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One Hundred Years of Social Ministry —  
Now What?

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# One Hundred Years of Social Ministry— Now What?

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Organized social ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, officially begun in 1950 by the creation of a synodical Board of Social Welfare, is in 1968 actually in its centennial year. While it is striving to discover newer and better ways to reach troubled people and in this sense may be rebelling against the past to a certain degree, it is by no means willing to ignore the foundations and activities of the past, which have abundantly demonstrated that faith has been at work within our churches in deeds of love. It is interesting to note that within social ministry circles there have always been those who were considered “rebels” because they insisted on developing new and better approaches to meet the problems and burdens borne by the people of their day. Like the social workers of today, they sought to put into practice effectively the command of our Lord who said: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”<sup>1</sup>

## I. ONE HUNDRED YEARS

“Notable movements in history are usually traceable to notable individuals who are providentially endowed with those

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<sup>1</sup> John 13:34-35.

*The author is executive secretary of the Board of Social Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*

qualities which equip them to make a lasting influence on the thoughts and actions of others. The Christian past has its share of pathfinders whose lives were opening wedges in new directions of understanding and application of Christian faith. Thus it was with the origin of the social ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. A colony of some 750 German-Lutherans had left their native Saxony late in 1839 for a new world. Among them was a young candidate for the ministry, John Frederick Buenger. This . . . practical minded man of thirty was to become a pioneer in the social ministry programs of our church body.”<sup>2</sup>

Pastor Buenger, who had received an annual salary of \$180 when he married in 1843, knew from experience the burdens and distresses that only the love of Christ could ease. Five of his seven children plus his first wife were the victims of disease and went to early graves. Undoubtedly this suffering and these losses were used by God to condition him for a ministry of concern for others.

In 1858 Pastor Buenger, already 12 years at Immanuel Church in St. Louis, became the advocate of a hospital. This was advanced thinking in that day. He had difficulty in locating a residence which was to be used for the care of the sick. “All he wanted to do was to rent a room or two somewhere in the city and install a kind-

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<sup>2</sup> F. Dean Lueking, *A Century of Caring* (St. Louis: Board of Social Ministry, 1968), p. 1.

hearted elderly couple who would care for the sick. But no one wanted a hospital, or as it was called in German a *Pesthaus*, in his neighborhood.”<sup>3</sup> In those days hospitals were looked upon as places where people were sent to die, not live. But Pastor Buenger saw the need for care as he ministered to his members during the cholera epidemic that had struck the St. Louis area. Finally a member offered the use of four rooms of his house (two rooms rent free, the other two for a small charge), and so the first Lutheran Hospital west of Pittsburgh, Pa., was started. In 1864 two large frame houses were purchased. This allowed for a patient load of 30 to 40 persons.

The association of congregations that was formed to care for the sick was expanded to include a home for children in 1867 when its charter was filed under the name Lutheran Hospital, Asylum, and Orphanage Association of St. Louis. The story of Pastor Buenger’s involvement in the creation of a home for children is told by Henry F. Wind as follows: “One day there came to his home a widower, a member of his congregation, who through adverse circumstances was compelled to leave Saint Louis. There was a minor child and no one to care for him. So the man came to his pastor seeking help. The problem seemed simple to Pastor Buenger. ‘Why,’ he exclaimed, ‘bring the child here. We have lots of room in the parsonage.’ So the child came to live with the pastor’s family. On the day following the child’s arrival an unsigned note was delivered to the parsonage. It read, ‘For the orphanage.’ Attached was a \$5 bill. So the seed was planted. The idea of an orphanage grew

<sup>3</sup> Henry F. Wind, “Love Never Faileth,” unpublished sermon.

quickly. Soon Pastor Buenger was compelled to act, for the news of his kindness had spread and after a few months dependent children occupied every nook and corner of the pastor’s home. With characteristic energy Pastor Buenger rented a house and installed an aged couple to take care of the children who soon overflowed this house also. Thus the first orphanage in the Missouri Synod came into being.”<sup>4</sup> The orphanage itself was located on land purchased by St. Paul’s Church of Des Peres in 1867. The cornerstone for the building was laid March 15, 1868. Pastor Buenger preached the sermon. The dedication occurred on Oct. 11.

At the turn of the century Missouri Synod Lutherans, inspired by what had happened in St. Louis, had established 13 child-caring and family-service institutions and agencies, five homes for the aging, five hospitals, and one institutional chaplaincy program.

