



# Lake Union Soul-winning Institute

**MINISTRY**  
Editor J. R. Spangler  
interviews Mark Finley,  
director of  
the Chicago-based  
institute, on a new  
approach to large-city  
evangelism that  
includes on-the-job  
training.

**Spangler:** I'm tremendously impressed by what I've seen of the Lake Union Soul-winning Institute, Mark. Your program may be a pattern of what we should be doing in the great cities of the world—New York, Los Angeles, London, Calcutta, Singapore, Tokyo, Melbourne, Sydney . . .

**Finley:** I believe it's the way to go. The work in the cities is dragging, to say the least.

**Spangler:** And Ellen White has urged us to do something—

**Finley:** One statement that has both encouraged and guided me is: "When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 304. Since we have not yet

seen such a movement, I must conclude that we have not worked the cities as we should. You'll recall that Ellen White spoke about an outpost training center for workers. As I see it, God would have us establish small training schools for workers in the city outskirts. No mammoth institutions. No great capital investments in one area.

**Spangler:** Maybe we'd better get back to the beginning. What your concept is. How you developed it. What it's producing that makes it such an exciting approach to the cities. Is there anything special that you think has given you unusual insight into the non-Adventist mind?

**Finley:** Well, for one thing, I had a non-Adventist mind for many years. I was 17 and a Roman Catholic when I realized I was just going through the motions religiously; I didn't really know Christ. When I realized that Jesus had died for *me*, my life was changed. I didn't know the term "righteousness by faith," but now I know that's what I experienced.

**Spangler:** And then it was on to Atlantic Union College and the ministry. What training was of particular value in shaping your concept for the soul-winning institute?

**Finley:** I spent two years in Hartford, Connecticut, working with Pastor O. J. Mills in medical evangelism. There I learned the basics of church administration, an ongoing health program in the local church, and a lay-training program. After two years in a district, during which application of these principles resulted in doubled membership, I began to sense something missing yet. I needed to develop teaching skills and to tie together more effectively the medical and the evangelistic work.

So I responded to a call from the Georgia-Cumberland Conference to coordinate the evangelistic work of the seven satellite churches around Wildwood. I also coveted the opportunity to work with Elder W. D. Frazee, who had become a close friend while staying in my home for a number of weeks. From there it was on to evangelism in the Southern New England Conference.

At Wildwood I was helped particularly in two areas. One was in getting decisions, both in personal work and public meetings. Second, I developed the concept of a team ministry, where people with specific responsibilities—the doctor, the nurse, the professional business person, the teacher, the minister—worked together to lead men and women

to Christ. And for the first time I saw things really happening in meetings, as the power of God worked. Both in classes and in public meetings meaningful changes took place in people's lives. There were spontaneous testimony meetings and visible responses to the deep moving of the Holy Spirit.

**Spangler:** Did you take something of this organization to your next post—as an evangelist for the Southern New England Conference?

**Finley:** Yes. By the time I left for the Lake Union in 1979, we had built three teams, involving fifteen to seventeen people—and this on only three full conference salaries and a half salary.

**Spangler:** I understand you had several team members living with you.

**Finley:** Yes. I felt that if I asked people to sacrifice to work on our staff, I had to sacrifice too. Fortunately, I have a wife who is deeply involved in the ministry. And we both love people, so it wasn't really so difficult. Several quality young people volunteered a year of labor; others stayed two years. We gave them a stipend, room, board, and incidentals.

**Spangler:** And you trained them?

**Finley:** Right. We'd take them with us on studies. We'd observe them giving studies. We put top priority on training a staff. What we are now doing in Chicago is an expansion of the gospel-medical evangelism we used for five years in New England. Here we have put the training into an educational setting, in cooperation with Andrews University. In fact, one thing that prompted us to come to Chicago was the conviction that we must be not only soul winners but educators training soul winners on a larger scale than in New England.

