

EFFECTIVELY USING THE MULTIPLE ROLES OF THE MISSIONARY

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the proper use of the various roles of the missionary. These roles are the missionary as pastor and the missionary as mentor. Used appropriately, the missionary can proceed with his goal of establishing an indigenous church in the most efficient manner possible. In the history of WELS world missions, there was a tendency for a missionary to remain in the role of pastor for too long or transition to the role of mentor too early, hindering the progress of the indigenous church. For that reason, effective use of roles and the ability to transition between them was investigated. The topic was researched by studying the history of the WELS world missions; general church missiology, which influenced WELS mission philosophy; other church bodies' mission work; and interviews with WELS world mission board committee members and as well as past and present WELS world missionaries.

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Introduction

From very early on, I have had an interest in mission work. As a boy, the most fascinating days for me were the ones where missionaries came to our church to speak and to share their experiences. Distant lands, strange languages, interesting clothing, and exotic foods all added fuel to the fire in my heart. The seven-year-old version of me knew this one thing: I wanted to be a missionary.

But, over time, I discovered that being a missionary was not like the days of Sir Arthur Livingston, hacking through the jungle and converting crowds of natives. It was calmer than that. It seemed like missionaries were just pastors in another land. Still cool. Then I learned that life overseas is not so easy. There are huge barriers, culture, language, customs, to name a few. I heard people say, “You can study a language all your life, and you will never be as good as one of a native speaker.” Hard to be a missionary it seemed.

After college I got to get a taste for the life that I had so badly wanted when I lived in Asia. But during that year, observing missionaries in East Asia and then after, I discovered something. My dream was dead. There were no missionaries like the ones I had imagined. It was all very different. When I got to the Seminary, I looked into this more, but now finally, with my thesis, I have had the opportunity to research and find answers to the questions I’ve been battling. What is the role of the missionary, and how has his role changed over the years? And, more specifically, as the church the missionary serves grows, how does he handle his various roles? That last question has seemed especially important. Missionaries looked different because over the years the WELS has wanted their role to change, along with the status of the mission. Last year, while vicaring, I heard a strong opinion that missionaries should continue to be more like missionaries of the past: doing more leading than guiding, more the “sage of the stage” than “mentor from the side.” And that thought isn’t without support, other missionaries, especially those from the past have expressed the same opinion. Here’s the big debate. When should a missionary serve in his role as pastor and when as mentor? How does he handle the relationship of those two goals? On one hand the missionary could go and act just like a pastor in the States. He would lead the people, learn the language, and be their pastor. But the church would be very dependent on him. Or the missionary could work at raising up workers right away and step away, almost never taking on the role of a pastor. The history of WELS mission work has tried to

maintain a balance between the two extremes, but it has probably leaned toward acting as pastor more, especially in the past.

Through this thesis I searched for a better way for missionaries to understand these two roles in order to be most effective in their settings, especially if the WELS' stated goal for missionaries is to be establishers of indigenous churches and not just pastors.

Roles of the Missionary

Defining terms will aid in understanding this thesis. First, the roles of the missionary. The world mission handbook WELS missionaries use states, “World missions have sometimes been established with the assumptions that the sending church would provide permanent funding and that the expatriate missionary would be indefinitely responsible for the pastoral, teaching, preaching, and evangelism work.”¹ That certainly was the case for many years in early WELS missions. Missionaries saw themselves as pastors in another land. They were responsible for preaching, evangelism, visits, Bible studies, and anything else the pastor would be expected to do in the United States. This was the case in Central Africa.² The missionaries who worked there were massive blessings for the church. Their determination and their ability make them sound almost legendary. At the same time their greatness made it difficult for their congregations to grow their own leaders. But that changed. “Strategies more recently developed by missionaries and their parent bodies seek to establish independent national churches that are self-administering, self-disciplining, self-propagating, and self-supporting church bodies within their own culture.”³

