

*Note: This essay was prepared by Dr. John Lawrenz at the request of the district teachers' conference of the Michigan District, WELS. It was first presented in 1991, at that time, Dr. Lawrenz was serving as the president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, Michigan. Since that time, the Lord has led Dr. Lawrenz to serve him as president of Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota and as vice-president for student life at the newly-formed Martin Luther College, also in New Ulm. Currently, Dr. Lawrenz is serving as administrator for the synod's Board for Ministerial Education.*

## A Biblical Perspective on Recruitment for Our Day

### Historical Introduction

*You may rejoice and be glad from the heart if you find that you have been chosen by God to devote your means and labor to raising a son who will be a good Christian pastor, preacher, or school master, and thereby to raise for God a special servant, yes, an angel of God, a true bishop before God, a savior of many people, a king and prince in the kingdom of Christ, a teacher of God's people, a light of the world.<sup>1</sup>*

Dr. Luther wrote these earnest words to the parents of his day. Parents, then as now, needed encouragement because only a few were offering their children for church vocations. Sixteenth century Europe experienced rapid growth in commerce and trade. A spirit of materialism dominated popular thinking. Learning, apart from the kind that led to profit or pleasure, was scoffed at with the rhyme, *die Gelehrten sind verkehrten* ("the well educated are all messed up").<sup>2</sup> The invention of the printing press offered the common people access to information that previously had been limited to the educated elite who ran the schools. In addition, almost all schools had been run directly or indirectly by the Roman clergy.<sup>3</sup> Evangelicals did not always discriminate between teachings tainted by doctrinal error and the kind of learning that was worthy of retention and preservation. Sometimes the pious attitude was to play it safe and write off the whole of traditional education, especially since there was profit to be made in the confiscation of the church schools with their property and endowments.<sup>4</sup>

There was another danger for Christians who had been liberated from the tyranny of the Roman hierarchy and its web of authority. If all Christians had direct access to God, why train clergy of any kind? More odious was the idea that God's Word had no objective interpretation based on the plain sense of words, the kind of plain sense which a student learned from a diligent study of the Bible's original languages. Some held to the belief that each man was guided by an "inner word," nothing more.<sup>5</sup> Such people had no need for schools.

It sounds somewhat familiar. Today materialism rules! If it doesn't fill my pockets or feed my senses, Americans ask, why learn it? Modern American education, heavily influenced by Darwin, Dewey, Freud, and a host of sympathetic humanists, is our equivalent of the educational monopoly enjoyed by Germany's sixteenth century ecclesiastical establishment. Education is more widely available today. Everyone must go to school. But many in our country continue to ask why so little is accomplished for the majority of students.

There is also an uneasiness among us in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). Has our once solid commitment to Christian education eroded? Are we unwilling to pay the steep price for

quality education in the school system that we have inherited from our forefathers? Will we opt for a more practical ministry, and put at risk our ability to understand and communicate the Word of God? Are we ignoring the external forces that simultaneously tear at and shape our schools? What about the multi-media "electronic printing press" of our day? Is technology going to lead our youth off, Pied Piper style, into a purposeless future? Or are we going to learn how to harness today's wonders to serve Christ? Are the voices of the school-age children and their parents echoing the independent, my-ideas-are-as-good-as yours, "inner voice" of religious thinking in America today? Or, will we teach them to sing the song of salvation with a clear, firm, united voice, one whose grace and simple beauty will soar forever, while the dissonant noise of a decaying world rolls toward its inevitable self-destructive crescendo?

There is no denying the negative spiritual forces at work in ourselves and our world. Satan wants neither the proclamation of the Gospel, nor the inculcation of the truth of God's Word which leads to salvation. The world, the devil's playground, is content to have people lose their way searching for heaven on earth. Our sinful selves urge us to play Judas, to abandon our fellowship with Christ for thirty pieces of the here and now. Yet we look at the fields white unto harvest. The world is approaching 6 billion souls. We see that the multitudes are as harassed as ever. They still need shepherds to lead them. But the laborers are few. Recruitment was difficult for the church of the Reformation and it remains difficult today, as our Lord said it would be for the New Testament church [Matthew 9:37 38].

Jesus trained the Twelve and sent them out worldwide to preach the Gospel. Luther was not idle either. He went to work. We are gathered here today at this educational conference partly as a result of the Lord's blessing on Luther's work in education. In 1524 Luther appealed to the councilmen of the German cities to establish and maintain Christian schools to strengthen the church and the Christian state.<sup>6</sup> A visitation of schools in Saxony in 1528-29 uncovered a desperate need for trained pastors in Luther's own back yard. Saxony needed to more than double its supply. In 1530, while in Coburg awaiting the conclusion of the Diet of Augsburg, Luther put the finishing touches on a sermon that takes up to forty-five pages in the English edition of Luther's Works.<sup>7</sup> This sermon was Luther's recruitment appeal to the parents of his day. He began by laying down the law for his fellow Germans:

*[God] has not given you your children and the means to support them simply so that you may do with them as you please, or train them just to get ahead in the world. You have been earnestly commanded to raise them for God's service, or be completely rooted out -- you, your children, and everything else, in which case everything you have done for them is condemned...<sup>8</sup>*

