



About the Institute

Objective

The Institute for Worship and Outreach is a group of WELS pastors who have brought together their experience and training in public worship and mission outreach to assist and encourage pastors as they work to reach out to the lost with the gospel of Jesus.

The Institute for Worship and Outreach is a group of WELS pastors who have become convinced, on the basis of study and ministry experiences, that worship forms and outreach methods can and must intersect confessionally and evangelically in efforts to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. With this perspective, they have come together to assist and encourage pastors as they strive for excellence in public worship and mission outreach.

Presuppositions

Based on their experience and training, the members of the Institute on Worship and Outreach believe that:

Reaching out to people in his neighborhood and community is perhaps the most challenging work a pastor does. What ought to be a joy and come naturally to every pastor often is compromised by personal insecurity, insufficient training, knowledge, and skill, a lack of enthusiasm and vision on the part of his members, and inadequate strategic structures.

While personal, educational, social, and service-oriented outreach efforts can and do attract people to our churches and its message, it remains a truism that most seekers will measure our churches and receive first contact with our proclamation of the gospel in public worship.

Many people in our neighborhoods and communities are searching for the truth about life with God and are more interested in our message than in the customs that surround it. Many others, however, approach our church looking to fulfill personal needs that the gospel may not address. Every pastor struggles to minister to these people on their terms so that the Spirit may have an opportunity through the means of grace to touch their hearts and lead them to desire more of the message of Jesus.

Like the ministry of outreach, public worship also presents significant challenges to a pastor. Even without a consideration for outreach, worship and preaching consume a great deal of his time, energy, and ability. Since public worship

invariably includes music and the arts, pastors without experience or skill in these areas feel the challenges more acutely, and not every pastor is able to rely on skilled church musicians to assist in this ministry. The worship inadequacies he may sense as he serves his own members are exacerbated when worship becomes a critical component in an outreach strategy.

Today's pastor observes the spiritual attitudes of the people he serves and those to whom he reaches out in his neighborhood and community. He deals with post-modernism that leads people to reject biblical truth. He sees cultural biases that stand as barriers between people and the message of Jesus. He grapples with the pervasive influence of the neo-Evangelicals whose focus on emotionalism and legalism has had a stunning effect on outreach methodology and worship practices.

The Spirit grows the Church through the means of grace, but every pastor searches for ways and means to invite and attract people to his church so the gospel might be heard and the sacraments administered. He also works to equip the members of congregation to share in carrying out the Savior's commission in their neighborhoods and communities. Based on their personal study and in their own experience, the members of the Institute on Worship and Evangelism believe that efforts at worship and outreach need not be mutually exclusive, pitted against each other, or outside the parameters of Lutheran history and practice and are willing to share what they have learned with brothers in the ministry.

Functions

The Institute on Worship and Outreach intends to carry out four functions:

Studying - The Institute is committed to an on-going study of methods, practices, and customs that concern especially the interaction of worship and outreach. The Institute also intends to share its study with the pastors of the synod through a variety of means.

Meeting - The Institute intends to assemble periodically and to invite other WELS pastors to participate in the studying process.

Training - The Institute hopes to develop a "school" similar to the Commission on Evangelism's School of Outreach and the Commission on Worship's School of Worship Enrichment that will assist congregations interested in developing an overall strategy of outreach that includes an emphasis on public worship.

Consulting - When invited, members of the Institute will work with individual pastors and/or groups of pastors to offer advice and counsel concerning specific challenges on the field.

ADMINISTRATION

Oversight

The Institute is to be considered an arm of the Conference of Presidents and receives funding with the advice and consent of that body.

Membership

Current members of the Institute

The Institute will consist of between 18 and 22 members. Eight to twelve members will be parish pastors serving WELS congregations. The following will also be members of the Institute: the chairman and administrator of the Commission on Evangelism; the chairman and administrator of the Commission on Worship; two representatives from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, one teaching in the area of evangelism and the other in the area of worship; a representative of the Conference of Presidents.

Members may be nominated for the Institute in a variety of ways and are invited to serve by the members of the Institute. Appointments are ratified by the Conference of Presidents.

Members of the Institute serve for six years. After six years members may be nominated and invited to serve again.