The missionary today works toward establishing indigenous churches. The time it takes to do so may vary, but an understanding of the advantages and blessings that come with national pastors from a culture or foreign nation leading their own people in God’s word is worth working toward. With that goal in mind, the missionary’s work can be divided into two main roles. He is pastor and he is mentor. The missionary is a pastor in the sense that during the beginning stages of his work, he acts just like a pastor. He leads services, visits members, performs baptisms, evangelizes, and does everything else a pastor would do. He learns the language and culture of the people as best as he can to fill the vacant role of pastor. He must take on that role for a time. But as the church grows, he transitions into another role: a mentor. What is meant by the word mentor here is that the missionary specifically identifies and trains men to become pastors and evangelists so that the church can continue. The WELS World Mission Handbook states,

“As the Lord unfolds his blessing, believers will be gathered, and the missionary will utilize the mission spirit that is in the hearts and lives of those won to faith in the Lord

¹ World Mission Handbook 4.1

² Wendland, E.H. *Sharing a Mission Experience*. Mequon, Wisconsin, 1982. 3.

³ WMH 4.01

Jesus. The forward-thinking missionary also will realize that soul-winning ministry is enhanced by ‘preparing God's people for works of service’ (Eph 4:12). As believers are trained to propagate the faith, they spread the saving message to a greater number of people in clearer language and in a larger area than the missionaries could ever hope to reach.”⁴

There are many advantages to training others to carry on the work. The missionary may have to leave unexpectedly. It can be due to changes in government policy or attitudes, lack of funding, sickness, or any other number of reasons. But one of the biggest advantages, besides their natural cultural understanding and language ability, is the blessing of being able to hand off the amazing privilege of gospel work to others. So the missionary will struggle with these two roles, pastor and mentor. How long should he be a pastor? Can he be a mentor? To whom? On one hand, because of his seminary training, he will instinctively desire to serve as a pastor to the people. It’s why he entered the ministry, and it’s what he’s trained to do. In any church in America, he would do exactly as he was trained. And it is not a sinful desire to want to serve the people as a pastor and care for their souls. But without good foresight or planning, serving only as pastor can cripple the church’s growth and cripple the abilities of the nationals to lead their own church.⁵ He should strive to become a mentor and a guide, raising up future leaders and pastors for the national church. This is a big enough problem to be noted by Melvin Hodges, who wrote the quintessential book on the indigenous church, titled *The Indigenous Church*,

“The government and extension of the church in any land must eventually be left in the hands of national leaders. These men are Christ's own gift to His church. Without such men, the task of establishing an indigenous church would be hopeless. Since it is precisely at this point that many missions have failed, we shall endeavor to point out some of the mistakes of the past, giving also some constructive suggestions.”⁶

But this hasn’t only been noted among those who study missiology but by the WELS’ own world mission board,

“The transition from mission to national church is a path that at various points may be rough, indistinct, or poorly marked. There may be enticing side paths or tempting rest areas along the way. There are possible detours or alternate paths. Often it is all too easy to lose one's way or to forget where one is, or to misunderstand the direction that others may offer us”.⁷

⁴ WMH 4.04

⁵ Interview

⁶ Hodges, Melvin. *The Indigenous Church*. Enlarged Edition. Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Pub. House, 1973, 53.

⁷ WMH 4.04

For every church body, Wisconsin Synod included, the challenge using the missionary's roles is a real one. Interviews with missionaries revealed that maintaining the mission by only using the role of pastor was a temptation.⁸

⁸ Interview

Missions Terms

It is also important to explain some terms which have now become very common in the sphere of world missions. The first one is indigenous. Indigenous means “produced, living, or existing naturally in a particular region or environment.”⁹ An indigenous church then, as related to a world mission, means a church that can support itself, train its own leaders, and discipline itself. Not all of those things happen at the same time or even equally, but that is nevertheless the goal for an indigenous church. Along with this term is what are known as the “three-selves” or a “three-self” church. “Three-self” means self-administering, self-propagating, and self-supporting. The WELS World Mission Handbook adds one more self in its definition, “self-disciplining.” Indigenous churches “are self-administering, *self-disciplining*, self-propagating, and self-supporting church bodies within their own culture.”¹⁰¹¹ An article by Maynard Dorow, longtime LCMS missionary in South Korea, attempts to pinpoint the origin of the term “three-self”:

