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I N

F L O R I D A

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## HOW SYNOD STARTED IN FLORIDA

When the first Michigan Synod organized for the purpose of doing mission work among the Michigan Indians, it called itself "The Mission Synod." Later when eight pastors and three laymen met to reorganize the split and dissintegrated Synod, they continued the aim of missions as their chief purpose, especially in "gathering and serving scattered Lutherans and organizing them in congregations" (1). Even after the Michigan Synod merged with the Synods of Wisconsin and Minnesota and became only one district within a larger Synod, the Michigan District continued a strong mission-minded drive into other states. In fact the Michigan District led the Synod in zeal and especially in boldness for mission work.

One evidence of this is that within the first 50 years as a district of the Wisconsin Synod, the Michigan District started 58 missions. Karl Krauss demonstrates the zeal and boldness of this district with a short description of a mission started in what is now a suburb of Detroit:

In 1952 a chapel was built at Livonia without the preexistence of an organized nucleus for a congregation, truly a bold step, not only for our district, but in our ultraconservative Synod. Early in 1953 that mission was organized with 45 communicant members. Talk about starting from scratch! (2)

Truly a bold step based on Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations. It took some

trust in the power of the gospel, and in the promises of the Lord that he would bless the preaching of his word, in order to take the steps the Michigan District did in 1952.

But that was nothing yet! Two years later they took more of a "giant leap" compared with that relatively "small step." As obvious evidence that the Michigan District led the Synod in zeal and boldness for mission work, let's take a look at the great leap in faith they took in beginning work in Florida.

To study the history of how Synod got started in Florida is to study a story about faith. Faith was evident by their zeal and boldness in reaching out both to the scattered Lutherans of the WELS, and to the shepherdless souls of the unchurched. Faith compelled many individuals to "go" where no district in Synod had gone before, and to "make disciples" in a manner that Synod had never done before. And Faith not only succeeded as a mission congregation, the members of Faith Lutheran Church not only showed that the faith of their home district was founded on a fertile and ripe field, the success of Faith not only inspired the faith of the Michigan District, but it also had "a 'domino' effect on the home mission zeal of the Synod" (3). The story of Faith is a story of leadership in zeal and boldness for mission work in the Synod. The Faith-story is a faith-

story.

This is Faith's story as told by an eye witness of how our Synod started in Florida:

"IT ALL STARTED because we had members from Michigan, or the Michigan District in general, that were living in St. Petersburg. A lot of people were starting to come south for the winter. And I think that a lot of companies were beginning to move their people around too. Then the Service also contributed to moving people around, because we had young men at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa. Those are some reasons I can think of that people started moving around.

"THOSE LIVING IN ST. PETERSBURG always went over to Grace, the Missouri Synod Church, but they were a little dissatisfied. So they contacted their Michigan District mission board by asking one of the members of the mission board if they would take it upon themselves to send a man to Florida. This mission board member was one of those living there during the winters and going over to Grace. Up until that time the farthest mission south was in Jenera, Ohio (and Findlay). This mission board member had often talked to Pastor Steih about it, and Pastor was definitely interested in Michigan, or Synod rather, expanding farther south than just Ohio. Oh, that went on a couple of years.

"PEOPLE CAME TO FLORIDA for health reasons, and like people do now-a-days, they wanted to get away from the cold weather. So they just came down. There weren't so many real older people. They were maybe in their 60's. And then the Browns came. They were a young couple with a boy, David Brown. But most of them were retired folk. Some moved here and bought homes and some only stayed for the winter.

"ST. BARTHOLOMEW Lutheran Church in Kawkawlin, Michigan is where Pastor was serving at the time. It had been there, I can't tell you how many years, 50 or 60 years. We had a school. They opened it while we were there. He taught school for six years at the same time as he took care of his congregation. And now they have four teachers and a brand new school.

"FINALLY PASTOR STEIH preached a sermon in Saginaw on missions, and said that he thought that Synod should not be satisfied and expand farther south. And we sang that hymn, "O Little Flock,

Fear Not," which begins:

O little flock, fear not the Foe  
Who madly seeks your overthrow;  
Dread not his rage and power.  
What tho' your courage sometimes faints,  
His seeming triumph over God's saints  
Lasts but a little hour.

That was in June, either the June of 1954 or the June before.