*You refuse to give one child -- and would do the same if all the children in the world were yours. ...It does not help your case to say, "My neighbor keeps his son in school, so I don't need to." For your neighbor can say the same thing, and so can all the neighbors. Meanwhile, where is God to get people for his spiritual office?<sup>9</sup>*

*God willing, I shall really go after the shameful, despicable, damnable parents who are no parents at all but despicable hogs and venomous beasts, devouring their own young.<sup>10</sup>*

Luther had a plan. Spiritual leaders (*Lehrstand*, "those who instruct society") would learn Latin and the biblical languages, master grammar, study history and literature, and expose themselves to the arts. Public servants (*Wehrstand*, "those who defend society") would master the law in order to keep the peace and hold in check mankind's penchant for disorder and violence. Women (*Naehrstand*, "those who nurture society") would be taught to instruct the young and otherwise manage family and home wisely.<sup>11</sup>

Our WELS pays homage to Luther's vision. Clergy are not certified among us for pastoral ministry without a passable acquaintance with the languages of the Bible and of theology. We require both pastors and teachers to receive training in the liberal arts from a Christian point of view. Throughout our

history elementary schools have existed to train youth to be both good Lutherans and good citizens. Today our Lutheran high schools extend this training for four more years. Nearly 60% of our congregations directly support a Lutheran elementary school or high school. We also have Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) whose avowed purpose is to train citizen Christians. We offer women careers in the education of the young. Just this summer our synod established staff ministries in the areas of administration, family and youth, and evangelism.

The WELS educational system is now under intense scrutiny. A major challenge is the declining number of students pursuing a church vocation. At the 1989 WELS convention the recruitment of future church workers was made the top priority of the Board for Worker Training. The Coordinating Council subsequently made it a "key thrust" under the Mission/Vision 2000+ blueprint adopted for our church body. Since then two full-time recruiters have been authorized and called, one at Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) and the other at Martin Luther Preparatory School (MLPS). The funding of a third full-time recruiter has just been approved for Northwestern College (NWC). In 1990, NWC went to every district convention with a recruitment appeal. Our Association of Lutheran High Schools (ALHS) has made it its business to do more for worker training. Next February the whole ALHS agenda has been dedicated to this topic. At my school, Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS), the faculty has devoted considerable effort toward the improvement of recruitment and has enlisted the cooperation of Lutheran elementary schools and parish pastors in the effort. At this summer's WELS convention MLS was encouraged to share its ideas with other high schools. In all of this we can hope for an outpouring of God's grace in answer to our prayers and efforts.

To this end we do well also to examine our recruitment efforts in the light of God's Word. It is the Lutheran thing to do. It is the reason this paper was assigned to me.

### **Recruitment Defined**

The word "recruitment" has no equivalent in the vocabulary of the Old or New Testaments as far as I know. If you check books dealing with schools, or theological treatises on the church and ministry, you will rarely find the word in an index or glossary. My Webster defines the verb recruit as follows: "to raise or strengthen an army, navy, etc. by enlisting personnel," or "to enlist personnel into an army or navy," or "to enlist new members for a party, organization, etc." The word carries heavy military connotations, a fact that does not please everyone. Since the Apostle Paul refers to his "recruit" Timothy as a "good soldier of Christ Jesus" in 2 Timothy 2:3, I find the term perfectly acceptable in our midst. Military overtones may raise eyebrows in the world. Recently, for example "*Onward Christian Soldiers*," was banished from the hymnal of a mainline Christian church. This past month, that same hymn was sung at the funeral of Pastor John Westendorf of Westland, Michigan, at the request of his family. It was an entirely fitting choice to grace the passing of one of our good and faithful WELS ministers.

I will offer the following definition of "recruitment" as it is commonly used in the WELS: *The God-pleasing activity of the church which encourages young people to enroll at schools whose function is to prepare them for God's call into the public ministry.* Each of our schools has a person and/or a committee appointed to coordinate recruitment activity. The aim of each school's recruitment office is to bring students in, keep them enrolled, and move them on to the next level of training, eventually, to the point where they become candidates for the public preaching or teaching ministry.<sup>12</sup>

### **Recruitment Is the Holy Spirit's Work**

Recruitment for the full-time public ministry reflects the more general "recruitment" activity of the Holy Spirit. We do not commonly use the term "recruitment" to describe the work of the third person of the

Trinity, but it fits quite well.

***The Holy Spirit calls.*** "The Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel" is the Catechism's way of describing that blessed event which ushers a child of God into a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Conversion, as taught in Scripture, is the day of birth that really counts for a Christian. Recruited from the darkness of sin and the certainty of hell, the sinner is turned around so that life, not certain death, becomes the everlasting outcome of his existence. The means the Holy Spirit has chosen to accomplish this miracle is the gospel which comes to men through God's revealed Word.