“It was in reaction to this pattern of paternalism that a movement arose with the objective of establishing independent native churches, or ‘indigenous churches,’ as they came to be called. During the latter half of the 19th century the indigenous idea gradually crystallized around the so-called ‘three-self formula.’ Chiefly responsible for this formulation were two leading churchmen, Henry Venn, general secretary for the Anglican Church Missionary Society in Great Britain, and Rufus Anderson, secretary for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Under their leadership it became missionary policy to plant ‘self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating’ churches. The goal was that missionary control would gradually recede as the churches developed their own leadership, their financial independence from the foreign mission board, and their own program for mission outreach. In essentially the same form the ‘three-selves’ have been brought forward to the present and continue to be used as the marks of an indigenous church.”¹²

The mid-nineteenth century marks the first time this concept was mentioned in the Christian church, and it spread to other church bodies rapidly after that during the middle to late nineteenth century. But this was not true in the Wisconsin Synod. The first world mission in the

⁹ *Merriam-Webster*. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indigenous>

¹⁰ WMH 4.04

¹¹ Self-disciplining and self-administering are very similar, but the added self emphasizes the need for pure doctrine in the church.

¹² Dorow, Maynard. “The Missionary Role in the Formation of the Lutheran Church in Korea: With an Eye to the ‘Indigenous Church.’” *Missio Apostolica* 6, no. 2 (1998). 78.

Wisconsin Synod has traditionally been considered to be the Apache Reservation. For most of its over one hundred year history, the Apache people have been served by missionaries who functioned exactly as pastors.¹³ When did this idea of establishing indigenous churches start to incorporate into the WELS mission mindset? Some missionaries had been implementing similar ideas already in the 1950's and 1960's like Missionary Wendland. But these concepts finally came to the forefront in the 1990's and after, especially in the 2000's, when budgetary restrictions forced the churches to become less dependant on resident missionaries.¹⁴ So the terms "indigenous" and "three-self" came onto the scene, even though some missions were already enacting these well. Missionary E.H Wendland assigns these ideas their proper place when he points out,

"We should guard against the mistake...that the mere outward achievement of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation necessarily make a church indigenous. A national church, for example, can be completely self-governing, yet its whole system of government may be the most un-indigenous thing in the world, a poor carbon copy of some Western form which is little understood and less appreciated. A church may have succeeded in following a completely European type of liturgy, but somehow the people seem to have a hard time putting themselves into it. A church may even become completely self-supporting, but the methods of achieving this goal have been legalistically applied and the foreign support which has been cut off has hindered its growth. Premature insistence upon self-support can do this. The church at Jerusalem was certainly indigenous in the true sense of the word, even though it did receive support from fellow Christians elsewhere. "Slavish obedience to the 'three selves', "J.A. Scherer declares, "can actually amount to nothing more than ecclesiastical engineering."¹⁵

Also interesting is a comment made in a Missouri Synod article about the relationship between the terms "indigenous" and "three-self",

"It should be noted that this focus on the "three-selves" fails to deal with other aspects of the church taking root in a place—namely, how the Christian message comes to expression in the language and the culture of a people and how the church communicates the gospel in its worship and in its witness so that the message is genuinely meaningful to that society. It is interesting to note that more often the expatriate missionaries are concerned with indigenous as expressed in the "three-selves," while the national leaders stress the cultural aspects of indigenization."¹⁶

¹³ Sauer, Theodore A. *To Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People: A Century of WELS World Missions*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 1992. 20-24.

¹⁴ Interview

¹⁵Wendland, 5.

¹⁶ Dorow, Maynard, 78-79.

So a church can be “three-self” while possibly not being indigenous, even though “three-self” is commonly used to define an indigenous church. So the missionary will strive to be keenly aware of the mission’s progress and working toward handing over power and authority, while keeping up healthy, steady communication.

