

PRAYER: OUR WORKING METHOD

By Leslie Urie

History of Mission, August 2023

This article was compiled from a report that our Personnel Director, Becky Thorson, compiled for the Finance Retreat that occurred July 14-15, 2023. See more about Becky at the end of this post.

The name of our organization is a mouthful for people to remember, yet it gives the essence of who we are in those four words: World Mission Prayer League. Or WMPL (pronounced wimple). We are a group of people (league) committed to a certain method (prayer) to bring the knowledge of Immanuel (mission) to a particular place (world).

Beginnings



Ernest Weinhardt (photo from The Spirit of God Was Moving, p. 10)

Birthered from the vision of Ernest Weinhardt, a Lutheran pastor working in Africa, and a group of college students praying in Minneapolis (Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis), the organization has sought God's provision through prayer alone.

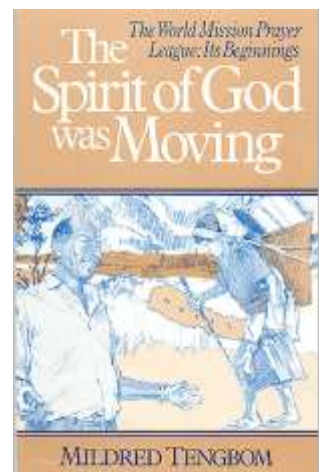


Lutheran Bible Institute door from article published in Metro Lutheran in 2020

As noted in the small book of our history, *The Spirit of God Was Moving*,

“Weinhardt himself would declare in an early issue of the mission’s *Bulletin*:

‘Prayer is our working method. Prayer takes our eyes off circumstances, off appearances and focuses them fully upon the Lord of the harvest. He alone has the answers. He alone has the resources. Is there need for laborers? We pray. Do we have need for money, for government permits, for transportation, for equipment, for anything? We pray. We know no other way to meet the situation.’”





Original vision photo from 1929, Weinhardt on the right



Lutheran Bible Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The combination of the vision of a pastor (a Lutheran, no less!) and the passion of college students led to the challenge of taking Scripture to heart. As the country was continuing to emerge from The Great Depression, a small committee ultimately outlined the principles of the mission's financial philosophy, including:

“Point 3: To receive, care for and distribute funds of the mission on the basis of Philippians 4:4-7 & 19; Romans 13:8, 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, with full understanding that the mission shall not solicit any funds.

Point 4: Full agreement that distribution of funds received by the mission shall be made on the basis of actual need (1 Corinthians 9:13-14) and proportionately as funds allow, fully recognizing that the mission, in obedience to Romans 13:8, will not borrow funds and thus cannot guarantee any set income.”



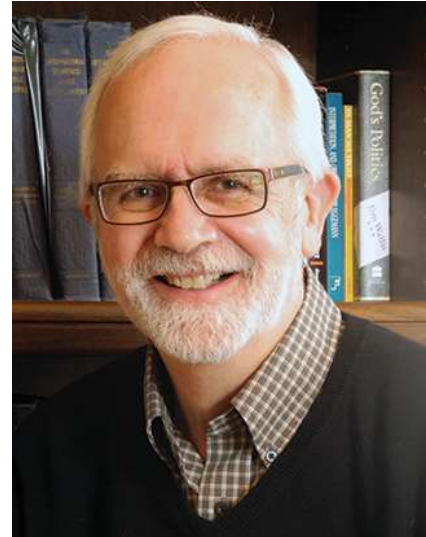
Jonathan Lindell

In 1984, General Director Jonathan Lindell wrote for *Financial Principles and Practices*:

“WMPL workers are a kind of volunteer ‘order’, similar to the Diaconate in some respects. WMPL workers have voluntarily chosen a modified “manner of life” with respect to material goods, and a distinctive method of obtaining and using money.”

In 2002, these principles were articulated once again by General Director Chuck Lindquist, when writing *Guidelines for Communicating Financial Needs*:

“...our financial principles are ‘charisms’ of God. ...the word means *grace* or *gift*. Many organizations like our own—missionary and monastic communities—have adopted the word to describe their particular organizational distinctives or emphases. The Franciscans, are organized around the ‘charisms’ of simplicity and service to the poor. The Jesuits are organized around the ‘charisms’ of obedience and mission to the world... We are organized around a set of ‘charisms,’ too.”



