



GOALS AND PLANS FOR MINORITY MINISTRY

EDITOR'S INTRO—The thing that I have most admired and envied the Roman Catholic Church for is that it is catholic. Oh, I know that ethnic divisions and prejudices luxuriate within the Roman vineyard as much as in other places but when it wants to, the Roman Catholic Church can present a face to the world that corroborates at least to some extent its claim to universality. No televised mass from St. Peter's is ever without its Asian acolyte or African lector. And there is something inside of me that is cheered by the sight.

The same appears to be true of Gary Pence, author of the article that follows. Gary describes himself as a partisan on behalf of the new *Goals and Plans for Minority Ministry* adopted by the Lutheran Church in America last summer. Even a partially successful implementation of *Goals and Plans* would move us closer to empirical realization of the catholicity the LCA also aspires to. It is an objective devoutly to be pursued, for no mark of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church is more meaningful and important to our age than catholicity.

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Not long ago my family and I moved from Des Moines, Iowa, in the center of the Lutheran heartland, to Oakland, California. That 1,800-mile shift turned out to be as cultural as it was geographical. Our move took us from a city and a state where "minorities" really are minorities to an area where the tables are turned. Here in the San Francisco Bay Area Americans of North European ancestry find that they are merely one more flavor of U.S. citizen alongside a proliferation of Asians and Pacific Islanders, blacks, Chicanos and Hispanics.

Our family enjoys living in a truly multi-ethnic community where blacks and whites and all shades of brown mix and where on the streets and in the shops and restaurants we can overhear the Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog (Philippino), and other assorted tongues of our neighbors. In the mails we receive public notices printed in two or three languages. Television offers programming in Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, and a scattering of other tongues. Our daughters' elementary school, a rainbow of colors, offers friends whose names—Kristin, Sara, Elaine—are linked to family names like Katsumata, Alemillo, and Quan. Everywhere we are reminded of the lavish variety of human life.

By contrast, when we are with other Lutherans we begin to understand the meaning of the word "ghetto." Our local Lutheran church can claim one black family, a Perez and a Juarez family. Otherwise we are Danes or Swedes or Germans, or at least Anglo-Saxons of some sort or other. Most other

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Lutheran congregations I have visited in the Bay Area evidence even less diversity than my own. For my family and me the gap between our Sunday world and our Monday world is marked by race and ethnicity. We experience a monochromatic white Sunday world and a variegated Monday world rich with human diversity.

It is in such a cultural setting that I received my copy of the Lutheran Church in America’s new *Goals and Plans for Minority Ministry 1978-1984* adopted last July by the Chicago convention. I read that the convention had set as the church’s comprehensive goal that “. . . the LCA shall continue to become more inclusive in membership while continuing and expanding its emphasis on justice in society.” Even when living in more homogeneous surroundings I would have applauded such goals. In the overtly multi-racial and multi-ethnic environment of northern California my experience of Lutheran insularity has spurred me to active partisanship on behalf of the new *Goals and Plans*.

Is the LCA bound forever to make its appeal only to the white Anglo-Saxon sons and daughters of its forebears? That is the issue posed by the *Goals and Plans*. Or to state it more boldly: Is the LCA to understand itself as representative of a “confessional movement” (Pelikan) committed to “evangelical catholicity” (Söderblom), or is it to identify itself as another Protestant denomination with a franchise to service a specialized sector within the American religious “market” (i.e., Our product appeals most to our own, and we aim it at our own)?

Goals and Plans faces honestly how large a task the LCA has accepted in seeking to become an “inclusive fellowship.” Concerted attention to racial issues in the LCA began only fourteen years ago,

when, after the President of the United States had signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the second biennial convention adopted its own statement on race relations. Condemning racial discrimination as “a violation of God’s created order, of the meaning of redemption in Christ, and of the nature of the church,” the 1964 statement’s intent was that neither church nor society should permit race to be a factor determining any of their activities. “Without regard to race” was the key phrase which was repeated in the LCA *Manifesto* adopted two years later by the 1966 convention.

Between 1964 and 1974 the percentage of minority group persons among LCA confirmed members doubled. The percentage of congregations with minority group members nearly tripled. By 1974 there were also more minority group persons serving as pastors, as synod staff and committee members, as delegates to synod and church conventions, and as employees of churchwide agencies.

Nonetheless, the actual number of minority persons active in the LCA at all levels remained infinitesimally small. According to *An Inventory of the Lutheran Church in America: Race Relations*, submitted to the Boston convention in 1976 as a report on the progress in race relations achieved by the LCA during the ten years since the adoption of its 1964 statement, the doubling of minority group confirmed members in the LCA meant an increase from 0.74 percent in 1964 to 1.48 percent in 1974! Similarly, although congregations with confirmed minority memberships increased from 13.9 percent to 37.3 percent, of these congregations 63.7 percent had less than 1 percent minority membership and 86.6 percent had less than 5 percent. Statistics for other categories mentioned above are comparable:

PERCENTAGE OF LCA MINORITY PERSONS		
	1964	1974
Clergy	0.64%	1.1%
Synod leaders	1.33%	3.39%
Delegates to synod conventions	0.8%	1.66%
Delegates to LCA conventions	0.15%	3.11%
Employees of churchwide agencies	7.21%	16.18%

The large gains in minority employment by churchwide agencies, while encouraging, are compromised by the fact that minority employees were generally younger, more likely to be female, and in lower paying clerical positions than white employees. Average income of minority employees in 1974 was only 63 percent that of white employees, and although 23 percent of white employees earned more than \$17,000, only 2.5 percent of minority employees attained such an income level. The *Inventory* explains that “until recently it was expected that most staff positions would be held by employees who were white males.”