There are also terms used for the different developmental stages, or statuses, of a mission. Wendland¹⁷, again, documents them well,

“The Lutheran Church in Southern Africa has outlined a statement of policy which has much in its favor. It distinguishes three stages of development as follows: guardianship, partnership, and ownership. First there is a period of close guardianship on the part of the sending agency. This is the early exploratory stage, during which nearly all the support and direction must of necessity come through the missionaries who are sent. This is followed by a partnership between the mission and the national Christians. National workers are trained, and as the church grows in knowledge, it is expected to assume more and more responsibilities in all phases and at all levels of the work. Much of the support of the work, particularly that of institutional training and publications must still be supplied during this period. Finally there comes the period of ownership on the part of the national church as an independent body. While it still may receive limited support, and while missionaries may still be expected to serve as friendly advisors, for all practical purposes it manages its own affairs. The ideal, of course, is still the attainment of the three "selfs" with the missionary becoming superfluous.”¹⁸

The World Mission Handbook adds a fourth stage, declaration of fellowship, where after becoming fully indigenous, the new national church will submit a Constitution, bylaws and a statement of faith to be reviewed and accepted. Finally, the church will enter into fellowship with the WELS.¹⁹

These are the terms that are now a part of the ongoing discussion of world missions.

¹⁷ This is because the mission work in Africa was very formative for the WELS, the only other missions at the time were the work in Apacheland which had already been established for 50 years, and that of Poland. These two areas weren’t at the time considered for this type of philosophy.

¹⁸ Wendland, 5.

¹⁹ WMH 4.04

Role Struggle

As mentioned before, WELS missionaries have struggled with the role of pastor and the role of mentor. Especially in the past, a very convincing theory was to identify as much as possible with the nationals in order to be a most effective pastor.²⁰ One can see already where this begins to fail as the pastor makes every effort to be a pastor and not a missionary or a mentor. Wendland explains the downsides of this strategy,

“Perhaps a few words still need to be said as to the personal relationship between the missionary and the nationals with whom he is working. How much is expected of the missionary here? How much must he "identify" himself with the national in the conduct of his work? To what extent must he turn his back upon his former way of life to prove to the national that he loves him and wants to be one with him in all things?

There was at one time a wide divergence of opinion on these questions, brought on especially by enthusiasts who promulgated the method of total identification. It was thought by these eager proponents that one must adapt to bush living and forego almost everything connected with a foreign type civilization in order to reach out to the nationals on a local level. Authorities today are pretty well agreed, however, that this is the wrong approach entirely. Dale Kietzmann, who has worked effectively in the Congo for many years, writes: "The missionary's participative role with indigenous ways is always limited. It is not within his power to demonstrate by his life how the practices of a native culture are to be 'transvaluated'. We are and will remain different. We cannot ever completely 'identify' ourselves, neither ought we try to do so." William Reyburn, a missionary-anthropologist who has eaten caterpillars with the best of them, declares, "Going native is no special virtue. Living in a village or learning the native tongue is no open sesame to the native's heart." Ming C. Chao offers this revealing statement from the viewpoint of an indigenous Christian: "A missionary living in a modern house will find more opportunities of effectively communicating the Gospel than the one who seeks to 'identify' himself with their way of living, and is therefore looked upon with suspicion."²¹

Based on his years of experience as a missionary and his great research into the topic, Missionary Wendland understood the missionary's role very well. No matter how hard the missionary tries, he simply cannot fully become one of the natives he is serving. In fact, it's even better that he is not. By living honestly and with a loving attitude he can overcome some of the differences in status a missionary would normally have.

Wendland's first paragraph explains a struggle had been alive especially during the early part of the Wisconsin Synod's history of mission work. Again, it was thought that the missionary

²⁰ Interview.

²¹ Wendland, 19-20.

should become as close as possible to the people he was working with.²² This has changed over time, but not without some struggle. It had long become the custom for missionaries to see themselves as pastors. Clearly there are advantages to a solid understanding of the culture. One interviewee said the same, and added that learning another culture is a task that never ends. Another interviewee, a former missionary, noted the advantage of a missionary who can give his outside perspective of the culture, its values and strengths but also its blind spots and weaknesses.

On the other side, and to the extreme almost, Robert Scudieri wrote in the Missouri Synod Journal “*Missio Apostolica*”,

“Furthermore, in the past, the missionary too quickly stopped being a missionary and became the pastor of a new mission which might begin in a cross cultural environment. He would spend most of his time shepherding one flock—expecting it would take years, maybe decades, before someone from the indigenous culture could be raised up for public ministry. These days are also mostly over.

