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**Who Will Support Campus Ministries?**

"If You Want To Stay In Campus Ministry, your future is in Madison, not Milwaukee."

With those words, I heard the Rev. Dr. Ronald E. Meyer, President of South Wisconsin District (SWD), tell me what I did not want to hear: SWD did not have enough financial resources to continue its full-time campus mission ministry to the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, where I served as campus pastor. As a result, I accepted the call I had received to Calvary Lutheran Chapel, the LCMS campus ministry serving the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

SWD did close its full-time ministry to UW–Milwaukee. The chapel, located across the street from the student union, is for sale, and the 27,000-student university is now served part-time by a traditional LCMS congregation that is about one mile from campus.

Meyer’s comment did not stem from a lack of interest in campus missions. To the contrary, he and SWD were and continue to be among the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod’s strongest supporters of campus ministry.

**Changes in District Support**

In 2003, SWD gave $323,000 in direct support to its five campus ministries serving public universities and an additional $67,000 to help students attending Synod’s ten colleges and universities. These figures do not include the District’s indirect support of insurance, capital improvements, in-kind services, etc.

"This is in light of SWD taking a 10 percent drop in congregation pledges in 2003 from 2002," said William Hoeg, SWD executive assistant to the president and business manager.

In 2005, SWD received about $370,000 less than it did the previous year, according to the Rev. Daniel McMiller, SWD missions executive.

"There is a lot of hardship in many of our parishes," said McMiller. "They are down in size and down in offerings."

Hoeg said that the District’s “buying power” is further reduced because congregational giving to the District hasn’t risen for 30 years. When inflation is taken into account, each dollar given in 1975 is worth less than 50 cents today, he said. "Needless to say, given our support received there will be changes in the support that we can provide," said Hoeg. The SWD is not alone.

**Impact on Campus Ministries**

In 2003, the Texas District eliminated program funding for all of its campus ministries except those serving the University of Texas, Austin, and Texas A&M University, College Station. Both must become self-supporting by 2010.

"The students and I have to spend more time raising money and less time doing ministry on campus," said Paul Hoemann, LCMS campus pastor serving Texas A&M.

"Also, we are cutting our International Student Ministry director position from full-time to part-time."

"The Michigan District is experiencing a difficult time, in terms of declining income, and we are impacted," said Dave Winningham, LCMS campus pastor serving the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Winningham said his District is considering various options, including possibly combining the campus ministry with another ministry or with Concordia University, Ann Arbor. "I am looking at other options," said Winningham, "either becoming a fundraiser—which I am not, but necessity is the mother of invention—or developing an independent congregation."

Even campus ministries that have not yet been affected recognize that long-term District funding is not guaranteed. "We have a wonderful relationship with the District," said W. Max Mons, LCMS campus pastor serving the University of Iowa, Iowa City. "They support us and we support them." Iowa District East provides Mons’ salary and benefits, plus half of the campus ministry’s $100,000 budget. It is also responsible for all of the chapel’s major maintenance and repairs. "But what happens if financial times and District leadership change and it is decided that campus ministry is not as important?" Mons asked.

**New Directions**

St. Paul’s Lutheran Chapel and Student Center, where Mons serves, recently received a Charitable Gifting Initiative grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans to begin an endowment campaign coordinated by a new part-time development director. "We hope to get to the point where, if the District snipped the umbilical cord, we would be fine," said Mons. St. Paul’s campaign has generated $45,000 in donations so far.

Calvary Lutheran Chapel in Madison, Wisconsin, and Martin Luther Chapel in East Lansing, Michigan, also have received Charitable Gifting Initiative grants from Thrivent Financial to start intentional campus ministry fundraising campaigns.

With or without paid development staff, many other LCMS campus ministries are also becoming more intentional about raising the funds needed to do the Lord’s work. This often begins with seeking additional support from the participants who are currently being blessed by campus ministries, along with their closest relatives, such as parents and spouses. It continues with appeals to the ministries’ alumni who have fond memories of the blessings they received back when they did not have much money to put into the offering plate.

"I have donated every time my former campus ministry has asked me to do so, and I would be willing to write more and bigger checks if only they would ask," said one LCMS campus ministry alumnus who requested to remain anonymous because “I want every campus ministry to think that I am one of their alums.”