The following years saw much activity throughout our church in developing extensions of these programs. As needs were discovered, new programs were established, and these were very relevant to those days. A program for the adoption of children as well as a foster home program was established in the Milwaukee area in 1896. This was a break with the concept of caring for children within an institution. It advocated the modern approach in child welfare that a child normally should grow up in a family setting. The need for the care of mentally retarded and physically handicapped children resulted in the creation of Bethesda Home in 1904. Tuberculosis was claiming the lives of many. This resulted in the establishment of the Wheat Ridge

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Sanatorium the same year. The realization that thousands of people were confined in publicly owned and operated hospitals, prisons, homes, and institutions moved our leaders to advance the practice of designating certain pastors, called city missionaries, to provide a pastoral ministry in these institutions. Pastor F. W. Herzberger in St. Louis at the turn of the century was the first of these, and it was not long before similar programs were sponsored by groups of congregations in other metropolitan areas. Thus there began the extensive programs of institutional chaplaincy services which now extend into more than 30 states, the District of Columbia, and our three Canadian Districts.

As we review the early history of social ministry in our church it becomes quite obvious that welfare programs were carried on because of the initiative of certain individuals or groups of individuals. Dr. August R. Suelflow comments concerning these activities as follows: "It was felt that the services of the 'Good Samaritan' ought to remain purely personal and spontaneous rather than be provided through the channels of synodical administrative machinery and budgets. But collectivization to meet the challenges became necessary and societies and associations multiplied. A few feeble attempts were made to incorporate such services in the 'official programs' of the Synod. But these were successfully 'decentralized.' It need not be surprising to note that on the parish level societal requirements were often more effectively presented on a personal basis than on district or synodical needs. Sometimes it even resulted that the districts and the Synod itself found difficulty in meeting the responsibilities and assignments which the vari-

ous congregations had given them. Greater coordination and regulation was needed to establish priorities and allocations. These factors, together with other social developments, sharpened the tensions. In fact, it involved the Synod in a paradox. It was opposed to centralization and bureaucracy on the one hand but became engaged in providing it on the other."<sup>5</sup>

While the structure of social ministry programs varied in the early days, and support came from the local areas, there was wide agreement that social ministry was not an optional activity for the church. In his treatise on *Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staat unabhängigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde*, C. F. W. Walther wrote: "For the proper care of the poor, widows, orphans, aged, invalids, sick and the like, the congregation shall elect one or more persons who are to serve as almoners to see to it that no one is overlooked in the matter of necessary support and help."<sup>6</sup> While a false dichotomy was to develop which separated social welfare activities from the proclamation of the Gospel, Suelflow bears record that this was not the situation from the beginning. "The Synod was fully cognizant and aware that welfare cannot well be separated from the fruits of the Gospel. Therefore, it was not a matter of 'either or' but a 'both and' objective. One was not to be performed at the expense of the other. Quite frequently

<sup>5</sup> August R. Suelflow, "Spontaneous, Optional, or Luxury," mimeographed (St. Louis: Concordia Historical Institute, 1963), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *The Form of a Christian Congregation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 153. Another translation of this work was published in William Dallmann et al, *Walther and the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938).

in presentation of the history of the Synod a wrong impression may have been left by a concentration on its theological controversies and involvement, rather than upon its emphasis upon the fruits of faith.”<sup>7</sup>

While no provision for synodical supervision over direct welfare services was provided, and no money was included in the operating budget of the Synod for these causes, the Synod did provide publicity for these programs and encouraged the members to participate freely. The pages of *Der Lutheramer*, the official organ of the church, carried regular reports of the activities and helped communicate needs.

At the synodical convention of 1874 a resolution was submitted by the Pastors and Teachers Conference of Michigan to convert the Detroit Deaf Institute from a private institution to a synodical institution. A similar request came from the Orphans' Society of Addison, Illinois. While the Synod did not feel that it was in a position to participate directly in the work of societies that were springing up, it did by resolution express its willingness to oversee such institutions. In assuming supervision over the Deaf Institute and the Orphans' Home it authorized the respective District presidents to serve as synodical inspectors and made them responsible to the Synod for the work of the institutions. The presidents were to report on the conditions and work of the agencies and supply the necessary encouragement to the congregations to continue their support and participation.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning in the early years, Synod served as a transfer agent for funds that

were contributed for charitable agencies, and this practice has continued to this day in parts of the church. An attempt was made in 1881 to regularize this procedure and include welfare within the synodical budget. Three years later the Synod was asked to establish an institution for the mentally ill. But in each case the Synod felt that it was inadvisable to respond in the affirmative.

