



## A Rationale for Recruitment to the Gospel Ministry

### THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE

People make decisions every day. We recognize, ultimately, that the decision to study and prepare oneself as a candidate for the public ministry of the Gospel is a work of the Holy Spirit and a fruit of faith. In this special sense we see that *recruitment* is the work of our God who works solely through his Word.

At the same time we may properly say that congregations and individuals can offer evangelical encouragement to individuals toward such a decision. We may also call this *recruitment*.

However, though there are many resources and tools available for the recruiter to use, the task of recruitment toward the public ministry dare never be reduced to mere salesmanship or public relations. Always remember that **the recruiter's first goal is to be a faithful servant of God who knows that the fruits of his efforts will only come about by God's grace and blessing.**

With the above principle in mind, the following insights may prove beneficial for congregations and for individuals as they "recruit" within their congregation.

### WHAT IS RECRUITMENT?

Recruitment is many different things. There are also many things that recruitment is *not*. Recruitment is not just "selling" someone on a school. It is not "arm twisting" or "guilt tripping." Recruitment isn't begging. It isn't promising or assigning or even owing someone a call into the ministry. There are many different facets to recruitment. The following sections will list and describe some of them. Take a moment to refer to the portion of scripture noted as an illustration for each section.

#### I. RECRUITMENT IS *ASKING*

Mt 9:35-38 (Cf. also *Part III* of the Bible Study)

Jesus could clearly see the need for the gospel to be preached. He saw multitudes of straying sheep who didn't know the Good Shepherd. But Jesus also saw another problem: the workers were few. Jesus' instructions to the disciples were simple - ASK. The words Jesus spoke indicate the disciples were to begin by literally begging the Lord of the Harvest to "throw out" more workers into the harvest field.

The times haven't change. The harvest still is plentiful. Workers still are few. What does God tell *us* to

begin by doing? *“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

When you stop and think about it, we are all quite good at asking for things we want. Spouses ask favors of each other. Children make their requests known to their parents and vice versa. Friends know they can freely ask favors of each other. Of course, because we still have a sinful nature, our asking can sometimes become selfish and demanding. That isn't the sort of asking our Lord is looking for.

Rather, the asking he seeks will come from our new man, our Christian nature (Luke 11:9-13). At our Lord's invitation, we believers may gladly and willingly bring our requests -- specifically the request for workers -- to God with boldness and confidence. We are, after all, bringing this request to the Lord of the Harvest, who wants to hear our prayers and who is delighted to answer them. In fact, in Matthew 10 we read how the Lord answered the very prayer he instructed his disciples to pray. The disciples who prayed for workers in Matthew 9 were sent out by Jesus in Matthew 10 to do the very work they'd prayed about. By God's grace, the disciples were allowed to become the answer to their own prayer!

Please note carefully for what we are to ask -- that workers be sent. This implies that workers are available. It implies that those workers have been trained and motivated. It implies that those workers will be supported. (Cf. *Part I* of the Bible Study)

Why are *we* to do this asking? If for no other reason, it is simply because God has told us. That, in and of itself, is reason enough. But there is more, much more. The need for workers still exists. There will always be a need for workers. As long as there are sinners there will be a need to preach the saving message of Christ crucified! (Romans 10:14-15)

## II. RECRUITMENT IS *IDENTIFYING*

2 Timothy 2:1-2

We recognize that God has given gifts to each of us as individuals. He expects us to use those gifts to the best of our ability and for His honor and glory. In the case of ministers of the gospel, the Lord has also spelled out some specific qualifications or gifts that should be present. A list of those qualifications is given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. In this way God himself helps us to identify some of the talents we should look for when it comes to recruiting. Take a look at God's lists of qualifications as a guide in identifying recruitment prospects.

However, when it comes to *identifying* it is crucial to remember that we are seeking to identify *prospects* -- individuals who may have the potential to be developed into *candidates* for the public ministry. We don't seek ready-made pastors and teachers. What we find may often be “diamonds in the rough.” Certainly, every person we consider as a recruitment prospect will be a sinner; that means we will never find a prospect who is a “perfect fit” for God's qualifications. Also, because many of the prospects we consider will be young, their abilities and even their characters and personalities may be undeveloped or immature. But they still may be “raw material,” clay that can be molded by the hands of God.

It would be fair to expect that a prospect for the public ministry ought to have some ability to communicate. The Gospel does not “jump off of the page” (Cf. *Part I* of the Bible Study); it is communicated. Sometimes we say that the prospect ought to be a “people-person,” that is, someone able to work and get along with people from varied backgrounds. The prospect should also possess the intellectual gifts needed to complete the course of study necessary for the ministry. As a whole, this means having intellectual gifts that are average or above.

Above all, however, the quality for which to be watchful in seeking to identify possible recruitment

prospects is *faithfulness* -- faithfulness to God and to his word, faithfulness in use of the means of grace, faithfulness in making the most of whatever talents and abilities God has given. Where faithfulness is present, God can help the individual overcome limitations in other areas. Where faithfulness is lacking, even the highly gifted individual will struggle.