"FIRST THEY CALLED a Pastor Arthur Wacker of Scio (i.e. Salem of Ann Arbor), Michigan. But even though he was a member of the mission board, he was not really interested in coming down here to Florida. And then Pastor got the call in '54. They reminded him that he had preached this sermon about expanding, of course jokingly! And he accepted the call. So that's how it happened that he got the call, and of course -- he always called himself "The Synod's Pick-and-Shovel Man." That's what he liked; just going in where there was nothing and working up something.

"PASTOR MADE THE TRIP to Florida and first explored to decide that St. Petersburg was the place to start. He also went to Lakeland because there was a group there that had broken away from the Missouri Synod. They also wanted our Synod to pick up their little group. They even had the land and the money to start building. But he said that he was not called here by disgruntled members of that Synod to pick up a group who had broken away from their church. So that's why he concentrated on St. Petersburg -- because that's where the folks lived who had asked for someone to come down here.

"THIS WASN'T A SYNOD subsidized mission at first. It was under the Michigan District alone. I don't really know why it happened that way. Possibly they thought that it wouldn't work. I don't think they knew too much about the south.

"IT HAD A LOT TO DO with not being so mission-minded years ago as they are now. You know, years ago people didn't have such a far-sightedness in mission projects as they do now-a-days. And I think that could have been something, because when the executive board came down here, they were really pleasantly surprised at what Synod had done here. They came two or three years after we had started. Then two of them came down every year.

"AFTER THEY REALIZED what progress was being made, they sat back and watched us grow. How the District was able to go against Synod policy, well, I don't know how it came about. But being it was the Michigan District that did the investigating and all, I think that's how they worked around it. Synod just didn't fund it at first (to do the exploratory work). But when everything worked out so well, I don't think that they were sorry that the Michigan District went ahead. They can't be now!

"CONGREGATIONS IN MICHIGAN and individual people sent money to this congregation to help them for things. One congregation, it was in Minnesota, sent money to the Sunday School to help buy Sunday School materials. That's the way they got a lot of extra money. And then some of those people even loaned the money. One of the northern people loaned Synod their house for four months. We got here in September and we had free rent until the first of January. That was one of those people that was anxious for Synod to come down for missions. So that was a big help. They didn't have to pay out any rent.

"THEN THEY PURCHASED the house and we moved in before the first of the year. Actually we had to purchase the house ourselves first. They wouldn't sell it to Synod. So we purchased the house and then signed it over to Synod. Of course it was done with gifts, not Synod money. It was done with gifts from the Michigan District.

"FAITH WAS STARTED mostly with gifts given to the mission board and to the church. And we kept in close contact with Michigan. Oh, we had telephone bills that were staggering! And I tell you, they were really enthusiastic, because the people that were down here were so happy that they had their own church that their happiness spread back north to their home congregations. When the winter residents went back up north for the summer, why they just spread the good word. That's how the northern District really got to finding out about the new missions in the south.

"PASTOR'S WORK was not affected at all by the Synod policy. The only thing it did was that on our first Thanksgiving Day here we got a letter, 'Hold everything!' I don't know really what the reason was. They knew we were looking for property. But I think it had mostly to do with purchasing a house. It was a big damper. That came from somebody in Milwaukee and it did dampen our spirits.

"BUT WE KNEW that one of the members of the Michigan District board was coming down shortly,

so we contacted them right away. Then he came down earlier that year to straighten things out. It didn't stop us from having services or anything. We had a group of people that were all ready to go, so you couldn't tell them we're not going to do anything!

"YOU TAKE IT ON THE CHIN and go ahead. And eventually it all kind of smoothed out real well. I don't know what kind of battle the Michigan District mission board had, but everything just smoothed out. That didn't stop us down here. We kept on!

"WE HADN'T STARTED our first service yet, but they already were planning and organizing it. That was just before we started services. They had been having counsel meetings up until that time. Five or six men who were really interested were going ahead and were looking for property and planning things. We just made up our minds that we were here and there wasn't any other place to go. I don't know if Pastor got discouraged. If he did, we didn't talk about it. Everybody had to have a positive attitude.

"AFTER WE WERE READY for the first service, we started advertising in the newspaper. We always had an ad in the newspaper. Sometimes we had to pay it ourselves, but it was there. That's the only way people coming to town would know. At our first service there were about 72. Some of these were Wisconsin people who had already joined the Missouri Synod church down here. But when they found out that there was going to be a Wisconsin Synod church they came to us right away. We also did a lot of canvassing. And the people pitched in -- they told their friends, and their friends told their friends.