When a believer enters the public ministry, he does so properly through a call from God the Holy Spirit. In conversion the Holy Spirit brings about a turnaround from damnation to salvation. In respect to the public ministry no turnaround takes place. Rather God directs a believer's activity so that it moves into the public arena. The scope and direction of service is determined by believers who have gathered together in Jesus' name to carry out some aspect of the great commission that Jesus entrusted to the church at his ascension.<sup>13</sup> In the New Testament era the exact form and direction of each call is a matter of sanctified judgment, free of the kind of ceremonial law by which God bound his Old Testament believers.<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, the direct call from God to men ended when Jesus called Paul directly to be the last of his apostles.<sup>15</sup> Since that time the Holy Spirit has used gatherings of believers as his instruments to select some Christians to serve publicly on behalf of others.<sup>16</sup>

"Once saved, always saved," the believer is not. It is possible to turn from the Gospel and to expel the Holy Spirit from his temple within us. Nevertheless, the believer is launched on his lifelong journey with God, fully expecting to remain in the faith to which he was called. As in the call to faith, the call to public ministry is not by nature permanent. It can come to an end. Pastors and teachers do not have an "indelible character" which locks them into public service for life, no matter what. Continued service, however, is the desired norm for most.<sup>17</sup>

***The Holy Spirit enlightens.*** The new life of a converted sinner brings with it an enlightened understanding of God, of creation, of oneself, and of others. This new self is not self-generated. It is worked solely by the Holy Spirit's power.

Serving in the public ministry assumes a degree of enlightenment sufficient to help God's people. A public servant of God must be able to listen to and submit to his Lord. This means rightly dividing the Word of Truth [2 Timothy 2:15] so that law is distinct from gospel and both are in proper balance. Nor may private opinion add or subtract from what God has said.

Enlightenment places a public servant in the position to teach aptly, rebuke courageously, correct accurately, and train consistently.<sup>18</sup> A certain level of enlightenment is made a prerequisite of public service, lest pride and ignorance give Satan an opening [1 Timothy 3:6]. This baseline spiritual maturity is described by Scripture in a number of ways, "not a recent convert," "a lover of goodness," "upright," "holy," "holding firmly to the Word," "tested".<sup>19</sup> Enlightenment is nurtured and expanded once public ministry is under way through the study and application of Scripture [1 Timothy 4:15]. Full credit for all enlightenment belongs solely to God.<sup>20</sup>

***The Holy Spirit sanctifies.*** A convert's new life manifests itself in a process called sanctification. Miracles occur daily through the Spirit's indwelling presence. God's hold on a person is built up while the old self is torn down. Godless attitudes and commitments diminish and dissolve. The believer, out of a thankful heart, brings forth God-pleasing works which can be observed by all. The once feared commandments of God become a welcome "blueprint for happy living." Behavior is marked by faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love [2 Peter 1:6-7].

Sanctification is an on-going, up and down, struggle. This on-going process approaches, but never

totally reaches, perfection this side of the grave.

Service in the public ministry also assumes a level of sanctification sufficient to avoid the giving or taking of needless offense lest the ministry be blamed. The standards are high. Paul says: "*We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited*" [2 Corinthians 6:3]. The profile of a worthy minister given by Paul to Timothy [first letter, 3:1-13] and Titus [1:5-9] lists a model family life (husband of one wife, hospitable, in control of household and children), fiscal responsibility (no lover of money, not greedy for gain), and self-discipline (above reproach, temperate, sensible, no drunkard, gentle not violent, not quarrelsome, not quick-tempered, well thought of).

High standards are not to be confused with perfection. No aspect of sanctification pleases God or benefits believers without proper motivation. Living in the grace of God makes the difference. Without a total reliance on God's love in Christ, only a Pharisee remains.

*The Holy Spirit keeps us in the faith.* It is also the work of the Holy Spirit to preserve saints "in the one true faith" unto the end. The holiness of God, expressed in his law confronts every weakness of thought, word and deed that springs up within the believer. The grace of God, expressed in the gospel motivates repentance and engenders faith which lays hold of the promise of God so that sin is forgiven, guilt put away, and the consequences of sin turned to God's good purposes. Only unbelief stops this process and throws a person back on the road to willful sin, hardened indifference, and punishment both temporal and eternal. The "ending" for a believer's life here on earth is the happy one which occurs when the Spirit beckons a soul to follow Jesus through death and resurrection. Then sin and weakness are cast aside forever.

The public ministry carries with it no special exemption from sin and the need for repentance. Nor is a public minister's deep hope in the triumph to come any different from that of any other believer. The Apostle Paul told Timothy that "*the hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops*" [2 Timothy 2:6]. In other words, those who preach and teach must be the first to feast on God's Word and sacramental grace. Only then will the Holy Spirit exert his full power to preserve faith in the messenger. The greatest tragedy for a public minister is the possibility that, having saved others, he himself is lost [1 Corinthians 9:27].

### **The Who, What, When, and Why of Recruitment**

Several points, then, can be made after comparing recruitment for the kingdom of God in general and recruitment for ministry in particular.