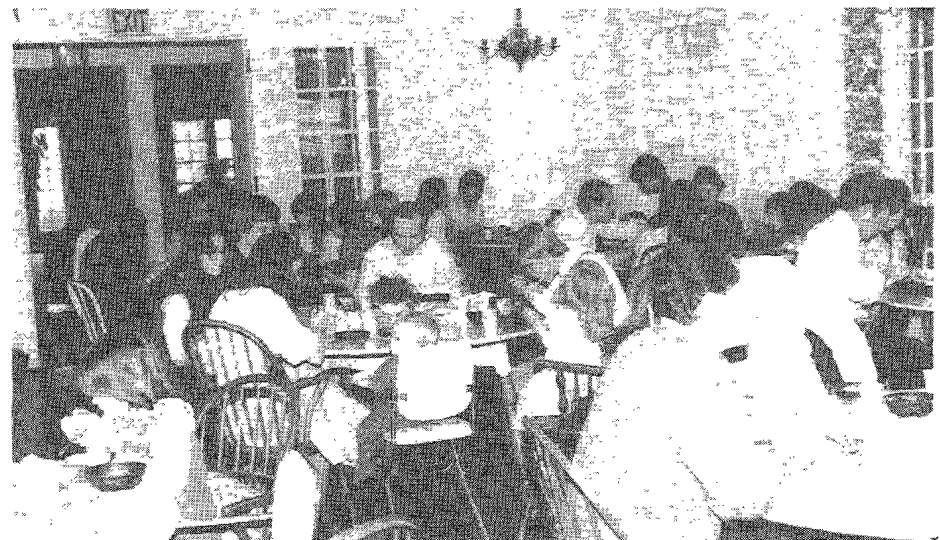
**Spangler:** I understand that your campaigns last approximately five months, and that you hold two a year. Does your program imply a rejection of the short evangelistic campaigns generally used throughout the States?

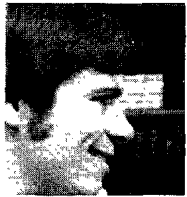
**Finley:** The short campaign is valuable as a reaping instrument. I have no criticism for the short campaign, so long as it is used for that purpose—say in a church where fifty people have been taking Bible studies or in an Adventist community where there are many backsliders. I do question using the short campaign to zero in on individuals who never have been exposed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I would expect a high mortality rate from such a misuse.

**Spangler:** Let's get back to your move to Chicago. What brought you to this city?



Page 4, the exterior of the multimillion-dollar property leased for one year to the Lake Union for one dollar. Above, MINISTRY Editor J. R. Spangler interviews Mark Finley in one of the tastefully decorated rooms of the institute, and Pastor Finley lectures to a group of students at the institute. Below, students and their families enjoy a meal together in the spacious dining room.





## Our health programs are an island on which to create confiding relationships . . . a vehicle for generating and nurturing a spiritual interest.

**Finley:** I had been praying that the Lord would lead me to a place where we could establish a center outside a city and work it systematically from there. At the same time Lake Union president Lowell Bock and Ministerial Association secretary Don Gray were praying for someone to head a training program for city evangelism. The miracle of Chicago is that we found the building we did. It has the capacity to sleep a hundred people, and feed them in its own dining room. And we were able to lease the facility for one dollar!\* After such a providence I had no doubt that God wanted me in Chicago.

**Spangler:** Let's explore your philosophy for church growth. I understand that it is different from much of what we hear and practice today.

**Finley:** There are many similarities. We begin with the conviction that the laity must become involved in evangelism. But how can this be achieved? In what kind of model can they work effectively? Our answer is, In three aspects of public evangelism—health programs, personal Bible studies, and community Bible classes.

We begin by offering a variety of testing programs such as heart and blood-pressure screening. We usually follow these with a Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking. Then we offer a stress-management workshop.

**Spangler:** What about a nutrition workshop?

**Finley:** Yes, we offer that, too. At first we placed it after the Five-Day Plan, but then we lost the men before we could get into the stress program. So now we follow our Five-Day Plan with stress management and nutrition, which run concurrently. Stress management usually runs for six to eight weeks, one night a week, say on Thursday night. The nutrition series is run for the same period on a Monday night. So people can come to stress or nutrition or both. Every program is conducted in the same community.

**Spangler:** In other words, rather than

scattering your shot, you've got a battle plan. You focus your artillery on a particular section of the city.

**Finley:** Exactly. Without doing that, you waste many interests. People are not followed up. As we go along in our health programs, we train a team that knows not only how to register and greet but how to ask the right spiritual questions, how to detect and evaluate interests, and how to build interest in people who are nonspiritual. We pay particular attention to how to probe the secular mind. We teach our students that our health programs are an island on which to create confiding relationships. Each student focuses on four to six friends during the health program, which becomes a vehicle for generating and nurturing spiritual interest.