The key to planting an indigenous church is for the cross cultural missionary to act as a missionary, an “episcopus”, an overseer. As long as the cross cultural leader works more as a “poimen”, as a shepherd, caring for one flock, and does not work at leadership development as an “episcopus” or overseer, the work will be slow and incomplete. When Barnabas went to Antioch (Acts 11:19-26) he did not act as “poimen” but as “episcopus”. He did not stay and pastor a congregation—local leaders became pastors. But Barnabas and Paul did disciple indigenous people, and then were sent by these same people to repeat what they had done in Antioch in many other places. They did not remain very long in most areas. Their goal was to identify, disciple, nurture and certify local leaders. In other words, they were missionaries—spending their time overseeing the work of those raised up by the Holy Spirit for work among people of their own setting.

Yes, expatriate missionaries can begin indigenous churches. Early on in his ministry Bob Selle [LCMS Missionary to Venezuela, now in Florida] sent me an email that said, in part, “No public worship service will begin until there is an indigenous leader to lead it; no Sunday School will start until there are indigenous leaders to administer and teach in it.” Expatriate missionaries can begin indigenous churches—if they focus their work on raising up indigenous leaders.”²³

WELS mission philosophy would probably not go that far in saying the missionary should never play the role of pastor. How would he gain followers? How would work get done?

²² Interview

²³ Scudieri, Robert. “Can Expatriate Missionaries Begin Indigenous Churches.” *Missio Apostolica*, November 1, 1998. 68-69.

WELS current theory is that the missionary would transition to the role of mentor and advisor, while still switching into the role of pastor at times, though less and less as he goes on. This is not to be overlooked. The teaching that goes on through seeing a well-trained pastor at work is invaluable. The WELS seminary training is one of its greatest strengths and allowing others to see a pastor as a model has immeasurable benefits. Also having a missionary work as a pastor in the field, training up men by working alongside them says a lot more about an attitude of equality than any mission statement or document could. Admittedly, a good technique would be to start with younger men to instill in them these qualities early on. Missionary Dorow's article supports this point: "From the outset the missionaries have played an active, if secondary, role in planting new churches...The missionary then often serves as the supervisor for the vicar as he undertakes the difficult task of church planting. He will counsel the young man, offer advice and encouragement, and administer the sacraments until the vicar is ordained."²⁴ So the missionary works as a pastor and a mentor, always doing what is best for the church. And yet world mission work even within the WELS carries on through more than just resident missionaries. WELS has been doing work with non-resident missionaries, and working through Multi-Language Publications to give materials to Christians thirsty for the gospel, neither of which has an expatriate missionary on the ground.

²⁴ Dorow, 82.

Missionary as coworker

Within the WELS approach to world mission work, the end goal is ideally that the missionary would leave, and the result would be a separate, indigenous, self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating church. But could there be another role for the missionary? Interestingly, the Missouri Synod would say yes. In an article detailing its successful work in Korea, Missionary Maynard Dorow highlights the role of the coworker among the roles and goals of a missionary.

“The Lutheran Church in Korea has always anticipated an ongoing role for missionaries in its midst. It has not seen the missionary as one who "works himself out of a job." And this is a sound view of the missionary and his calling. The missionary may complete certain assigned tasks; he may give training to national workers enabling them to carry on work which he has started; but the missionary calling in that place remains valid. His title may change, as we see in the present-day use of "fraternal worker" or "coworker."

But the expatriate worker fills a role which cannot be met simply by training a national worker to replace him. For the missionary, simply by being who he is, has essential functions: he brings "spiritual gifts" which stem from his distinctive cultural roots; he helps to bridge older Christian traditions to the younger; he represents the broader church, the ecumene, to the emerging or younger church. Whether as a planter of churches or as a coworker with national counterparts, the missionary continues to fill valid and essential roles in the church today.”²⁵

And it isn't only the Missouri Synod who sees this role. In fact an article from the Lutheran Danish Church details the same strategy, saying, “Missionaries are to work for the common joy in the Christian faith among all Christians. Each of us has to carry the responsibility for the mission of our local churches. Co-walkers and coworkers are not to take responsibility from the local church, but they are most certainly to point to the responsibility - also when it is not that popular.”²⁶ In order to show this interesting dynamic the article also included a moving, thought-provoking poem written by a missionary to Madagascar,

“On the road together Together we are on the road: You travel with oxen or your worn out bike or barefoot. I drive my Toyota Land Cruiser with the air-condition turned on.