*First*, the master recruiter is God. He initiates membership in Christ's kingdom. He works through the kingdom, his church, to recruit leaders to bring the gospel to others publicly. In no case does a person recruit himself. He may aspire to a calling [1 Timothy 3:1], but only God through the church recruits. As members in the church we, however, all are recruiters of others since it is the church that calls.

*Second*, the toolbox for the church's ministry is the same as the one used by the Holy Spirit to call, enlighten, sanctify, and keep individuals and, concurrently, to gather the church. His voice is not the voice of experience, the whisper of Mother Nature, the nagging of a troubled conscience, the wisdom of the ages, the babbling of the occult, a mystical music of the spheres, a feeling, a hunch, or a better-than-nothing gamble. Although the Spirit's working is hidden from our eyes, the means of grace are not, nor are the people who administer them. When we see children baptized, when we witness believers giving and receiving the body and blood of Jesus in, with, and under the bread and wine, when God's Word is taught in schools and preached from pulpits and sung from the pews -- then we know Jesus and his church are present and that ministry is taking place.

The effectiveness of the means of grace to work faith is guaranteed by God, even though there will be some who will stubbornly reject God's free gift in unbelief and others who will obstruct and hinder the working of the means of grace because of weakness and inconsistency. Public ministers bear the awesome responsibility of preaching and teaching God's Word God's way and administering the sacraments rightly so that they never get in the way of the Spirit's working. God's way is the evangelical way, with law and gospel in their proper places. The right way is the way of scripture. Prophets were accounted faithful in the Old Testament if they stuck to God's words alone, whether or not the message was easy or hard to deliver. Similarly priests were faithful when they adhered to the covenant received by Moses, both in its form and meaning, and thereby interpreted correctly the shadows which pointed to the coming Christ. Kings, too, were faithful only when they placed themselves solely under the authority of God almighty and adhered trustingly and unswervingly to his revelation. In the New Testament as in the Old, nothing was to be added or subtracted from God's Word. Fidelity to the Spirit's inspired message remains the prime directive for all forms of ministry. We may recruit for ministry only those who accept this.

*Third*, the public ministry is a circumscribed service whose parameters are set by gatherings of believers in their Christian freedom in order to place the enlightened and sanctified lives of some at the disposal of others. Such ministry is always centered on the truth and power of God contained in the means of grace. For us, this means that the option to call a believer into public service will be exercised by God through the church at some point in a recruit's life when he or she is judged to be sufficiently enlightened and sanctified to serve others. Babes in the faith with a rudimentary knowledge of the mysteries of God and moral weaklings with hardened consciences will not receive calls. In Acts 6:3 this is stated positively, "*choose . . . men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.*" If the church chooses to organize its recruitment function around schools, it will take care that enlightenment and sanctification are cultivated. At the same time it will be mindful that neither believer nor public minister is able to achieve perfection. Those who serve others are to be examples for the flocks over which the Lord has made them overseers [1 Timothy 4:12].

*Fourth*, the goal of the believer and public minister is identical and the means to achieve that goal are identical. The goal is eternal life with Christ. The means are the gospel in Word and sacrament. Both the minister and the ones ministered to will together struggle with a humble appreciation for the contribution and burdens of the other. Recruitment will therefore place no emphasis on secondary aspects of public ministry, such as service in a particular place or with particular honor, benefits, or prestige. Nor should recruitment strategy shift its hope of success away from the power of the gospel as the key for awakening proper motivation. Recruitment does not offer entrance into a privileged caste. Public ministry is not hereditary, nor the "power center" of the church,<sup>21</sup> nor does it have a corner on spiritual access to God.<sup>22</sup> In our recruitment there must be a strong emphasis on the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the mutually-beneficial relationship public ministry has with it.

### **The Spirit Recruits For Personal and Public Ministry**

The calling of the believer creates a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ also ushers a believer into a bond which unites all true believers to each other. In a beautiful metaphor Scripture calls this union the body of Christ. He is the Head, we his members. In the Apostle Paul's use of this metaphor, we see that no two "members" of the "body" are expected to function precisely in the same way. Yet all are necessary. The Apostles' Creed calls the body of Christ "the holy Christian church, the communion of saints."

The Holy Spirit's call to put the means of grace to work belongs to every believer. It takes only one to begin the process of admonition leading to repentance and correction according to Matthew 18:15: "*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.*" The deacon Philip and other individual Christians were scattered by persecution. We are told they "*preached the*

*word wherever they went*" [Acts 8:4] and many believed and were baptized by Philip [Acts 8:12]. Gideon's son Jotham rebuked the citizens of Shechem for making his half-brother Abimelech the king [Judges 9:7ff]. Aquila and Priscilla invited Apollos into their home to teach him *"the way of God more adequately"* [Acts 18:26]. These are but examples of the truth that, given opportunity and circumstance, it is part of every believer's new life in Christ to spread the word of God's grace in Christ and administer the sacraments.<sup>23</sup> The work of God done by all on behalf of all is called the universal priesthood of all believers. By the Spirit's inspiration the Apostle Peter said it best: *"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"* [1 Peter 2:9].