**Spangler:** In other words, you put into practice the science of salvation.

**Finley:** Right. Certain statements in the health programs are designed to awaken spiritual interest. After establishing a relationship with the people attending, the students ask them what they think of certain statements. Out of sixty to seventy people in the health programs, ten to fifteen will respond to this approach. We believe that every individual—whether he or she knows it or not—has a longing to know God, and we seek to nurture that need.

**Spangler:** So your evangelistic programs follow the health programs?

**Finley:** Yes. But at the same time that we're developing community interest in health programs we're holding Bible seminars—but let me start at the beginning.

When we move into a church, we do not start a lot of programs immediately. We first evaluate the interest file. We begin systematic mailings over seven weeks. The first mailing is first-class with an address-correction request, so that we're not mailing each week to people who have died or moved three years before. In a saturation mailing to noninterests, the return is generally one percent. In a recent mailing to 400 addresses

in the interest file, our return was seventy people who desired Bible studies.

**Spangler:** What do you mail for the seven weeks?

**Finley:** We send a letter, an Amazing Facts tract, and a Bible card. We don't mail tracts that deal with controversial doctrines. Of course, most interests know something about Adventists. Many have listened to the Voice of Prophecy, It Is Written, or Faith for Today. We don't mail anything more than announcements of health classes to people who have been through only a health program. To approach them on spiritual subjects through a mailing might seem exploitative. And it generally is not productive to approach them in an area in which they have not expressed interest.

**Spangler:** Is it more likely that people will go from the Bible program into the health program than vice versa?

**Finley:** Yes. But the more health-related programs a person comes through, the more likely it is that he will become spiritually sensitized. In any case, since health is part of the three angels' messages, we think all potential converts need the benefits of the health program.

**Spangler:** What is your bridge from health programs to public evangelism?

**Finley:** People who come to a public program may be reluctant to invite a person into their home. So we try to bridge them into our community Bible classes, which are studies in the book of Daniel.

**Spangler:** Don't these classes interfere with your public evangelistic meetings or your health classes?

**Finley:** We run them simultaneously, but not on the same night of the week. For example, right now we have eleven community Bible classes going in different areas. Three are in the daytime, eight in the evenings. An individual who comes to the nutrition class on Monday night may choose from eleven Bible classes. We have found that two nights a week isn't too much for most individuals.

But to get back to the bridge: actually, we offer bridges. At the end of each health course we pass out an evaluation sheet. The individual can check whether he's interested in another health class and whether he would like to receive literature on a health subject. He can also check "I would like to discover what the Bible says about the future and Bible prophecy" and "I would like to discover the Bible path of personal



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peace.” In our last stress-management workshop, seventeen people checked that they wanted personal Bible studies or wished to attend a community Bible class. We turn such requests over to our follow-up workers, who already have been involved in the health programs.

The bridges are all two-way. People coming to the community Bible classes are getting all our literature on the health programs.

**Spangler:** I'm not clear on the relationship of your classes on Daniel to your evangelistic meetings. How long do you run the classes before beginning meetings?

**Finley:** We run our Daniel seminar for ten weeks, one night a week. Our evangelistic meetings usually begin the following week. Our health programs also are followed immediately by evangelistic meetings.

**Spangler:** Why so quickly? Is it that once you have the people conditioned to coming week after week, you don't want to give them time to change their pattern?

**Finley:** Right. We move ahead while their interest is at its peak. During our last evangelistic series, thirty out of 108 people taking our nutrition series came to our meetings. Of 600 non-Adventists who attended at least once, 200 had come through personal Bible studies, our Daniel seminar, or health programs.

I usually end a health seminar by taking a five-dollar bill out of my wallet and saying: “Suppose that I put a five-dollar bill in your hand as you leave tonight. You'd likely be pleased. You've got information on health; now you've got a five-dollar bill. But suppose you read in tomorrow's newspaper that I had inherited ten billion dollars. You would say, ‘This man could have given us so much more!’ And you wouldn't be happy at all. Now, I just want to tell you that while I've been giving you information on health, there is much more I could have given you; much more I've wanted to say but couldn't, because I advertised this as a health program. You know, man

is a unit. He's physical. He's mental. He's spiritual.

“Through instruction on physiology and health, I've offered you approximately seven more years of life. But I've wanted to offer you a million trillion years! Friday night I'm going to make that offer in a Bible lecture. I have reserved seats available. I won't thrust them upon you, but I'd be negligent if I didn't offer you the opportunity to attend. We're going to pass out the reserved-seat tickets now. If you would like to come, please sign your name at the bottom of the ticket, indicate how many seats you want for yourself and your family, and tear it off.”