Clearly, the struggle to achieve an authentically inclusive fellowship within the LCA will be great. Yet, the pattern of growth is well established, confirming the church’s intentions and offering hope for the future. Indeed, Philip Hefner, professor at the Lutheran School of

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Theology at Chicago, has written in an LWF study, *The Church Emerging* (Forrest, 1977), that cross-cultural, socio-economic, international, and ecumenical inclusiveness is to be grasped as "the LCA's destiny under God."

The LCA's decision in Chicago last summer to adopt the new *Goals and Plans for Minority Ministry* was the sign of its intention energetically to seek that destiny. Abandoning the passive style of the earlier statements which had called on the church to act "without regard to race," this document sets as a goal "an annual growth figure of at least 15,000 minority group persons . . . until the LCA has within its membership a percentage of minority group persons at least equal to the percentage of minority group persons in the general population." This ambitious goal is supported not only by proposed assistance to congregations to help them identify and act on possibilities for outreach among minority persons, but also by a directive to the DMNA to establish seven to eight new mission entries each year in "areas of more than 50 percent minority group persons" and to sustain financial support, where necessary, to congregations serving in such areas.

Other goals call for churchwide attention to the economic and institutional injustices caused by continuing white racism in our society, for more intentional recruitment of minority persons for lay and ordained leadership, for changes in the curriculum and staffing of LCA seminaries to assure a theological education appropriate for minority ministry, for identification and enlistment of more minority persons in committees, delegations, and staffs at all levels of the church's life, for broader and more realistic coverage of minority persons and ministries in LCA publications, and, note well, for provision of funds adequate to reach the outlined goals.

The process by which *Goals and Plans* was developed embodied the inclusive character intended for all LCA life and work. Many minority group persons joined colleagues from across the

church to produce a document which reflected a broad spectrum of experience and interests. By adopting the statement, the LCA has proved its capacity to expand its understanding of inclusiveness to embrace an even wider range of heritages than it gathered together when the church came into being in 1962. Both the experience and determination will be put to the test, for the United States and Canada are rapidly becoming microcosms of the interdependent global community. To cite one example, both *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines in the past year have carried major feature articles portraying the emergence of Hispanic Americans as what *Newsweek* called "in effect, a nation within a nation." Similar descriptions could be given of the growing visibility of blacks, of Asians, of Pacific Islanders, of native Americans. This is true not only in California, the Deep South, Chicago or New York, the areas of their heaviest concentration, but also increasingly in the rural areas and small towns of Iowa and Washington and Alberta. For the future it is clear that conformity to a single racial or cultural ideal will give way to increasing pluralism of race, culture, and even language. (Lutherans of German, Scandinavian, and Slovak backgrounds might recall that they relinquished their native language and traditions largely because of the anti-"foreign" hysteria that developed during World War I.)

How shall the LCA use the new *Goals and Plans* to shape a ministry fit for this rapidly developing international society which is transforming the face of North America? Already representatives from each synod have met to begin devising strategies appropriate to their own synods, for as Massie Kennard, LCA Director of Minority Concerns says, "Each plan has to be customized to fit a particular situation."

The key to the success of these efforts will be the LCA's willingness to work with and listen to its minority group members and then to make the internal changes necessary for what the *Goals and Plans* statement calls "integration of cultural variations into all parts of the church's life." The issue is not only inclusive fellowship, but inclusive identity, a new self-understanding broadened to love and to make its own the interests and collective wisdom of all the racial and ethnic groups present in the LCA and, indeed, our society. According

to the 1977 LWF ecclesiology study published as *The Identity of the Church and its Service to the Whole Being*:

The openness of the church to all people is diminished through conscious and unconscious commitments to traditional preconceptions, to arrangements that are related to specific statuses and are politically determined, and to the values of the existing economic system. The Christlike structure of the church (Phil. 2) must become visible in the fact that in her life and work the natural divisions (sex, race, age, ethnic origin) as well as social and political oppositions (class, levels of education, nation and party) are overcome. (Gal. 3:26-28; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; 1 John 4; Matt. 5:31-46.)

The "natural divisions" cited by the LWF study are not overcome by obliterating them, but by loving them enough to be affected, changed, and transformed by them. The inclusive fellowship to be sought by the LCA is neither to be a union predefined by its dominant element nor a confederation of autonomous interest groups which have agreed to mutual toleration. Inclusive fellowship will seek to be what the LWF's Dar es Salaam Assembly called "reconciled diversity"—the "way of living encounter, spiritual experience together, theological dialogue and mutual correction, a way on which the distinctiveness of each partner is not lost sight of but rings out, is transformed and renewed. . . ."

Not mutual toleration but Luther's "mutual consolation and admonition" is the pattern of the new inclusive identity to be sought by the LCA. It is no other than our baptismal identity already given by Christ to his church. Day after day he who "makes all things new" will raise up a new self for the LCA so that "we too might walk in newness of life." (Luther, *Small Catechism* IV, 4.)

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