Prospects for recruitment toward the public ministry come in all shapes and sizes and may be of almost any age or background. There are prospects among the people you know, in your congregation, perhaps even in your own family. It is never too early to begin *identifying* them.

### III. RECRUITMENT IS *CONTACTING*

John 1:40-51

Andrew sought out Simon Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him. Jesus himself spoke to James and John and the others who became his disciples. *Personal contact* is instrumental in drawing people toward the Savior's service.

Obviously, one of the persons who needs to be contacted is the prospect. Finding out about his or her interest in the ministry, knowledge about the work, and individual talents for it are important. That can best be done by striking up a casual conversation and developing a rapport that allows you to get to know the prospect as an individual.

A few cautions are in order. Be careful about singling prospects out in ways that might embarrass them, especially in front of peers. It is also important not to downgrade or belittle other possibilities they may be considering for careers.

Parents may also need to be contacted. Elementary and even high school age prospects seldom make important life choices without involvement and support from their parents. Perhaps parents may not have thought about their child as a candidate for the public ministry. Perhaps they, themselves, need to be encouraged to encourage their child.

At times it is also good to contact others in and outside of the congregation. Make the Board of Elders aware. Contact the Scholarship Committee. Make use of classmates because sometimes interest in the ministry expands if more than one person is considering it. Explore the different schools available for preparing, encouraging, and nurturing prospects. Contact these schools to gain information about them and to share appropriate information about the prospect so that the schools can follow up.

Satan seeks to place many obstacles in front of people thinking about studying for the ministry. God may use you as the one to remove some of those obstacles for a prospect you know. It begins by simply making contact.

### IV. RECRUITMENT IS *ON-GOING*

2 Timothy 1:5-6

When should you begin encouraging a young person to think about the ministry? It is never too early. Paul recognized that Timothy had been set upon a path toward the public ministry through the faithfulness of his mother, Lois, and his grandmother, Eunice. Their influence began when Timothy was still just a little child.

When children in their early years talk about what they will be when they grow up, it is a perfect time to

introduce and reinforce the *possibility* of serving as a minister of the gospel. Pre-school children often ask questions about pastors and teachers and what they do. Along with explaining the work of God's servants, little ones can be told that this is work *they* can grow up to do. Elementary age children see their pastors and Lutheran school teachers as figures they look up to and admire. It is fair to point out that God could use the child in the same way some day. Junior high and high school students are beginning to think about what they want to do with their lives. Helping them keep the public ministry among their options is surely a worthwhile effort.

One of the best ways to encourage young people is by *modeling*. When young people see the joys their called workers display while serving in the public ministry, it speaks volumes. Also worth noting are the important examples that lay people set in how they show respect, support, and appreciation for their called workers. Actions speak louder than words.

Where possible, helping prospects to get acquainted with our synod's ministerial education schools is valuable. This can be as simple as inviting them to attend a sporting event or arranging for them to make a campus visit at one of the synod's schools. If the campuses are quite distant from where the prospect lives, arranging a visit may be more difficult but may be even more important. The more distant a school may be, the more "foreign" it can seem to a prospect. Making a campus more familiar can go a long way toward bridging the distance between home and school, and between the prospect and the public ministry.

It is also beneficial to try to involve prospects in some active form of public ministry: teaching or assisting with Sunday School or VBS, canvassing the church's neighbors, ushering or playing an instrument in worship services, tutoring or drilling younger students in the elementary school, accompanying the pastor on calls, and so on. Such activities not only help to make the public ministry more concrete for young people but it also lets them begin to visualize themselves filling such roles.

Recruitment for the public ministry is seldom accomplished by a single, life-changing effort or contact. Normally it is the fruit of persistent, personal, on-going effort.

It is vital to remember that recruitment efforts may not always be met with the sort of "success" we might hope for or intend. What affects one person positively may turn another off. Prospects may seem to be headed toward the ministry and then change their minds along the way. On some occasions individuals may do things that disqualify them from the office of the ministry or studying for it. However, God will bring the "success" he desires from our efforts. Remember the *underlying principle* with which we began. Ultimately, recruitment is God's work. He uses our on-going efforts as he knows best and, in the end, he will give the increase.

## V. RECRUITMENT IS USING RESOURCES

Ephesians 4:11-12

Please don't be left with the impression that, somehow, you are alone in this process. Remember your other resources. Pastors and teachers are involved in this work and may have ideas to share. Other members share your concern about this work and may be willing to work with you. Sons and daughters of your congregation who are either currently serving in the ministry or studying as candidates for the ministry can be wonderful sources of information or encouragement for prospects. This *Handbook* will try to provide other ideas, thought starters, activities, and resources that may be useful for you. Above all, remember the resource you have in God and his Word. His promises hold true. As Paul wrote, "*It was he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*"

Return to p.24 and review *The Underlying Principle*.