So every health program ends with an invitation. I cannot conduct health programs without doing so in the framework of medical missionary work. There's a difference between health education and medical evangelism. The world has health education. Seventh-day Adventists do medical evangelism.

**Spangler:** Amen! Tell us something about the type of places you hold your meetings in. With so many classes going, isn't rent quite expensive?

**Finley:** We're holding eleven seminars on Daniel. Two are in banks—free; one is in a library—free; two are in rooms in restaurants for \$20 and \$30 a night; one is in a YMCA—

**Spangler:** About those restaurants: Does the class have to eat?

**Finley:** No. Currently, we are using eleven auditoriums at a total cost of \$100 a week. And I've found opportunities like these in every city in which I've worked. I've held meetings in Holiday Inns, Howard Johnsons, Ramada Inns, and—here in Chicago—in Caesar's Inn, an affiliate of Best Western Inns. We also use the local church if it's in a good location.

**Spangler:** We haven't talked about results. What has been the result of your most recent meetings?

**Finley:** We have had between eighty and one hundred decisions for baptism out of an average regular attendance of

300 non-Adventists. We have baptized about sixty, and we have another twenty to thirty getting ready for baptism. And we also have established a new church of approximately 100 members, in a neighborhood where we had none. And the church has another thirty to forty solid interests.

Our goal is twofold. It is to strengthen churches that already have facilities but whose congregations are weak and to establish churches where we have none. When we have a church facility and a weak congregation, it is our goal to put thirty to forty students in there for six months to strengthen it.

**Spangler:** You have mentioned students. How do you get them?

**Finley:** Those with us now are Seminary students—fifteen of them—pastors and lay people. The Seminary students are from Andrews University. They take their final two quarters of their Master of Divinity program here, getting full credit—twenty-nine hours—through the Lake Union Soul-winning Institute. They register for these classes at Andrews and they pay their tuition to Andrews. They pay their room and board to us. We are, in effect, adjunct professors of Andrews working in an off-campus Seminary project. All Seminary students who are members of the Lake Union go through this practice program.

**Spangler:** And do you do all the teaching?

**Finley:** No. We have a faculty. I teach three classes. Marion Kidder, the associate director, teaches two. Roy Whiteman, of Great Lakes Adventist Health Services, teaches one. In addition, we bring in Seminary professors to work with us in specialized areas.

**Spangler:** What subjects do you teach?

**Finley:** The first quarter I teach Studies in Daniel, which is a verse-by-verse analysis of the book of Daniel. In the second quarter I teach Field Evangelism, a general overview of the total evangelistic process. That quarter I also teach Contemporary Denominations and Trends—an evaluation of religious groups in America. Marion Kidder teaches Church Growth and Personal Evangelism, and Roy Whiteman teaches Health Evangelism. Starting in 1981, all unions in North America will be responsible for the ninth quarter of the Seminary program.

**Spangler:** What about the pastors who are with you? Are they on the Seminary program?

**Finley:** Most don't come for academic credit. Some are here on their own ini-

tiative, others because their administrator has wished to enhance their training. The conference pays \$135 a month for tuition. This covers the expense of four classes. The individual rate is \$250 a month. Room and board is \$190 a month for the pastor. If a pastor comes with his wife, the couple's rate is \$375 a month for room and board plus \$50 for each child. A couple would pay about \$400 to \$500 a month.

**Spangler:** Do you accept ministers from outside the Lake Union?

**Finley:** Yes. We have ministers at the moment from three conferences outside the Lake Union.

**Spangler:** The Ministerial Association wants to begin a continuing-education program, with concentration on soul winning. Could we work out something? Say that a person could come to you to get his CEU's (Continuing Education Units) toward maintaining certification in our Academy of Ministers, or whatever we call it.

**Finley:** That would be an exciting possibility. In fact, we save 30 percent of our space for retreats and for continuing-education programs. So we've got room for thirty persons. Right now we have a number of lay people with us. One is a businessman who sold his business to come here to become a Bible instructor. Many do not come with the intent of being employed by the church when they leave. They simply want to go back to their churches with sharpened skills in soul winning. Some church boards have sent a member, giving a stipend, as well. In this way, the pastor can increase his number of assistants.

