in the area in case students should want to go visit them. He also arranges for members of the congregation to welcome the students for a home cooked meal on Sunday after the worship services should they so desire. He continues to offer a mid-week devotion involving the students in the planning and the execution of it.

He calls on each of the students personally and discusses their Christian faith with them to clarify any misunderstanding or questions they have. He also trains a core of college students to serve as witnesses and to share their faith with non-Christians on campus. He secures time on a local radio station to share his understanding of Scripture with the students. He writes a weekly column in the campus newspaper. He meets with faculty and administrators regularly to clarify his role on the campus and to clarify the university's responsibility to allow for a forum in which Christian viewpoints are expressed. He holds an adult information class for students who want to know more about Christ. He

offers himself to local sororities and fraternities to speak on Biblical topics on which he is competent to speak as part of their speakers program. He makes himself available to the university faculty as a guest lecturer on various areas that he has studied (possible Reformation history, Biblical interpretation, Old Testament history, special topics that he has researched).

His secretarial staff, together with student volunteers, publish a regular newsletter which includes articles by the students as well as information about coming events and devotional, thought-provoking articles by the campus pastor. Leroy speaks to local congregations, conferences and area high schools about the campus ministry. He sees to it that there are posters regularly on campus to publicize events and that there are regular ads in the campus newspaper to keep his campus ministry highly visible on campus.

Together with the collegian leadership he structures services projects that are meaningful to the students. Leroy also provides a dial-a-thought telephone service which students can call in order to receive a daily devotional message. He holds a week-end retreat in the fall, in the winter and in the spring. He has worked out an arrangement with the university hospital to receive names of students of his affiliation.

Wouldn't we evaluate Leroy's ministry as an effective ministry? Notice what we have described. The question we have not asked is how many students are coming, but rather what is being offered. What is being done? Is it possible that sometimes we write for ourselves result-oriented goals over which we have no control. Do we contribute to our own frustration by writing such goals? Should we instead be setting performance-oriented goals? Do mission boards sometimes unconsciously set result-oriented goals and thus add frustration to the campus pastor who is already limited by a part-time ministry and feels depressed because the results he must report are so meager? We must, of course, be careful that we don't rule result-oriented goals entirely out of the evaluation process of ministry. Even the great commission expects results. We are sent out to "make disciples," not simply say so many words and offer so many testimonies. But perhaps we do have to re-evaluate our objectives and our goals in campus ministry and be sure to understand the difference between performance-oriented goals and result-oriented goals.

It is obvious that in the institutional ministry we do not expect our institutional ministers to gather congregations, build buildings, or ever be self-supporting. Is it possible that one of the reasons that campus ministry sometimes receives the attention it does is that we are measuring it with the same criteria we use for measuring mission congregations? Are we subliminally expecting our campus ministry to produce little congregations on the campuses? Both campus pastors and mission boards need to ask themselves these questions.

What are some of the obstacles that get in the way of being able to offer Leroy's kind of ministry? The first obvious obstacle is lack of time. The second obvious obstacle is lack of finances. The staff and machinery described in Leroy's ministry requires funds. Many campus ministers may not feel that they have the funds available for sophisticated secretarial help and equipment. They may be suffering, however, from their own pessimism. It may be that more than one mission board could say to a campus pastor, "you have not because you ask not." It may be that some campus pastors have

told themselves that they save to save money but waste precious time instead. Labor-saving dictating equipment, addressographs and printing machines save time and expand ministry well worth the money invested. The hiring of a competent secretary can accomplish the same results and free a pastor from doing secretarial work for which he was not trained, to do the ministry for which he was called. Even within the limitations of a part-time campus ministry, pastors need to ask themselves questions about whether they are wasting precious time by doing certain secretarial tasks themselves which could be delegated to someone else, either hired or volunteered.

There are obstacles which also occur on the campus itself. Some campuses do not allow visitors to rooms unless a specific resident of the dorm escorts the visitor from the lobby to the specific room which he wishes to visit. Other campuses do not provide religious preference cards. Some campuses do not even allow religious groups to meet in their building in an effort to maintain separation between church and state. Some campus papers will not interview religious leaders by claiming that they do not want to give free advertising (however, they will interview all the other radical groups without a qualm of conscience). Campus radio stations run by students will often not offer time to religious leaders either for their own broadcasts or even to interview them.