²⁵ Dorow, 83-84.

²⁶ Iversen, Hans. “Ten Theses on the Diaconía of the Cross-Cultural Missionary.” *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 91, no. 4 (2003): 533–51. 543.

Together we cook rice with sauce and meat: I use the better part of the pig. You use some small pieces of gristle and pork.

Together we send our children to school: You to classes with sixty pupils, that they may sweat under the rusty roof while learning by rote the meaningless strings of words of the teacher. I to twenty five classmates who - in architect designed furniture and IT-rooms - are enjoying themselves as they are learning at a cost per child far beyond your income.

Together we invite one another for dinner: I invite you to a restaurant with tablecloths and napkins and wine and French dishes. You humbly ask me to take a seat at your rush mat.

Together we are struck by illness and disasters: I have access to the expertise of the best doctors available, In worst case I will be evacuated to Denmark. You may die without anybody noticing it at the entrance of the hospital.

Together we sing hymns to praise the Lord. We listen to the message about the salvation by His death and resurrection. And together we meet at the table of the Lord.”²⁷

This role would be a step further than a missionary in the same spot as a national pastor, mentoring or advising. He could be in the same mission field but in a different area, working alongside the national pastor or using his abilities and deeper training to teacher others. Could a similar role exist in WELS world mission work? Possibly. The biggest factors preventing the funding of a missionary coworker at the moment would likely be money and the urgency of needs elsewhere. The WELS is blessed with too many possibles for mission work. If there were enough pastors and missionaries in the synod, the role of a coworker could serve well. Overall it would be best to use men’s strengths where they can. The national pastor will always have a better handle on his own culture and language. But there are areas where this sort of coworking can take place. Especially in countries where the class differences aren’t that different, for example in some Asian countries. But the idea of working together in ministry isn’t too far off. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary occasionally trades its professors to other seminaries in fellowship, like in Africa.

²⁷ Iversen, 543.

Suggestions for Effective Use of Roles

How can the missionary use his roles of pastor and mentor effectively and efficiently? First, it would be incorrect to assume the same strategy can be used across the board. This is especially the case where the WELS has already been using a certain style of mission work for a long time. It makes it complicated. But as the WELS moves forward or looks at mission work in new areas, actively keeping the missionary's role in mind is essential. The following ways could help the missionary stay effective in his roles.

Training

The missionary should be informed of his different roles thoroughly either at the seminary level or right after receiving the call so that he understands the transitory nature of his work. He will start as a pastor, but even from the start he is looking for people to be elders and evangelists and teachers. He knows that he will change at different times and that his role will morph from pastor to teacher to mentor to supervisor to advisor as the church progresses.²⁸ Training early on will help keep all this in mind, because the seminary graduate has since college or even earlier been ingrained with a desire to serve people as a pastor. It's hard for him not to do what he's been waiting to do for years. A source who highly favored being a missionary/pastor reported that he felt like a guard, a manager, a janitor, a judge, and a checkbook, anything but a pastor.²⁹

If the expectations are clear going in, it will deter the missionary from feeling cheated or deceived as to what kind of work he was getting into.

Plans

Good planning can also help a missionary understand how to effectively use his roles as a pastor and as a mentor. Initial five-year and ten-year plans can help the missionary see the changing nature of his role. Without a plan the tendency could be for a missionary to act as a pastor indefinitely, as one might in the States. But even in established WELS churches a plan should be periodically reviewed so that a stateside pastor could look to plant his own churches. Logging progress can also help keep the plan in mind as the work progresses.

²⁸ Interview

²⁹ Interview

Encouragement

This is an area that is already developed but is worth mentioning. The different structures in place with advisors and committees as well as conferences with other missionaries in the same field and in other world mission fields all help the missionary keep his mind on the goal. They help him see with a wider perspective the needs of all the world missions. Exchanging information with other missionaries helps him see his own church with an outside perspective. And of course the value of simple gospel encouragement is invaluable as is the opportunity to study the Word with fellow brothers in the work. All these will help encourage the missionary to be see his larger work like Jesus did, “Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come” (Mark 1:38) and to allow nationals to serve as well, “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:12).