**Spangler:** Do you use Bible instructors in your church ministry?

**Finley:** Do we! In the past year we've placed Bible instructors in six churches. The Illinois Conference budgets part of its evangelistic funds for salary and expense. The church comes up with a matching program. Some of these Bible instructors live at the institute, where they're charged \$250 a month for room and board. The Illinois Conference puts in \$300 to \$400 a month and the local church the same amount. The institute becomes a live-in center for Bible instructors who work through the local churches and for training lay people. So in addition to the impact of our evangelistic team, there are all kinds of spinoff benefits for the local conference and area.

**Spangler:** Do you offer a bulletin that explains your program?

**Finley:** Yes. It can be obtained by

writing to Lake Union Soul-winning Institute, 6259 Madison Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521.

We are developing a church-growth packet that will explain our program step by step: how and when to do the health program, what is mailed, when it is mailed; the training of lay people; studies in Daniel; and our evangelistic-series materials. We'll have to charge for this how-to-do-it packet.

**Spangler:** That sounds great, Mark. But can such a sophisticated, involved attack on a metropolitan area be adapted for a town, a little church, or a small district—or a pastor who doesn't have anyone to help him?

**Finley:** The only answer is to look the program over and begin where you are with the program you feel comfortable with. As your confidence and knowledge grow, add other components. Don't try to do everything at once. There's a Biblical principle that says, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn." If all you know how to do is to begin cultivating your interest file and mailing to it, do so. The next step might be to train your lay people. Then add studies on Daniel. Go on from there. Not being able to do all the health programs doesn't mean that you can't do one.

**Spangler:** Can the wife be part of the team in this health-program business?

**Finley:** Yes. My wife does the nutrition series and is involved in the stress-management and Five-Day Plan. She involves herself in every aspect of the program.

**Spangler:** Where did you learn all this? Do you have an M.P.H. from Loma Linda?

**Finley:** No. Most of my expertise has come from doing. I've been with men who knew what to do—including M.D.'s and M.P.H.'s—and I've learned. And certainly one's ministerial training touches on the human mind, how people think, and how that thinking affects one's outlook on life.

**Spangler:** Now let's get back to my opening thought—that this program might be a pattern of what should be done in the great cities of the world. What is your vision?

**Finley:** I repeat the statement of Ellen White: "When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed." I think what we are doing at least approaches what she advised the church to do. We should have training schools such as our institute near every

major city where such a work is possible.

**Spangler:** But what of the cost? I wouldn't describe your program as small.

**Finley:** It's a matter of definition. I suppose that if we had had to build our facility, it would cost a million dollars and more. Yet God has miraculously provided it. Yet if we had to build it, I would not consider this an extravagant investment for an evangelistic training institute. We think little, as a denomination, of building an academy that costs several million. We put millions into junior camps and recreation centers. We spend more on a gymnasium than an institute would cost. And we are building churches that cost a million to a million and a half.

Why, then, hesitate to spend that much for a training center outside a major city to train pastors, seminary students, and lay members, who would not only work the city but tithe and sacrifice to pay for the project? Think of it! Hundreds of ministers could be trained—and retrained. Thousands of Bible workers and lay workers could be trained to work with them. It seems to me that even to spend a few million dollars as a denomination to establish scores of these centers would be well worth the investment.

**Spangler:** We should be spending a hundred million. But one last question comes to me: Why do you think our great city evangelistic centers have failed?

**Finley:** The philosophy of the centers was that people would come to you. Here we move the center outside the city and then we go where the people are. The only way the big cities can be worked today is by neighborhoods. From our center outside Chicago, no part of the city is more than forty-five minutes away.

What else is there to say but that it's time—past time—we get about our Father's business.

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\* Elder Earl Simmons, pastor of the Northbrook and Des Plaines, Illinois, churches, overheard a conversation in a barbershop regarding a large retirement center that was soon to become vacant. Lake Union Ministerial secretary Don Gray had recently presented to the Illinois workers the concept of a soul-winning institute to be established in a rural outpost of Chicago, America's second-largest city. Elder Simmons alerted Lake Union officers, who investigated and discovered that the property was situated in an ideal setting only three miles from Hinsdale Hospital and that the facilities would fit their needs more than adequately. Through God's leading, subsequent negotiations resulted in this multimillion dollar property being leased for one year to the Lake Union for only one dollar!