



BOARD FOR HOME MISSIONS

Evaluation Task Force Report to the Districts

Background

At the Fall 2009 Board for Home Missions (BHM) meeting, the BHM established a task force to look at all aspects of Home Missions' ministry. The goal of the task force was to find ways to improve efficiency so that the BHM might better rise to the challenge of opening new churches in North America.

To accomplish this work, the task force conducted interviews of the BHM administrators Harold Hagedorn and Mel Schuler, WELS President Mark Schroeder, Seminary President Paul Wendland, and others. The task force surveyed current and former mission counselors, both those who serve in traditional settings and those who serve in cross-cultural settings. In addition, the task force surveyed over 100 pastors who have worked with mission counselors, as well as every current member of every current District Mission Board (DMB).

What follows in this report is a summary of potential changes the task force is considering. The final report will be shared at the Fall 2010 BHM meeting.

Structure

The task force is considering the following internal structure changes, none of which require alterations to synodical or district constitutional bylaws.

The task force is considering that the BHM alter the way it elects the Executive Committee

(EC). The EC does synod wide prioritization and budgeting for the BHM. Currently, the Executive

Committee consists of the BHM Chairman (elected by the synod in convention) and four members of the BHM, elected by the BHM. At present, 40% of the EC members are from one district. To allow for broader representation, the task force recommends the BHM divide the country up into four regions, and that the BHM then elect two representatives from each region to the EC. The EC would thus consist of eight members, one pastor and one layman from each of the four regions (elected by the BHM), and the BHM Chairman (elected by the synod in convention).

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The task force is considering performing training and prioritization on the regional level. Currently, when synod-wide mission requests are brought to the EC, only four of twelve districts have a man who has first-hand knowledge of the request. Electing an EC from four regions and discussing requests on the regional level allows each DMB to "have the ear" of two EC representatives. The task force believes that doing prioritization work on a regional level will allow for the BHM to allocate resources more effectively. The task force believes that doing DMB training on the regional level will increase efficiency and uniformity among the DMBs.

The task force is considering the formation of a Cross-cultural Committee. This committee would also consist of two members of each region, as well as the cross-cultural consultants. They would consider and prioritize all cross-cultural requests, based on BHM budgetary dollars earmarked only for CC work, and then forward their recommendations to the EC. We see two benefits in this. First, it acknowledges that the approach to CC ministries is often vastly different than to traditional home ministries. Secondly, it helps us maintain an appropriate balance in the budgetary percentages between traditional and cross-cultural ministries.

Mission Counselors

The task force reaffirmed the value of the Mission Counselor (MC) program. The MCs are able to be on-site in mission fields to a degree that DMB members cannot (due to the fact that many DMB members have full-time calls and jobs). Thus, the MCs serve as the eyes, ears, and mouth of the DMBs in our mission fields.

Our considerations for the MC program pertain to what we believe is the desire of the WELS constituency and of the BHM: to make the establishment of new churches the greatest priority of the BHM.

The task force believes that the BHM should maintain the mission counselor program at three traditional MCs, and two cross-cultural MCs (Hispanic and Asian). Thus, in the task force's preliminary report at the Spring 2010 BHM meeting, it was recommended that we do not replace MC Wayne Schultz when he retires this June. Instead, the task force recommended retasking the remaining three MCs as now described.

The task force is considering having the mission counselors be tasked by the pastoral administrator of the BHM and accountable to the nine-member EC of the BHM. This allows MCs to be tasked where and when opportunity arises, rather than being tied to one geographic region. Currently, if the Lord opens many doors for us in one geographic area, it would mean that only one MC's

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workload increases. This change would allow for a more even distribution of work-load.

The task force is considering having the BHM limit much of the MCs' efforts with non-subsidized congregations. The task force recognizes that the MCs have done much to help established (non-subsidized) congregations. We also recognize that some of that help can come from other WELS agencies (a district Commission on Evangelism, the Commission for Congregational Counseling, etc.). Thus, while the MCs would, at the direction of the EC, still work with some "mission critical" established congregations, in most cases requests for help from established congregations would be directed to the WELS *Congregation & Ministry Support Group*. This allows the MCs to focus on new mission fields: helping identify locations which are ripe for a WELS church, providing more frequent nurturing and encouragement for congregations that are in the infancy stages, and providing better oversight in areas where the BHM has allocated large resources.

The task force is considering that the pastoral administrator position be expanded to include MC-type responsibilities, such as training DMBs, disseminating resources, etc. We believe that having consistent practice and training across all the DMBs will provide for increased efficiency. Having consistency in the way requests are brought forth to the BHM will allow for those requests to be compared and prioritized fairly. Having every DMB equally equipped in nurturing missionaries and encouraging mission-mindedness will be, we believe, a blessing for our synod.

New Starts

The task force believes that right now opening new congregations should be the highest priority of the BHM. We believe the BHM has not done well at communicating the opportunities that the Lord of the Church has placed before the WELS. That must change.

The task force is considering having the BHM publish not only what by God's grace we have done in Home Missions, but also what by God's grace we want to do. We took note of the ample home mission opportunities, such as in the South Atlantic, where the DMB has a list of seventeen locations they believe provide excellent opportunities for the WELS to plant new churches. For five of those locations, they have had DMB members or their MC in the field. They have estimated budgets for those locations from start-up through self-sufficiency. Through the internet and a synod-wide report, the task force feels opportunities such as these, from across the country should be placed before the WELS people.

Subsidiaries

The task force is grateful for the partnerships that exist between the BHM and both the *WELS Church Extension Fund* (CEF) and *WELS Kingdom Workers* (WKW). We are thankful that both of these agencies have been eager to look for ways to increase their support of the work of establishing new congregations. We are excited by the possibility of working with CEF and WKW to expedite resources for new starts.

The task force continues to explore the possibilities, and will include final recommendations at the Fall 2010 BHM meeting.

The task force is also grateful for the work that the Campus Ministry Committee (CMC) does on behalf of the BHM. We see no reason for any change in this area. We recommend the CMC continue to have two representatives on the BHM.

In Summary

The members of the task force believe that even in these economically challenged times, the Lord of the Church can and will provide everything we need to open new congregations. We believe that if we plan and adjust accordingly, we can aggressively expand home mission efforts across the country.

We welcome all thoughts and questions.

Respectfully submitted,
The BHM Evaluation Task Force

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