God is glorified when the faithful fit together in a way that the sinful flesh is suppressed and talents are turned loose simultaneously for the Holy Spirit's work. Is it not amazing that God places his work in the hands of believers, none of whom will achieve perfection this side of heaven? Is it not amazing that the Lord would select from this group of redeemed sinners some *"to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ be built up"* [Ephesians 4:12]. Why not have the holy angels preach, teach, baptize, and distribute the Lord's body and blood? They are both powerful and talented and incapable of leading astray. True. But it is the highest truth that God is glorified best when his grace is front and center, and that all talents and abilities are infused with a deep appreciation for that grace.

Opportunity and circumstance are natural limits to all forms of ministry, private and public. No human being can do everything all the time. In addition a person's capacity for ministry varies in proportion with spiritual gifts. No two human beings are alike. People have differing aptitudes, characters, abilities, insights, and temperaments. Believers vary. Some consistently study and apply God's Word, others do not. Some live in the sacraments,<sup>24</sup> others do not. Some have a bent for service, others do not.

In the midst of this diversity, it is God's will that some are selected from among those who cherish Word and sacrament. Those so selected carry out the public administration of the means of grace in specific ways at specific times for specific purposes employing specific gifts. In this way everything is *"done in a fitting and orderly way"* [1 Corinthians 14:40]

We have already noted that there is no specific form of ministry prescribed for the church. The Bible, however, reveals the variety of tasks in public ministry already being performed during apostolic times. In his convention essay Prof. Gawrisch enumerates feeding (John 21:15-17), shepherding (1 Peter 5:2), teaching (1 Timothy 3:2), keeping watch (Acts 20:28), commanding (1 Timothy 4:11), urging (1 Timothy 6:2), warning (Acts 20:31), caring for the church (1 Timothy 3:5), directing church affairs (1 Timothy 5:17), leading (Hebrews 13:7,17), preaching, correcting, rebuking, encouraging (2 Timothy 4:2), and baptizing (1 Corinthians 1:17)<sup>25</sup> The Apostle Paul states that God gave the church *"some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers"* [Ephesians 4:11].

Within the church, whether in the universal priesthood or in the public ministry, those who are truly saints are known to God alone. Universal priests and public ministers lack the ability to know for sure. Are we dealing with unbelieving hypocrisy, often quite convincing? Or, are we observing the weaknesses of fellow saints, often quite disturbing? In eternity we will know others, even as God knows us [1 Corinthians 13:9]. Until then we have two responsibilities as we are drawn to others. We are to speak a clear confession of the faith that is in us [1 Peter 3:15 & Romans 10:9f]. We are also to measure the confession of our neighbor to determine whether it is in conformity with Scripture our own confession of its truth [Romans 16:17]. Lying hypocrites may masquerade as brothers and sisters in the faith, even correctly support and aid us in our Christian life. We can be confident that such sad situations will be in the minority. Our joy will be to improve our walk of faith through the supportive fellowship of faithful confessors who teach, rebuke, correct, and train us in righteousness. At the same time we will rejoice to give in return the same service that we have received.

The doctrine of the church in its visible and invisible forms teaches several important things about recruitment. *First*, we must recruit to reflect the diversity of the church. As times and opportunities change, there will be need to shift the parameters of public service. President Mischke in his opening address to the 1991 synod convention said:

*The environment in which you and I are called to lift high the cross has changed dramatically and is changing constantly. So the challenge for our synod in this decade is to be sensitive and alert to that changed environment and, without sacrificing a single word of God's eternal truth, to examine all that we're doing and how we're doing it and why we're doing it, always with the aim of reaching one more soul with the gospel, of lifting high the cross and more faithfully nurturing those already in the church and reaching out to those who do not yet know Christ as their Savior, that by all possible means we might save some.<sup>26</sup>*

All of us are accustomed to the forms of ministry which have been part of our church from our childhood onward. Our first thought is to urge young people to become pastors, teachers, or missionaries. These offices in the church have been in existence for two thousand years and will undoubtedly form the backbone of public ministry for years to come. In recruiting for them, however, we must not diminish or demean other public callings, nor refrain from holding them up also as worthy service to God. It might be well for our synod to examine periodically the goals of its worker training system to determine whether or not they are broad enough to accommodate varied forms of future ministry.

*Second*, our understanding of the doctrine of the church will lead us to be very careful in our evaluation of those whom we recruit to the public ministry. It is always amazing to me, yet of great comfort, that the three men God called to write more inspired Scripture than anyone else were men with blood on their hands, Moses, David, and Paul. These were God's recruits. Clearly, by the measure of God's own word [Genesis 9:5-6], none of the three deserved another day of grace on God's earth. Human beings could well have rejected these men. Yet we see how wise God is. He used men who had experienced abject unworthiness and amazing grace personally. God saw how uniquely qualified they were to administer the means of grace and do so with all humility and with the highest degree of fidelity for the benefit of others. Indeed, we read that Moses was the humblest man that ever lived [Numbers 12:3], that David was a man after the Lord's own heart [1 Samuel 13:4] and that Paul was the greatest of the apostles [2 Corinthians 11]. In recruiting workers for the church we must, on the one hand, keep in mind the high qualifications required of ministers so that the ministry be above reproach and the name of Christ be held high. On the other hand, we must not cast aside the sinner who has heeded the words "go and sin no more" and matches a reformed life with a humble, consistent, public confession of faith in the grace of God.