Chuck Lindquist

Lindquist continued in 2006 in a *Review of WMPL Financial Policies*:

“We have this policy not because it is particularly holy but simply because it is a unique charism, a grace that God has given us and has attracted people throughout the years. There is nothing unbiblical about asking for money but it’s not necessarily a biblical issue. We have chosen to gather into a particular kind of community.”

Specifically, as a mission, candidates and global workers must be willing to look to God for the supply of all their needs. That is further articulated in the *Handbook for WMPL*, to trust in God alone to provide all that is needed for life and work, both for personal needs and for the work of the Mission as a whole; that we will wait patiently for God’s supply—“which will surely come, if there has been a true call from God and true faith and dependence upon him.” This is a fundamental faith conviction. God is faithful; we may depend upon Him to provide in every way for His work around the world.”

Indeed, Jonathan Lindell emphasized at Briefing Course (orientation), saying that *we may go without full support—but that we should see support coming in eventually. If we do not have a good amount of support coming in by the end of the first term—we should seek the Lord on why—If supply is lacking—what is He saying?* Yet, when funds were short, Jonathan asked people for a “family huddle” to know if we needed to make any corrections in our life and work. There was no asking for money. The next month, God supplied!

This fundamental relationship of faith will challenge attitudes and shape behaviors at every turn. There is no solicitation of money for projects or people. There is no marketing division or fundraising campaign. There is no pledge of financial support. How can people live like this? Simply. Sacrificially. Without debt. Bearing one another burdens.

Can This Work?

A few years ago, Home Office staff were inspired to collect the stories that had been shared over the years of God's supply and write them up in a book to encourage new workers. Over 150 stories of God's supply were collected that spoke specifically to God's answers to prayer over the years; over 50 of them deal specifically with His providing—of finances, materials and people. Exact amount of donations received to match the cost of a ticket home. A check received, written two weeks earlier, to cover the amount of taxes that were being assessed. And even encouraging national believers to trust in God's supply instead of the missionary for funds for conferences and transportation.

The stories of God's provision continue today. Recently, staff were preparing, once again, to receive less than full allowance for the upcoming month. Prayers were offered at morning devotions and staff shared encouragement for the upcoming short months. Before the accounts were closed, a call was received in the Business Office. The caller asked, "How much do you need to cover full allowances for the next several months?" And that amount was provided.

How Good Is the God We Adore

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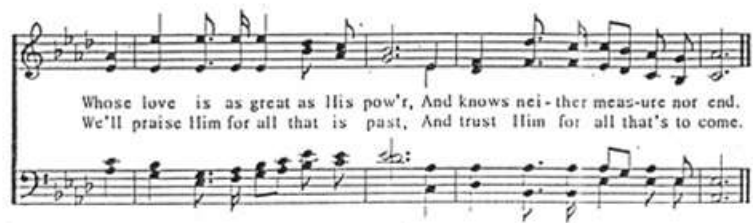
Joseph Hart, 1712-1768

Lancashire Sunday-School Songs, 1657



1. How good is the God we a - dore, Our faith - ful, un - change - a - ble Friend;
2. 'Tis Je - sus the First and the Last, Whose Spir - it shall guide us safe home:

Our WMPL Song"



Whose love is as great as His pow'r, And knows nei - ther meas - ure nor end.
We'll praise Him for all that is past, And trust Him for all that's to come.

**For more information, visit the WMPL website at www.wmpl.org,
email us at wmpl@wmpl.org, or call 612.871.6843.**



Becky and Steve Thorson served in Nepal full time with the United Mission to Nepal from January 1984 until November 2019. Steve is a Pediatrician and Theology teacher. Becky had many roles in Nepal, the last 16 years being in the UMN Personnel team, manager for all the expatriates and running the Language and Orientation Program. She was also the Nepal field treasurer for WMPL for many years. They continue to spend time in Nepal each autumn.