Lack of finances may also prevent campus ministries from establishing their own facilities on campus or near a campus. Privacy Acts in some states also forbid the giving out of addresses and phone numbers of students.

There are additional obstacles which may occur for the campus pastor. He may feel ill-equipped or inadequate to offer himself as a guest lecturer or to lead faculty Bible discussion studies. He may also feel ill-equipped to offer himself to a campus-wide lecture series which would in its very nature not only embrace students of our fellowship, but also mission potential students. The part-time character of his ministry may not allow him to train students to carry on personal contact work. He may at best only be able to offer one Bible study a week and one evening devotion in the midst of congregational activities. He may not receive the names of WELS students from home congregations and parents, or he may receive the names long after the fall quarter has begun and students have already established their routines. Local congregations could facilitate this effort by setting up committees within their congregations to begin in the spring of the year calling the homes of graduates for the last four years to find out if they are going to be in school and at what campus and then mailing that information to Milwaukee to be distributed to the appropriate campus pastors.

Leroy's campus ministry may give all of us, whether we be full-time or part-time campus pastors, a chance to re-evaluate what we can do within the limitations we realistically have to work. Or perhaps we have to re-assess our priorities. Perhaps something that Leroy is doing could be done within the context of our campus ministries, and something that we are doing could be scrapped. Perhaps we have given up too soon and too easily on delegating certain tasks which could more easily and satisfyingly be handled by someone else. Perhaps we have too easily allowed ourselves to be convinced that we cannot afford a labor-saving device which would greatly multiply our ministry. Perhaps we need to pursue more aggressively the necessary equipment so we can be free to minister with the Word.

There may be some campus pastors who only have a few names of Wisconsin

Synod students and conclude that the vast majority of activities which Leroy engages in would be fruitless on their campuses. But if a campus has even only ten or fifteen thousand students, in many cases, that is a greater population than some of the bedroom communities where our mission congregations are beginning their work in major metropolitan areas. That means we have to carefully think what our goal and objective is for ministry. If those ten or fifteen thousand students need to know Christ, there might be a good number of them who would respond to our mission outreach. If subconsciously we are operating with the goal of building a congregation, going self-supporting, paying for a building, than we might be reluctant to invest time in doing mission work among students who are going to be gone in two or three years. Yet, the impact on the Kingdom might be every bit as valid as work we would do in residential communities, since our task and goal is still to proclaim the Gospel to souls that do not know it and to those who do. So, even campus pastors on a campus where there are few names of WELS students could have a valid reason for establishing a public forum in which the Gospel could be proclaimed on that campus.

We must also remember that it is a valuable contribution to the Kingdom for us to develop leaders of the church who can responsibly participate in the ministry of the church even if our congregation doesn't directly benefit from their leadership. The college students of today could well become some of the important leaders of our congregations tomorrow. If during our campus ministry we can keep these students active in the Kingdom, give them new insights and equip them to be good effective leaders in the church, another congregation may benefit, and the Kingdom at large will too.

Hopefully Leroy's ministry will do more than just make us all feel inadequate, ineffective and frustrated. Hopefully, Leroy's varied ministry will suggest what we can do within the very real limitations we have to work. Limitations of time and resources. Hopefully Leroy's ministry will also alert us to questions we have to ask about what we are really trying to accomplish with our ministry as we ponder this in the context of a campus pastor or a mission board. Hopefully, Leroy's ministry will also give us an occasion to ask if there are not additional creative ministries we can carry out without having to expend additional huge amounts of time or money. Hopefully, Leroy's ministry will also help us ask if there are not a number of tasks that we are presently carrying on that could be delegated to someone else who is better equipped to carry them out and who would love to carry them out in order to free us to carry on those tasks we have been uniquely trained to do. And finally, perhaps Leroy's ministry will give us all an occasion to renew our joy and gratitude for being given the privilege of being able to handle the Word of God and bring it to bear in the lives of fellow sinners as we see not only what Leroy could do, but what we have the privilege of doing.

Initially given as a report to the General Board for Home Missions and the Special Ministries Board in joint meeting September 26, 1979, Milwaukee, WI, by Richard H. Stadler, Campus Pastor, University of MN, Minneapolis, MN, and Pastor of St. James Lutheran Church, West St. Paul, MN.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library

11831 W. Seminary Drive, 65W

Mequon, Wisconsin