This is especially true as we recruit young people whose enlightenment and sanctification are growing. When they make mistakes, we need to help them to deal with their sins and accept the consequences of sin. When discipline is given and received in this manner, few will be permanently disqualified from the ministry. We recall how Moses cooled his heels for forty years, how David's royal power was eclipsed, and how Paul suffered initial rejection by the congregation in Jerusalem,<sup>27</sup> yet each served God faithfully and fruitfully.

### **The Best Way To Recruit**

Little can be added to what has already been said regarding the best way to recruit for ministry. The Bible offers no prescriptive formula. We, however, have many accounts of men and women who God called to service in the Old and New Testaments. Their lives describe how the kingdom continues from generation to generation. In the sweep of salvation history we see how the Holy Spirit worked to meet the spiritual needs of the world through people who were called to service. I have found in my personal counseling as the head of a worker training school that the lives of the saints have been a gold mine of

inspiration, example, encouragement, and insight. I see in the people who served Israel and the early church real people, not unlike those who are our students.

I have prepared an exercise to complete this paper and to involve you. I have selected eighteen persons from the Bible who served God. They include people called to the offices of patriarch, prophet, priest, judge, king, queen, and apostle. To suggest a contemporary identification of these people with the types of recruitable young people that we know, I have characterized them as: high achiever, pessimist, loner, impious and pious "P.K." (preacher's kid), brat, hothead, hypocrite, gung ho, charmer, yuppie, nerd, self-confident, beautiful, handsome, servant for life, Mr. My-way, and social misfit. Each person has ten phrases which describe the good and bad points of his or her ministry.

*(For the conference, the phrases for each person were listed on separate sheets of paper. Groups were asked to read the characteristics listed on each sheet and follow the instructions below. The eighteen lists of characteristics are printed at the end of this paper, along with an "answer key" giving the name of the biblical character intended by Dr. Lawrenz to be matched with each list.)*

Using the phrases as clues, determine if the person is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Samuel, Saul, David, Elijah, Jonah, Daniel, Esther, Paul or Peter. Discuss the ministry of your servant of God. Swap stories on how these people remind you of the children you serve. Come up with one worthwhile thing related to recruitment to share with the group as a whole.

### Closing Thoughts from Scripture

*"Christ's love compels us"* [2 Corinthians 5:14]. Because I am Christ's and because Christ lives in me, I cannot miss the fields white to harvest and the millions seeking a shepherd. How can I not be a recruiter?

*"God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* [1 Timothy 2:4]. The alternative is eternity in hell. How can I not be a recruiter?

*"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work"* [John 9:4]. Today is a day closer to judgment. If the work is still not done, how can I not be a recruiter?

*"By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect"* [1 Corinthians 15:10]. If God did not accept the excuses of Moses, who am I to say someone else should be a recruiter?

*"Prepare God's people for works of service"* [Ephesians 4:12]. I'm a teacher with time to mold young lives. God is speaking to me; how can I not be a recruiter?

*"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has not pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth"* [1 John 3:17f]. Poor in time? Poor in cash? Compared to those without a Savior, how can I not be a recruiter?

*"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you would do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts"* [2 Peter 1:19]. By God's grace our fathers have bequeathed to us an inheritance we have not earned. Yet we are blessed with Word and sacrament and a church to share it. How can we all not be recruiters?