## WHO DOES RECRUITMENT?

There were times in the history of God's people that he came and spoke directly to individuals and called them into the ministry to preach and teach his word. Examples of this would include such ministers of God as Moses (Exodus 3) or the apostle Paul (Acts 9).

Today, however, God does not call people directly, using a voice from a burning bush or in a vision along a well-traveled road. Instead, God chooses to work through groups of believers such as our congregations or our synod to call people to serve him in the holy ministry. God expects his church to provide suitable training for those who would serve in the public ministry so that those whom the church may call will be able and well qualified to serve.

A point to remember is that serving God in the public ministry is a privilege, not a right; neither God nor his church "owe" anyone a call into the public ministry. It is for that reason that we rightly speak of those we recruit as *prospects* for the public ministry, and we refer to those who have completed the training the church prescribes as *candidates* for that ministry.

The apostle Paul reminds us that **Christ's love compels us** (2 Corinthians 5:14). It is love for Jesus and love for Him alone that will move us to view our fellowmen and recognize the mass of humanity who needs to hear about the Savior. **We all, like sheep, have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6)**. We all need a shepherd. By God's grace we have one -- the heavenly shepherd named Jesus. Because we want others to know that Shepherd as we do, we seek to train others to be earthly shepherds of Jesus' flock.

Who should do the seeking? Clearly, that seeking will be done by all those who want earthly shepherds to be found and trained, all those who will be blessed by the service those shepherds will render to the Savior and to his church. Who will seek? Who will recruit? Every believer will.

The recruitment of young people to prepare for the public ministry is a part of our Christian stewardship -- stewardship of the young lives God places into our homes, schools, and congregations. Such recruitment, like all other stewardship, is ultimately the privilege and responsibility of every child of God.

In His church today, God graciously uses people to do his work. God can and wants to use us and our congregations to find, encourage, support, and prepare future public ministers of the Gospel.



Return to p.24 and review *The Underlying Principle*

## WHY DO RECRUITMENT?

Who will baptize your children? Who will be there to assist you as you instruct your children in the truths of God's Word? Who will offer you guidance and counsel from God's Word at times when your

life is troubled? Who will be at your death bed to give you strength and hope? Following your death, who will comfort your loved ones and friends with the truths of holy Scripture? And who will do these precious things for the next generation, and the next? The answers to these questions also suggest several answers to the question: *Why Do Recruitment?* But there are other answers:

## **I. GOD COMMANDS IT**

God literally commands in the Scriptures that we encourage and train future ministers of the Gospel. Paul wrote to Timothy *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."* (2 Timothy 2:2). During his earthly ministry Jesus instructed his disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out more workers. (Matthew 9) In Romans 10, Paul simply raises a series of questions that illustrate the need to send out workers. Sinners need to hear the good news of the Gospel. Consequently, God desires those who know that good news to find, prepare, and send out messengers to tell others.

## **II. PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR THE GOSPEL**

Until Jesus comes again there will always be a need to preach the gospel. Until he comes again this world will be populated by sinners who need to know the message of the Savior who lived, died, and rose again for them. There will never be a day on this side of eternity in which the law will not have to be preached in all its severity and the gospel will not need to be proclaimed in all its sweetness to heal wounds, to comfort hearts, and to offer the sure hope of heaven. People need to know the Lord, the Savior-God who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Light. Salvation can be found in no one else.

## **III. DIRE CONSEQUENCES LOOM WHEN GOSPEL MINISTERS ARE NOT RECRUITED AND TRAINED**

When there are no pastors and teachers who are trained to lead God's people the picture is not a pleasant one. When no one is trained to preach and teach, God's people are not fed. Souls starve for want of the pure milk and meat of the Word. When no one is trained to preach and teach, outreach fades. New souls are not won for Christ; people continue on the one way roller coaster ride to their eternal doom in hell. When no one is trained to preach and teach, spiritual growth dwindles and may die. Without sufficient servants to feed the lambs and sheep, those in Christ's flock may be more apt to stray.

We can learn from the experience of Old Testament Israel: *"After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what He had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served Baal."* (Judges 2:10-11). It is the present generation's responsibility to train workers for the next generation of believers. When the Israelites did not make it a priority to train and share the word of the LORD, people turned from the true God to idols.

Observing the experiences of other church bodies can also offer warnings of what can and does happen to doctrine and practice when a new generation of public ministers is not recruited and trained. We can only humbly thank God that in His wisdom and mercy He has led the WELS to place a high priority on a thorough and biblical training for its pastors and teachers.

## **VI. GREAT BLESSINGS RESULT**

When one generation encourages and prepares future candidates for the public ministry, by God's grace, future generations will continue to hear the gospel and souls will be won for heaven. When we read and study the pages of Scriptures we marvel at the great blessing that men like Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, and Jeremiah were for God's people in the OT and men like John, Peter, Philip and Paul were in the NT. They were all public ministers of God who brought God's blessings to others.

Recruiting future candidates for the ministry is one way of reaching out for those blessings. It is a vital and invaluable investment in the future of Christ's church.