Other common sources of revenue include area congregations and church groups, such as Lutheran Women’s Missionary League societies. At campuses where parking is hard to find, some campus ministries generate revenue by renting church parking spaces to students during the week. Many campus ministries are taking advantage of Thrivent Financial’s GivingPlus program, which supplements some donations made to qualifying organizations. New LCMS campus ministries and dormant ones that wish to revive are eligible to apply for grants from the Lutheran Campus Mission Association (LCMA), a mission society in partnership with LCMS World Mission.

Some campus ministries are developing more creative ways to generate funding. For example, the Lutheran Student Center in Lubbock, Texas, located across the street from..."
The Lubbock coffee house

Texas Tech University, opened Martin’s Coffee Haus, a commercial business that sells coffee and cappuccino and provides other services such as free wireless Internet access. “We are hoping to see over $50,000 profit by the second year of operation,” said Bruce Wurdeman, the Texas District mission and ministry facilitator who assists the Lubbock campus ministry. “But the main reason we opened it is to get more traffic through the student center. It is a mission first; the money is secondary.”

Meijer, a grocery supercenter chain in Michigan and other Midwest states, offers its customers an opportunity to allocate one percent of the money they spend there to area charities. Martin Luther Chapel, which serves Michigan State University in East Lansing, is one of the registered charities, and 82 Meijer customers have listed the chapel as their recipient. As a result, the campus ministry receives more than $100 per month from Meijer customers who have listed the chapel as their recipient. As a result, the campus ministry

What’s Important

The Lubbock coffee house and the East Lansing superstore’s donation program help show that the primary focus of fundraising is not funding. “Ministry and personal relationships are more important than money,” said Dr. Phyllis Castens Wiederhoeft, executive director of the Association of Lutheran Development Executives. “If they are emphasized and communicated well, then funding can follow.”

To promote the campus ministry at Texas A&M, Hoemann asks himself, “How can I best communicate to people what God is doing here, and how can they become a part of it?” He encourages other campus ministry workers to ask themselves the same question.

“I try to have at least one article about the campus ministry in Iowa City in every issue of LCMS Today,” said Mons when discussing the bimonthly publication that is delivered free of charge to all congregations in Iowa District East. Partnerships with area congregations is a key element to effective campus ministries, according to Carl Selle, LCMS campus pastor serving the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. “We are not islands, but centers with octopus-like arms reaching for prayers, relationships, financial and other support,” Selle said. “It is a two-way street. I believe that campus ministries are being ‘dropped’ because they have not worked the partnerships available.”

Hoemann said that prayer, not funding, is the most important thing a campus ministry can receive from its partners. “Second, congregations can send us the names and contact information of their current and prospective college students,” Hoemann said, “so that we can begin to make meaningful contacts with those students.”

Reduced funding also opens doors for campus missionaries and the ministries they serve to be more entrepreneurial, said the Rev. Mike Ruhl, executive director of the Center for U. S. Missions in Irvine, California, and a former Michigan District missions executive. “There is no greater, more fertile, and more accessible mission field anywhere,” Ruhl added. “But many campus ministries have suffered from a lack of vision, mission and goals.”

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Strategic Planning

Entrepreneurial training is happening now, thanks to the Campus Missionary Institute. The Campus Missionary Institute is LCMS’s one-week learning opportunity to help LCMS campus and camp workers and the ministries they serve to develop a strategic plan for outreach on a nearby college or university campus. The next Campus Missionary Institute will be July 7-13, 2006, at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska. More information is available online at www.lcms.info.

Campus ministries deserve more enthusiastic and meaningful support because the church’s future will be affected by it, according to Hoemann. “The people sitting in my pews today are tomorrow’s leaders in your congregation,” Hoemann said regarding the Texas A&M students he serves. He also said that college is “a time of life when people are most open to the Gospel” and, as such, “university communities are tremendous mission fields.”

“What an opportunity we have to reach them with the Gospel now,” said Hoemann. “However, if we are shutting down our campus ministries, or severely cutting them back, because ‘they cost too much,’ then shame on us. We are missing out big time on an opportunity that God has placed right in our laps.”

“Campus mission fields are one of the most strategic fields in the United States,” said the Rev. Dr. Robert Scudieri, LCMS World Mission Associate Executive Director for National Missions. “It is on the modern day university and college campuses that the best and brightest from the United States and from around the world are located. Influences here are ones that will continue for years to come.”