## End Notes - *A Biblical Perspective on Recruitment for Our Day*

1. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, p. 223. The quote is from "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School" addressed to Lazarus Spengler a burgher of city of Nuernberg in 1530.
2. Luther quotes this proverb in his letter to Spengler.
3. The monastic schools were the only schools during the early Middle Ages. Cathedral schools offered a broader education to urban citizens in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Chantry schools appeared in the late Middle ages. These schools were taught by clergy who were endowed by wealthy parishioners in exchange for saying prayers and masses on their behalf. Guild schools were created by the emerging middle class, but were usually staffed by clergy.
4. Luther had this to say, *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, p. 352: "It is perfectly true that if universities and monasteries were to continue as they have been in the past, and there were no other place available where youth could study and live, then I could wish that no boy would every study at all, but just remain dumb. For it is my earnest purpose, prayer, and desire that these asses' stalls and devil's training centers should either sink into the abyss or be converted into Christian schools." Luther not only encouraged Germans to convert schools, but also to redirect the monies once extorted for religious nonsense toward these Christian schools, *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, p. 350f.
5. The iconoclast Karlstadt and the enthusiast Muenzer were two of these that Luther opposed.
6. The treatise is "To the Council men of all the Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools, *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, pp. 347-378. Calvin confused church and state in a way that Luther never did. Luther looked upon the state as a separate gift of God in whose service dedicated Christians would make their beliefs and values felt. We must always remember that statecraft in Luther's day was built around the assumption that hereditary princes were God's special gift to provide continuity and order. Luther did not doubt that princes had a duty to run their states in a Christian fashion, and this has sometimes been misunderstood as a confusion of the church and state.
7. "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," *Luther's Works*, vol. 46, pp. 209-258.
8. *Op.cit.*, p. 222.
9. *Op.cit.*, p. 223.
10. *Op.cit.*, p. 210.
11. Roland Bainton, "Luther and Education," *New Dimensions in Lutheran Higher Education*, p. 13.
12. Recruitment activity is not limited to worker training campuses. Our synod has had several recruitment drives directed at congregations. For years we have set aside Good Shepherd Sunday to focus on recruitment. Articles in our synod's publications periodically urge parents, pastors, teachers and lay members to get involved in person-to-person recruitment. Financial assistance in the form of grants and scholarships have been set up by individuals, congregations, schools, and the synod. Recruitment emphases are found in the curricula of our parish schools and area high schools. Sooner or later any program under the WELS umbrella should be concerned with recruitment, because all God-pleasing activities will seek God-pleasing leadership.
13. Such an assembly is mentioned several times in Acts, the calling of Matthias [1:12-26], of the deacons [6:1-6] and the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas [13:1-3].
14. Professor Wilbert Gawriscch writes in his 1991 convention essay, *Proceedings*, p. 239: "With respect to the offices of the public ministry it should again be stressed, as we noted in regard to the church's structure, that, although the moral law, God's holy, immutable will, has not been set aside, there are no ceremonial laws or legal regulations in the New Testament...The sweeping statement, "All things are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21), gives the church a free hand to establish whatever offices it finds to be necessary or useful (1 Corinthians 10:23), provided only that the basic considerations of good order and love are taken into account (1 Corinthians 14:33,40; 16:14)."
15. Theologians distinguish between the "immediate" call which God used in Bible times to call prophets and apostles directly without human agency and the "mediate" call in which God the Holy Spirit directs his will through a gathering of believers.
16. Paul the Apostle states that preachers must be sent [Romans 10:15]. In Hebrews the point is made that even Jesus had to carry out his ministry with a call from God [5:4f]. The Augsburg Confession sums up this

- doctrine in Article XIV (Triglot, 49), "they [i.e., the Evangelical Lutherans] teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called."
17. The "once a priest, always a priest" error is a Roman Catholic aberration connected to the false doctrine of the mass. Both errors are treated thoroughly and condemned in the Lutheran Confessions. Persons in the public ministry may resign for reasons of age or health, or be asked to step aside for cause. A person's ministry also ends if the call he holds no longer exists. On this last point, see a fine article by Richard Lauersdorf, entitled "The Doctrine of the Call With Special Reference To The Question Of Its Permanence Under Changed Circumstances." The Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. 86 (1989), pp. 265-281.
  18. These are the purposeful uses of Scripture commended to Timothy by Paul [2 Timothy 3:16].
  19. These terms are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
  20. "[God] made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" [2 Corinthians 4:6]
  21. Jesus admonished his disciples not to emulate the Gentile rulers who relished power, even when that power was benevolent [Luke 22:25].
  22. The creation of just such a priestly hierarchy in the medieval church led to many of the abuses condemned in our Lutheran Confessions, i.e., the mass, indulgences, purgatory.
  23. Peter encourages all of his readers to "declare the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" [1 Peter 2:9]. Paul stated that all of the Corinthian believers were ministers of a new covenant" [2 Corinthians 3:6] and urged all of the Colossians "to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" [Colossians 3:16]. Luther commented: "These words St. Paul spoke to all Christians, that he might make ministers of the Spirit out of all of them," Luther's Works, vol. 36, p. 149.
  24. Here we are reminded how Luther admonishes the believer to live his baptism by the drowning the Old Adam, and how he urged the faithful to frequent the Lord's Table for assurance of the forgiveness of sins.
  25. Gawrisch, op.cit., p. 243.
  26. Proceedings p.26.
  27. I am reminded of Luther's frustration with his friend Melanchthon's weak understanding of sin and grace as it touched key doctrines of Scripture and Luther's observation that Melanchthon would have been a better public servant if he had sinned a little.



## Discussion Exercise: God's "Recruits"

### 1. HIGH ACHIEVER

- a rags to riches story in youth
- took the law into his own hands
- didn't serve God until his life 2/3s over
- a friend who knew God face to face
- lost his temper and didn't give God glory
- in anger smashed scripture
- tried to turn down his call to ministry
- had the best education in the world
- prayed more than once to die for his people
- had a brother who let him down

### 2. PESSIMIST

- went one way when God said the other
- disappointed over God's mercifulness
- preached "hell and brimstone"
- asked to be sacrificed for his stupidity
- missionary to a foreign field
- also a victim of storm and sea
- a prophet of Israel
- dared to question God's judgments
- won over 100,000 to repentance
- trusted God in a very tight spot

### 3. LONER

- political outcast
- stood up against many and won
- performed many miracles
- so lonely he wanted to die
- heard God's still, small voice
- kept alive against the odds
- feared God had left him all alone
- anointed two kings and a prophet
- a prophet who wrote no scripture
- accused of troubling Israel