Additional Considerations

Here are a couple of lists that deserve some consideration with this topic. They come from Hodges' book *The Indigenous Church*,

- "The missionary is primarily a planter of churches.
- The missionary is a temporary factor in any local area, and he should build the church in such a way that it will be able to continue after he has gone.
- If the missionary finds an indigenous work already under way in his area, either the product of spontaneous national effort, or the fruit of missionary labors, he must be extremely careful not to adopt measures that will choke it out.
- The missionary should refuse to occupy a position that a national can fill.
- The missionary should not be jealous of his own authority or position but be willing for others to take the lead.
- There is undoubtedly a danger that the missionary may withdraw too soon from the work, but there is also the danger that he may fail to withdraw at the proper time."³⁰

The list makes a lot of sense. The missionary described always has in mind that the work isn't about him, it's about the people in the place he is serving. They are always going to be the ones who will communicate most effectively within the culture. The missionary's job is to put God's Word into that place clearly and effectively where he can, but always allowing for the church itself to grow. But the missionary also has eyes toward the future. WELS involvement in almost any country, even in the United States, is always up in the air. Countries can turn around on Christianity in a flash. Building up a church that can survive without the missionary must be a goal if he wants to succeed. And honestly shouldn't a stateside pastor strive for the same result? A congregation that could more than just hold itself together if a vacancy occurs. A church that won't fall apart if the pastor goes on vacation. A well-trained group of Christians who can care for each other. There is also the great and difficult task of handing over power. It can be hard for a pastor give up various tasks. He was the one trained for it! He is the best at it. The old adage, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," could be ringing in his ears. But how essential it is to allow for the new Christians to get experience at leading God's people! Even if mistakes are made, they will learn. A missionary will be able to see that he is doing the same amount if not much more work for the mission by teaching and equipping nationals to be leaders. The last point on the list goes back to a missionary properly using his roles of pastor and mentor. It is important to gauge the situation constantly to care for souls and to grow the church at the same time! The missionary must surely persistently ask for God's help in this task.

³⁰ Hodges 126-128

The second list by Hodges highlights training, or mentoring,

- “First, we must provide for the spiritual development of our prospective workers as well as their intellectual development.
- Second, we must integrate our training program with the national church.
- Third, the workers should be trained to the task, not away from it!
- Fourth, we must provide for the training of the entire church rather than the exclusive training of a select few who will be devoting themselves to full-time ministry.
- Fifth, we must not neglect the older converts. In New Testament times, the church laid hold of the more mature elements among the converts and these became the church elders. Some had ministry in the Word and others helped govern the work.”³¹

This list really hits items a missionary could easily overlook. Like Hodges says, we must remember to care for the spiritual welfare of the workers as much as and even more than their intellectual development. How many workers have been lost to falling into the devil’s traps of lust, greed, or the allure of native pagan religions? Proper, thorough spiritual development and guidance will guard against the devil’s attacks. Also a missionary that models this well will be worth a hundred lessons on the same topic for his students. The second and third points really speak from experience. Not working with the church and taking the national students away from their culture will only provide the people with an alien product, a man who neither fits in his own culture anymore nor performs how the missionaries want him to. Keeping him close to the ground in whatever way possible will prevent this. Also, it is very important that the entire church is trained up. The task of establishing a strong church that lasts requires more than just a skilled pastor, it needs an entire group of trained and encouraged believers who work together. This will also make the missionary’s and national pastor’s task much easier in the future. And finally so much can be said about remembering the older members of a congregation. There is a reason the church leaders are called “elders”. The respect and wisdom that comes from experience is not to be overlooked when establishing an indigenous church. A missionary who mentors will look for mature, seasoned elders who can run the church well even if they aren’t the pastors per se. These lists give great insight into the mentoring role for the missionary.

³¹ Hodges 60-65.