In 1899 a memorial suggested that all benevolence and charitable work be placed directly under synodical control. This memorial was tabled because the convention felt that it was unable to implement such a resolution. The fear was expressed that too many difficulties would be encountered.<sup>9</sup>

Most significant in the development of social welfare advances in the Synod was the contribution of the Associated Lutheran Charities, a free association of agencies and individuals within the then Synodical Conference who were active in welfare causes. This association was born in 1901 when three city missionaries — F. W. Herzberger of St. Louis, August Schlechte of Chicago, and Frederick Ruhland of Buffalo — met in Chicago at old St. Paul's Church. Initially known as the *Lutherische Wohltätigkeits-Konferenz*, this group grew until it counted among its membership more than one hundred agencies and institutions. For more than 60 years it served as a forum and a source of help for several hundred executives, staff, board members, members of women's auxiliaries, institutional chaplains, and volunteers.

It was this association, termed the “chief visible expression of our church's active,

<sup>7</sup> Suelflow, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> *Proceedings*, Missouri Synod, 1874, pp. 77 to 78.

<sup>9</sup> Suelflow, p. 22.

living faith,"<sup>10</sup> which for many years brought together those people within our church who were sensitive to the needs of the sick, the orphaned, the poverty-stricken, and the delinquent and wanted to do something about the situations. Here they had an opportunity to meet with people of similar concern, which resulted in a steadily advancing set of standards that added quality to the compassion they possessed. Undoubtedly, the willingness to discuss the common problems of society with people outside Missouri Synod circles, as well as leaders in secular agencies, contributed to the growth in effective services on the part of our agencies and institutions.

The fact that this charities association proved to be such a vital force in demonstrating the Scriptural truths of a ministry to the "whole person" must be attributed to the fact that the Rev. Henry F. Wind of Buffalo and the Rev. E. Buckley Glabe of Minneapolis served as the program committee for more than 30 years. We are convinced that God used these social ministry leaders and the instrumentality of this association to keep alive the concepts of proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel which, unfortunately, had become separated from each other from World War I until the 1950s, when the Board of Social Welfare was authorized. Later at the Detroit convention this separation was completely ended when the Mission Affirmations were approved. The very fact that Synod hesitated to accept official responsibility for the charitable programs being carried on conveyed the impression that social ministry was a second-rate or subordinate part of the Gospel ministry. Luek-

ing states: "In countless statements, affirmed and reaffirmed in conferences and conventions, the Synod stated its task as that of proclaiming and preserving the purity of the Divine Word in Law and Gospel. This task was envisioned as a work for the souls of people. The ministry to their sick, homeless, or aged bodies was not regarded as an essential element in the proclamation. It was regarded as a fruit of faith which local Christians had the responsibility to carry out."<sup>11</sup> Expressions which we heard from church officials in the 1930s and 1940s that institutional chaplaincy "is not the work of the Synod," that "missions is in the main tent, but charity is the sideshow," reflected how far the church and many of its clergy had departed from the beliefs and practices of its founders.

The conventions of the Associated Lutheran Charities regularly approved resolutions to bring to the attention of the Synod the importance of a ministry of mercy among troubled people. Memorials were addressed to synodical conventions asking for recognition and official involvement, but for one reason or another the Synod was not willing to say that the work of Christian love was equally important with the teaching and preaching ministry. At the same time leaders of the charities association found themselves in a strange dilemma. They wanted church recognition and participation, but they feared that programs might come under the control of churchmen who really were not sufficiently interested and concerned to carry out the programs aggressively. Some of the leaders of Associated Lutheran Charities felt they had a solution when they recom-

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Lueking, p. 7.

mended that the Synod should create a Department of Social Welfare and appoint to the board members of the executive board of the charities association. The delays and hesitancy on the part of Synod to create a Social Welfare Board seemed to give credence to the misgivings of these welfare people. When a special committee appointed by President John W. Behnken, consisting of Dr. Charles A. Behnke, Dr. Elmer E. Foelber, and Mr. Lewis Klitzke, recommended in 1948 that the area of Christian social welfare could be appropriately carried on only through the guidance of a special synodical board, they met with resistance. The Fiscal Conference turned the proposal down because funds were not available. It was estimated by the committee that \$10,000 would be needed to function for a year. Determined not to give up, the committee presented its case to the delegates at the Milwaukee convention in 1950, and finally after a second vote it was clear to President Behnken that the delegates had approved the appointment of a Board of Social Welfare. Two members of the Associated Charities executive board were appointed. They were Dr. E. B. Glabe and the Rev. Arnold Bringewatt. Dr. Behnke, who was a member of the association, was named chairman. The Rev. Henry F. Wind was chosen executive secretary on a part-time basis until 1953, when he moved to St. Louis from Buffalo and provided concerned and forward-looking leadership until his death in 1966.<sup>12</sup>

The history of social ministry within The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod had its high points and low points. Like

any good picture, there were the highlights where real concern and faith moved men and women to action in behalf of others less fortunate. There were also the shadows in the picture, when because of an almost exclusive emphasis on spiritual matters such as preaching and teaching, there was a corresponding lack of emphasis on the physical, social, and mental needs of God's people. These were trying times for those who pleaded for a demonstration of the Gospel as well as the proclamation of it. Some were frequently reminded that they had "left the ministry" when they accepted positions in our welfare agencies or became institutional chaplains. To counteract this, some of the clergy in welfare activities had themselves called to congregations as assistant pastors so that they might retain status in the church. To many in the Synod it was their connection with a congregation that made their ministry legitimate, not their dedicated full-time service in the slums, on skid row, or in an institution.

Yet in spite of misunderstanding and threats that financial support might be withdrawn "if certain requirements were not met," the past hundred years present a glorious history. They were glorious because as a church we came back to where we were initially and where Jesus was in His ministry. We came back to serving whole people in the whole of society because of a dynamic faith in Jesus Christ that just had to demonstrate itself in deeds of love.

## II. NOW WHAT?

We now live in a time of rapid social change which prompts us to revise our methods and update our plans if we as a church are to meet the needs of God's

<sup>12</sup> L. F. Weber, *The Man of Good News, the Story of Henry F. Wind* (Buffalo: Artcraft-Burow, 1968), pp. 14—15.

people in America. Henry Whiting, secretary of research of the Division of Welfare Services, Lutheran Council in the United States of America, wrote regarding this change that "our church agencies must take such steps as may be necessary to be assured that their service programs are related to the contemporary situation and not merely maintaining the programs which may at one time have been relevant, but may no longer be valid in a changed social situation."<sup>13</sup>

Relatively speaking, our problems today are to us what the problems of yesterday were to our forefathers. They, too, viewed the needs of people with great seriousness, and they were moved to action. It would appear that if we can retain the awareness and the dynamic faith, patience, and compassion of the Buengers, Herzbergers, Winds, and others, coupled with the newer insights which are made available to us through the findings of the behavioral sciences, then we shall be equipped to face the changing present and move into the dynamic future.

Our problems have different names today. We speak of racism, poverty, delinquency, deterioration of family life, rebellion among our youth, the need for identity and self-determination, a new morality, crisis in our cities, and we see in all of these an intensification and multiplication of the problems that were here also in the past. With our burgeoning masses moving into the cities and making us a nation of city dwellers, with a social revolution in which black people and other minorities

are no longer willing to be second-class citizens, with the technological advances in business and industry moving ahead at such a pace that dehumanization has become a major concern, we must face the fact that we are living in a greatly changing society. In fact, the changes are occurring so quickly that the answers to today's questions may not even fit before the day is over.

It may seem trite to repeat that the church is at the crossroads in American society. Yet this is true. To live, the church must face the realities of today. If it withdraws itself from today's challenges and needs, it will wither and die. The church cannot, in ostrich fashion, ignore the disturbed and hurt people of our world and then lay claim to having been faithful to Jesus Christ and His mission in the world.

To provide stimulation to the church so that the second century of caring might be equally as meaningful as the first, the Board of Social Ministry has been reappraising its goals and adjusting its program. In recognition that ours is not a mere *welfare* responsibility but rather a *ministry* motivated by faith in Jesus Christ, among people who are in all sorts and conditions of life, the official name of the Board of Social Welfare was changed to the Board of Social Ministry at the New York convention of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

The change in name indicates a new thrust as we move into the future. With the new thrust there is also a new emphasis that will draw our agencies more closely to the official church. The sharpening and strengthening of administrative lines on

<sup>13</sup> Henry Whiting, "Report to the New England Agency," unpublished survey (New York: Lutheran Council in the United States of America, 1968), p. 1.



synodical and District levels, long overdue, can be expected in the years ahead.<sup>14</sup>

For years many of our people felt themselves apart from our service programs because they saw them as being performed by the welfare agencies to which they may or may not have contributed a small gift. Because of this inadequate and uncertain involvement and support of the institutional church, our agencies and institutions had to discover other sources of income to continue their programs at high levels of efficiency. Because assistance came from outside the church, some church people began to ask, "How Lutheran is this agency which calls itself Lutheran?" To point the way to appropriate relationships with the church, a polity statement was prepared and approved in 1967 which states:

All health and welfare agencies and institutions that seek the support of the Church and strive to serve in the name of the Church shall be expected to seek accreditation and endorsement by the Synodical Board of Social Ministry. Specifically, this means that the agency shall subscribe and adhere to the following standards:

1. It shall be incorporated solely on the basis of a clearly demonstrated need;
2. It shall be incorporated as a non-profit organization;
3. It shall meet the standards of licensing and strive to exceed the minimum requirements;
4. It must receive the endorsement of the district in which it is geographically located;
5. It shall have an effective governing board, the members of which shall be

chosen in consultation with the District Social Ministry Committee and in a manner acceptable to the district.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the above requirements for accreditation as a church agency, the polity statement requires that "the budget of all agencies must be reviewed annually by the District Social Ministry Committees. After such review the individual district, according to its own established procedure, shall, in consultation with the District Stewardship Committee, determine an appropriate goal for its support of the agencies." It must not be overlooked that in these statements, which require agencies to maintain relationships of responsibility to the church, the church is also committing itself to a responsible support and involvement in the program of its agencies. Agencies which are identified as Lutheran and which fulfill valid and meaningful roles in the total witness of the church in our contemporary society not only merit our adequate financial support but the involvement of the total church. Only when this participation from the bottom to the top in our congregation and synodical structures occurs will the agency be able to staff and program its efforts to meet effectively the needs of people within the framework of the new insights and understandings of today.

In addition to their involvement with agencies, our congregations must participate more fully in total social ministry efforts in the communities where they are located. Social ministry cannot be done by proxy. Too long have we excused our

<sup>14</sup> Edgar F. Witte, "The Social Ministry of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod," *Welfare Review*, XVI (January 1968), 4.

<sup>15</sup> *The Relationship of Lutheran Health and Welfare Agencies to The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, A Polity Statement* (St. Louis: Board of Social Ministry, 1967), pp. 5—6.

selves from more personal and direct involvement because we made our contribution and "sent" someone else to do the job for us. The whole church — laity and clergy, young and old, rich and poor, sick and well — are part of God's mission. And this mission is not only directed inwardly to "our own" but "outwardly" to the world. Our fathers saw the initial programs of social welfare as ministry not only to our own but to any who were in need.

In *Faith That Works by Love*, a manual for congregation social ministry committees, Henry F. Wind included typical situations in any congregation in which any member might engage in the "servant role" so perfectly fulfilled by our Savior Jesus. He lists such catastrophes as fire (where food, clothing, and shelter may be needed), illness (where the temporary care of children may be required), death (where a helping hand may be extended in comfort to the widow or children), accidents (where members may stand by and offer help), loneliness (where regular visits by a volunteer may brighten the day of the aged, the infirm, or the chronically ill), unemployment (where help may be given in finding a job), and many other day-to-day problems with which the nonprofessional can give assistance.<sup>16</sup>

Some problems are too complex for the average member and therefore should be referred to the proper Lutheran community or public welfare agency for professional help. Typical cases are the alcoholic, the delinquent boy or girl, the mentally retarded child, the unwed mother, the mentally ill person, etc.

<sup>16</sup> Henry F. Wind, *Faith That Works by Love* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 25—26.

Social ministry on the congregation level must include the dynamic involvement that can be developed when a social ministry committee works as hard at its task as any other committee within the congregation. It must be remembered that appointment of a committee to do the work for the congregation is a misuse of a committee. The committee's role is to sensitize and stimulate all members so that they may understand that "this is what God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering, and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world."<sup>17</sup>

Congregations must not only be places of refuge in the midst of the world, but they must be like the oasis to which the tired traveler comes for refreshment. In them the Word stimulates the members to function as the church militant in attacking the injustices and problems of society. For too long we as a church have been satisfied to apply bandages to people's hurts when we might have been more active in removing the circumstances which caused the hurt. Most of our effort has gone into removing symptoms instead of attacking the issues that created the symptoms. Interest and concern for the kind of laws that are passed which will affect our brothers and sisters in Christ either negatively or positively is part of our Christian responsibility. Social action is part of social ministry. It is not necessarily the negative thing that some regard it as being, though we must be against evil and injustice. More positively, however, we must focus attention on concepts and practices that will prevent the injustices and inequities found in society today. It is better to erect

<sup>17</sup> James 1:27.

a fence at the edge of the cliff to keep people from falling than to have an ambulance and medical corps ready to pick them up after they have fallen.

Increased congregational involvement, updating of agency programs to meet current needs, and wider participation in social action and social concerns must be in evidence in the days that are ahead.

On the synodical level there must be more communication with other program boards of the church. All programs do not need to be administered under the direction of one board. The boards which have a major emphasis and concern in a given program should provide the primary leadership and direction, but all boards which have a relationship to the program should be involved, especially in the planning and evaluation of the projects. More interdepartmental conversation and participation will help guarantee that in practice as well as in theory God's mission is one.

Another major area of social ministry is the service rendered by our 150 institutional chaplains to the sick and troubled who are confined in institutions around this country. The future needs of America will require an even larger number of chaplains. Because of the limitations of men and money, we visualize a greater number of our parish pastors rendering a ministry in the institutions located within their parish lines. The growing number of theological students and parish pastors who are undergoing programs of clinical pastoral education will provide the church with a "ready reserve" to offer effective service in their community's institutions. Because of the demonstrated value of having a trained chaplain as a member of their staff, an increased number of institu-

tions are creating chaplaincy departments as part of their agency programs. Our church must be ready to name qualified chaplains to these positions as they develop.

For the next 10 years we see the housing needs of America as being of such significance that our church must continue its involvement in the program authorized at the New York convention. With an unusually large percentage of housing in the late stages of deterioration in our major cities (45% of housing in St. Louis is substandard, 51% in Washington) and with our nation's slowness to grasp the seriousness of the situation, this will remain a major problem for several years. At the current rate of population growth, 2 million living units are needed each year. However, all sources in the United States are producing only 1½ million units. Thus an accumulating need of a half million units is developing each year. With the use of government funds that are available, together with our own willingness to be involved morally and financially, we believe that our church can provide a sufficient number of housing units in various parts of our country so that many who now are ghetto bound and who live in rat-infested quarters may live in dignity as God's children.

Our world is no longer a vast expanse with people separated from one another and ignorant of what is happening to one another. Because of the gigantic accomplishments in transportation and communication, our world has suddenly shrunk until it is a large community and a single neighborhood. The barriers of race, color, and economics must no longer be stumbling blocks but stepping-stones to a mutual sharing of the blessings that God has built

into our world. Congregations in the suburbs must feel a sense of concern for congregations and people in the heart of the city. Districts that are financially, organizationally, and technologically advanced must be willing to go beyond the average efforts to assist the districts that are less productive due to their geographical location. The more advanced portions of our world must help those areas that are underdeveloped. The church must have a vital share in this too.

Social ministry, which has now reached an age of maturity, must build on the developments and accomplishments of the first one hundred years. It must continue to remind the church that "welfare is an integral, not optional, function of the Christian and the Christian congregation." Social ministry is not the only mission of the church. But it is such a vital part of it that we cannot afford to let parochialism or honored tradition keep us from fulfilling it in the best and most meaningful way. We must continue to remind congregations to equip their membership to fulfill the totality of their mission and ministry, including the area of social ministry. We must encourage Districts to assume the responsibilities that associations of congregations have accepted until the present: to sponsor and support professional welfare services by means of agencies and institutions which render needed services for the deeply troubled, disturbed, and distressed.

Finally, social ministry in the years ahead must make real and urgent the church's involvement in programs of concern for the poverty stricken, the mentally retarded, the victims of social injustice, the rebellious youth, the hungry in the world, the chronically ill, the alcoholic, victims of drug dependence, the homeless, the helpless, the accident victims, the delinquent, the mentally ill, and the aging. Society's problems will not grow less, even as the existence of sin in our world is not decreasing. The government's programs cannot meet all of the needs. The church's appropriate participation through its congregations, accredited health and welfare agencies, trained institutional chaplains, and the host of concerned, dedicated members must constitute a formidable force to attack the problems as they arise through programs of prevention and amelioration. Then we shall demonstrate convincingly that we are truly walking in the steps of Jesus through our teaching, preaching, and doing "the will of Him who has sent us."

One hundred years of caring has made an impact on our church and its service to people. This type of caring offered through social ministry programs has a future because "the divine motive that creates Christians and the human need which seeks their enlightened compassionate care will continue."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Lueking, p. 81.