### 4. IMPIOUS P.K.

- fourth generation servant of God
- married out of the faith
- didn't like dreamers and boasters
- made money on one brother
- offered to exchange self for brother
- lived a double standard in his sex life
- had a wicked son killed by God
- inherited the blessing from his father
- almost starved together with family
- ancestor of David and Jesus

### 5. PIOUS P.K.

- fourth generation servant of God
- married out of the faith
- flaunted his talents and gifts
- spent years away from home
- rags to riches story
- shrewd manager of other people's wealth
- believed God works all things for good
- able to forgive and forget
- inherited the birthright from his father
- able to put principle above pleasure

### 6. YUPPIE

- born & raised in rich cosmopolitan city
- son of an idolater
- blessed with great wealth, many servants
- married very attractive wife
- told lies to save his life
- tried to help God with the plan of salvation
- a good steward who refused to get rich on evil
- was asked to give up the thing he most wanted
- a warrior who defeated four kings in battle
- left everything to follow God's Word and will

### 7. NERD

- picked on and laughed at
- mother's child
- poor judge of character
- made servants do his "dirty work" for him
- entered into an arranged marriage
- lied to save his life
- let family members lead him astray
- trusted his father totally
- experienced what substitutionary salvation is
- one of the patriarchs

### 8. SELF-CONFIDENT

- schemed to get his fair share
- got back what he dished out to others
- spent long periods away from home
- ill-treated his loved ones
- plotted with his mother against his father
- held onto God for dear life
- had more than one name
- considered his life to be full of sorrow
- was encouraged by angels
- died in a foreign land

#### 9. BEAUTIFUL

- lived far away from the Holy Land
- married into power and wealth
- member of a nation marked for destruction
- won a beauty contest
- had the courage of convictions
- had more than one name
- put life on the line when it counted
- a savior of God's people
- hid faith when moving in society
- threw a feast for a king

#### 10. HANDSOME

- lived far from the Holy Land
- ate only clean food
- was able to understand dreams
- served mighty kings
- survived political changes
- willing to die for his faith
- was protected by angels
- prayed three times a day
- obeyed God rather than men
- lived a long life

#### 11. HYPOCRITE

- painfully shy as a young man
- a head taller than all the rest
- liked outward appearances
- carried out religious reforms
- didn't practice what he preached
- assumed public ministry without a call
- both hated and loved his successor
- suffered from depression
- uttered prophecies
- life ended in tragedy

#### 12. BRAT

- was pegged for ministry from birth
- belonged to an oppressed people
- trifled with spiritual gifts
- didn't listen to his parents
- had a weakness for women
- broke a sacred vow
- used as a defender of his people
- had a short fuse
- believed in getting even with people
- achieved more in death than in life

#### 13. HOTHEAD

- had a business with his brother and friends
- a natural leader
- a blowhard
- didn't always follow through on his word
- in the inner circle of his best friend
- able to repent
- had difficulty giving up childhood habits
- preached a sermon that won over thousands
- one whose love was three times requested
- wrote scripture

#### 14. GUNG HO

- a citizen of two nations
- had a fine formal education
- eager to do the right thing for God
- went after those who disagreed with him
- didn't accept pay for his labors
- suffered more than most in his ministry
- had a personal weakness he couldn't shake
- gathered believers wherever he went
- had to defend his ministry against critics
- considered self the worst sinner of all

#### 15. CHARMER

- a son almost ignored by father and family
- achieved almost everything a man could want
- betrayed his own family
- a poetic writer
- once an outlaw
- nearly undone by his passion
- one whose heart was one with the Lord
- confessed with no excuses
- knew the pains of parenthood
- proverbial for the best in a ruler

#### 16. SOCIAL MISFIT

- illegitimate child
- became an outlaw
- shunned by better-born kinsmen
- a shrewd diplomat and a fierce fighter
- foolish in making pledges
- folly forfeited family
- short-term savior in tumultuous times
- brought back home when all else failed
- ruthless with those who tried to steal a victory
- numbered among the heroes of faith

17. MR. MY-WAY

- son of a religious backslider
- tore down idols and altars
- acted like a king but refused the crown
- gutsy enough to dicker with God
- had a large army whittled to nearly nothing
- claimed equal billing with God in victory
- had 70 sons slain by another son
- set up an object that people worshiped
- wanted inside information before entering a fight
- deferred to an arrogant kinsman

18. SERVANT FOR LIFE

- the hopes and dreams of his mother
- was sent away to a "prep" school
- taught by a kindly but indulgent man
- called by God while still a boy
- grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and the people
- went on to serve as the last of the judges
- also a prophet and priest of God
- had sons who took bribes
- anointed Israel's first two kings
- operated a school of the prophets



***Answers for "God's Recruits" --***

1. Moses 2. Jonah 3. Elijah 4. Judah 5. Joseph 6. Abraham 7. Isaac 8. Jacob  
9. Esther 10. Daniel 11. Saul 12. Samson 13. Peter 14. Paul 15. David  
16. Jephthah 17. Gideon 18. Samuel