Conclusion

The missionary will effectively manage his roles by keeping the overall goal in mind, having been trained and having a plan, and he will effectively transition knowing that his role will change for the sake of the future of the national church. He knows how to be a mentoring pastor and a pastoral mentor. He is on guard against the hand of the devil who will try to bring ruin upon the church however he can. He will continuously be supported by fellow workers and his advisors to keep *the mission* his mission. He will trust in the mighty power of God's word as he prayerfully works each day to bring the gospel to the corner of the earth he serves.

Areas of Further Study

There are plenty of areas for additional study. A study of the areas which have for a long time had a missionary serve as a pastor would be interesting to investigate. An example would be the Apache reservation or Zambia. How does a precedent of missionaries who primarily were pastors affect the introduction of national pastors in the future? Another interesting area of study might be exploring the possibilities and versatility of mission teams as opposed to specific calls. What if groups or teams of missionaries took on a target area and each used his strength to grow the church? The whole could be greater than the sum of the parts, and it would eliminate the trouble of finding a single missionary who has the ability to transition from evangelist to pastor, to mentor, and to advisor.

Practical Uses of Thesis

While there may be many ways to apply this information for future pastors and missionaries, two possibilities will be briefly outlined here.

Goal review

WELS missionaries usually periodically meet with mission advisors to plan for the future. It would be beneficial to include in those discussions more intentional strategy for transitioning in his roles. Appendix B has a possible document that could be used by missionaries to keep the overall goal in mind. The good news is, in newer WELS mission fields, missionaries are already being much more proactive than in the past.

Incorporation of Intentional Roles, Strategy, and Transition in Missionary Orientation

Another way to implement this thesis would be to incorporate this kind of information into the orientation of new missionaries. From the start, the missionaries would enter their fields functioning in their roles and work intentionally instead of reactively. Interviews with missionaries revealed that even as late as the 90's and before, missionaries were acting more or less reactively to their respective mission field.³² A missionary partner would be withdrawn, work would increase, the role of mentor was forced upon the missionary, sometimes before an appropriate time. Again, interviews with current missionaries in certain areas, such as the East, reveal that these days they plan transitions between foreigners and nationals better and are able to leave behind better structures of leadership than in the past. The ability to work in some of these countries can change very rapidly, making an intentional transferral of leadership all the more important.

³² Interview

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- 8 Anonymous Interviews. These interviews were kept anonymous at the request of the interviewees and also for the purpose of allowing them to speak freely on the topic. A sample of the interview can be seen in appendix A.

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

What experience do you have as a missionary? In the role of pastor? In the role of mentor?

What did you do to make your church “Indigenous”? “Three-self”?

How intentional were you about it?

What were the biggest factors that lead to failures in the mission. Successes?

Do you think it is more important for a missionary to be a pastor or a mentor? (Do you lean one way or the other?)

What changes would make mission work easier? (Usually depending on information already given)

Is this a tangible problem in the WELS? Is there a bigger problem facing missionaries? (Time, money, control)

What are your thoughts on a missionary as coworker?

What role did you play in the changing nature of missionary work? (When did it start?)

What should I have asked, but didn't, that you believe is important in regard to my thesis topic?

Appendix B

Missionary Roles: Goal Review

**Note: The goal of this document is to keep the missionary and any advisors aware of the overall goal of establishing an indigenous church. It also allows for the missionary to reflect on why he is doing what role so he can be intentional about his actions. Sometimes the church will need him to be a pastor, and other times they may be ready for him to be a mentor.*

Current Mission Status

Describe how the work is going in the mission field. Include numbers of services, attendance, notable believer stories, prospects for leadership (in some capacity, not necessarily pastor). Take as much space as you need. Also attach the last three most recent BWM status sheets.

Roles

In order to continue in your goal of establishing an indigenous church, you will need to transition to the role of mentor. It is still vital, though, that you act as in the role of pastor for as much time as they need, to give them the means of grace appropriately and to model the role of pastor for the nationals.

Right now, how have you acted as pastor?

How have you acted as mentor?

Which role do you feel the mission needs most right now? Why?

What could you do to plan to transition?

What changes would allow you to transition your role?

What factors are holding back this transition for you?

What factors are holding back this transition for the mission?

Planning for the Future

Plans change; the mission could look completely different in a matter of months or weeks. But from your viewpoint, describe what the mission could look like in the following categories.

1 Year:

3-5 Years:

10 Years: