

Faithful Witnesses: Models of Leadership in Lutheran Congregations, Looking Back and Looking Ahead

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- **Introductions and overview**
 - A brief overview of some models of the past
 - Listen for:
 - Connections between historical practice and what you experience today.
 - What we might be able to learn from this past
 - What we might want to take from it, what might we want to avoid?
 - What are the implications for the present and future?
- **Colonial America (pre-1776)**
 - Isolation on the multicultural frontier
 - Lack of any kind of institutions, including churches and pastors
 - “Established churches” complicate matters
 - **Plan A**
 - Recruit pastors from Europe – a tough sell
 - Problems with those who come
 - **Plan B**
 - Utilize German-speaking pastors of other denominations (German-Reformed, Moravian, etc.)
 - Helpful, but not entirely satisfactory
 - **Plan C**
 - Involve more lay people
 - They read prepared lessons, sermons, and prayers, but no sacraments
 - Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787)
 - Travels all over the Eastern Seaboard
 - Recognizes the need for organization, regularize credentialing of clergy
 - No seminaries exist at this time
- **Early National Period (late 1700's – mid-1800's)**
 - Backcountry begins to become more settled
 - People move westward and begin to largely speak English
 - **Plan D**
 - Create a mentoring/apprenticeship system
 - Provides both benefits and challenges – results are uneven
 - **Plan E**
 - Seminaries emerge
 - Hartwick (1797), Gettysburg (1826), Southern (1830)
- **The Second Great Immigrant Wave (mid-1800s to early 20th century)**
 - **Plan F**
 - Traveling pastors and home missionaries in the Midwest and West
 - Sent by eastern churches and various synods - race to win them over others
 - Establish churches, tend to immediate pastoral needs, but most did not stay in one place.
 - **Plan G**
 - Europeans send pastors to the Midwest and West (unlike in the East)

- Churches become cultural centers
 - Synods form over issues of language, theology, even social issues
- **Changes in the 20th century (1914-2000)**
 - World War I presents a shock to the Lutheran system and speeds up adoption of English
 - Mobility, the post-World War II Baby Boom and the move to assimilation and the middle-class
 - Seminaries bursting
 - **Plan H**
 - Home missionaries establish hundreds of churches in the 1950s and 1960s
 - Post-War Baby Boom leads to expectations of residential pastors for every congregation
- **Looking Ahead into the 21st century**
 - The changed context (again!) of churches
- **Some observations**
 - **Context matters** – and always has.
 - **Contexts change** – and always have.
 - **Specific observations about the 19th century “mentor/apprenticeship model”**
 - **Ministry can and does happen**, even without a seminary degree.
 - **Mentored ministers were closely tied to their people**, often through shared occupations
 - **Everything depends on the quality of the mentor and commitment of “mentee”**
 - **Mentored ministers took less of a public role** beyond their own small congregations and became increasingly isolated, compared to seminary graduates
 - **Mentored ministers often missed out on communal formation** and bonding with fellow ministers

Discussion

- What can be taken from this discussion that is relevant and/or helpful to consider for the future of church as it (again) faces massive changes in the 21st century, especially in a post-pandemic world?
 - Are there leadership model, models, combination of models or new models that could serve our context today? What are the pros and cons of each?
 - How could historical patterns resonate with today's challenges and guide us forward? What similarities and differences do you see with ministry in the 21st century?
- What type of quality and consistency of training do we need for lay leaders in our context?
- What happens when mentorship or “alternate training” of ministers is suboptimal?
- What structures could foster connections between students who study in isolation to become ministers?
- What can we learn from the experiences of early immigrants when we think about ministry to immigrants coming into this country today, or even about “new Lutherans” coming into the faith for the first time?