"THE SOUTHERN PEOPLE did not know a lot about the Lutheran church, especially the people that lived down here. There were only three Lutheran churches in St. Pete when we came. There was Grace, and Our Savior was a mission, and an Augustana church. Oh there was one down town too, either ALC or LCA. The prominent churches were Catholic, Southern Baptist, and a lot of people that broke away from somebody else and called themselves by another name, the same as they have now. That's how we started.

"THE FIRST SUMMER it dwindled down to a very few people, of course. But as soon as fall came and after we got started, why it picked back up again. It was a little rough at first. For the first couple of years there were a lot of winter residents. That was what we had to work with. But then the summer group started increasing.

"WE HAD PEOPLE THAT CAME from Tampa. They contacted us and found out when communion Sunday was. And there was a family that came from Orlando who would come here on communion Sunday so they could go to communion. And the lady is still living. She lives in Cutler Ridge and is a member of that church down there now.

"WE USED TO GO OVER to Tampa and have evening services over there after a year or so. We went to Tampa for at least a year before they called a pastor there. Then they called Pastor Vogt from Mt. Olive in Bay City, Michigan. Then after that there were ten families from Faith that started the Bay Pines church. Then we went up there and preached there until they called Pastor Howard Kaiser. And then he took care of Tampa and Bay Pines when Pastor Vogt accepted a call to Bradenton. Pastor Vogt had started the congregation down there. Of course Pastor used to go with those men to canvass. He didn't preach any farther than Tampa and Bay Pines before they came. But when they had more pastors down here, he did go when two or three of them would go into an area to do canvass work.

"HE HELPED CANVASS in Bradenton. He helped canvass in Orlando. They went over to the east coast and worked over there. And of course by that time they were always picking up another extra man. So instead of two going, maybe three or four went. And that's the way they worked. I know that several of them went to Pompano Beach and worked over there. You would get a call from somebody that lived over in that area, and then men would go over to investigate. That's the way it happened.

"THEY WERE A CLOSE-KNIT group. There was Pastor Kaiser and Pastor Renz and Pastor Vogt. With Pastor Steih the four of them were a good team. Everybody got along fine. And when Pastor Kaiser left, Pastor Wiechmann came and it was the same thing. They were always helping each other. Of course you know it gets so that that's your family. Your relatives aren't here, so they are your family.

"STARTING IN FLORIDA encouraged people to ask for their church to come into their area. Of course you don't just move to some place because one person moves there. But I think people started asking more for help. And they are instrumental for getting more people because people, I know they did years ago, they really worked. And if they had friends that had no church, they brought them. And that helped a lot!

"THINKING BACK on how I felt about going to Florida, well I'll tell you, you have to be an



adventerous soul to do that! Everybody decided that's what father wanted to do and that was his calling. So we went, but we only took three of the children with us. The other three stayed, Bob who was in the service in Georgia, our oldest son Herb who was married and Sue and her husband were living up in Michigan. Of course it was rough for the kids. Bill was a Senior, Judy was a Junior and Lois was in the sixth grade. So it was just like pulling up roots and transplanting.

"I THINK THEY HELPED an awful lot. Judy and Bill were Sunday School teachers, and Lois was one of the pupils. And of course I played the organ, so we were set there. But Bill got awfully discouraged because he got so homesick. Judy was just the opposite. She made a lot of friends and got out and just made the best of everything. But finally Bill came around. He decided that if he wouldn't have come to Florida, he wouldn't have gotten the education he did. He had the opportunity to go to Junior College and to go to College here. And he's always been in congregations that are mission congregations. He's the one that should have been the minister of all the boys. But he works as a layman.

"THE MICHIGAN DISTRICT has always been very mission-minded. Oh, they were! very much so! and especially around 1950 and 54! They were very mission-minded. And that's why they were so convinced that this would be a going thing. That's why our church got the name of Faith. It was because, as they said, it was a venture of faith. That's how we got the name of Faith. Guess you can't describe it any other way, can you? Oh, people said it won't work. But Michigan District said it WILL work. So it did. And I'm glad that it did!

"IT GOT KIND OF ROCKY once in a while. But you just take everything and live one day at a time. That's the way to do it!" (4)

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That's the story from the perspective of the wife of that very first missionary. Such insights into this work of the Synod in Florida make the history come alive. It gives a person the feeling he was there when it happened.

There are, however, some questions left unanswered. First of all, what exactly was the policy concerning the right to begin a mission outside the district boundaries, and what determined the boundaries of a district?

The policy was that a district could begin a mission outside its state boundaries only if the new state was adjacent to it. Then the district boundaries were extended to that state. For example, Michigan had to establish congregations in Indiana or Ohio before they could move on to Kentucky. Therefore it was against Synod policy to "jump" states.

One pastor who has served on the General Board for Home Missions, as well as other home mission boards, explained that, "The reasoning was so that Synod could have control of budgetary monies, for one, and secondly the expansion of missions so they could keep some control on the districts and their general expansion. See, Synod would have to subsidize the missionaries. So at that time, they had to go to the Synod through the GBHM for the requests for the budgetary monies." (5)

One pastor who was on the Michigan District mission board when Synod started in Florida explained the reasoning this way:

If we jump two states, or let's say one whole state, he'd be by himself and he would be isolated that way. It would be kind of hard for him to carry on -- that was the thinking

at that time. That was the idea behind it, but I wouldn't say that it really held good. Today they are even sending missionaries into Indonesia all by themselves more or less, and that's thousands of miles from anybody you might say. So we've got a different thinking in our Synod now. (6)

The fear of isolating pastors was the main reason for the policy. Isolation is a valid concern. But the Michigan District led the Synod in zeal and boldness for home mission work by jumping down to Florida despite the dangers of isolation.

This brings up another question. How could the Michigan District go against Synod policy? Actually they never did. Although they had done exploratory work in Florida before the no-jumping ruling was repealed, the Synod had passed a resolution supporting the Michigan District in its plans before they actually carried them out. The mission board member, Pastor Zink, again explains:

"WELL, I'LL TELL YOU what actually happened. One of the principle members of my congregation here moved to Florida, not too far from Orlando. He had to go about 50 miles to go to church. It was a good Missouri Synod church at that time, while we were still together with Missouri. And he wrote to me a couple of times and asked me if we couldn't do something about going down there.

"SO I SPOKE AGAIN AND AGAIN to the mission board, 'We should get on to Florida,' I said, 'because I think it's a good field down there. Our members are moving down there and they have no place to go.' And so that's finally when our Michigan District mission board decided that we three pastors on the board should go down there and explore the state. The other two pastors were Pastor Alvin Baer and Pastor Kenneth Vertz. We decided that we would on our own go down to do exploratory work in Florida and see what's really cooking down there.

"WE DIDN'T EVEN ASK the General Joint Synod at all whether we could at all go down. We just went on our own. Our own district paid the expenses so they couldn't come back at us and say, 'Well you did something that you had no right to do.' Individual congregations, really, gave us money to go.

"WE WENT DOWN THERE in February, 1954 -- the three of us. Louis Ott, one of the lay members of the mission board, was living there. He drove us around the whole state that time. We travelled about 11 hundred miles going all over from top to bottom looking over the state. And we had pretty good success, especially in St. Petersburg.

"THE LAST NIGHT, ONE FELLOW we stopped to visit in St. Petersburg was so thankful that he said, 'Thank God my prayers have been heard -- Wisconsin is making some plans to come down here now,' although at that time Wisconsin hadn't made any plans. Just the Michigan District mission board had planned its own venture down there.

"AFTER WE CAME BACK we went to Milwaukee, the three of us, and we met with the home mission board of Synod and sold them on going to Florida. And then at the Synod convention that summer, Synod passed a resolution to go into Florida. The big thing was that the General Mission Board finally endorsed it. When they endorsed it, they carried the ball to the General Synod. It helped a lot that they pushed the ball.

"ACTUALLY OUR FINGERS were never really slapped. They kind of said that what we did wasn't really right, but they never really gave us a finger-slapping. The main thing is that the Michigan District mission board was the moving force behind going into it. They pushed it so that, as I said, the Synod accepted our recommendations and adopted it.

"WE WOULDN'T HAVE EVER called him down there unless Synod had given us the OK. That would have been contrary to the law of love to go on our own in that way. Everything was done above board. Synod passed the resolution to go to Florida, and THEN we called. We explored Florida without asking in order to give Synod a push. But we waited until after our recommendations had been adopted to call Pastor Steih.

"PASTOR STEIH HAS A LOT of credit coming to him because he was the first one down there. You know how it is when a guy goes down there all by himself. We went down there regularly to visit

him. Every year we went down to see him and I know how he appreciated those visits when somebody came down from up north and gave him a chance to talk to somebody else a little bit.

"AS SOON AS HE WENT down there, Synod started paying his salary, through the Michigan District mission board of course. And the fund drive was mostly for the building and the land. I guess our Michigan District people were so enthused we were going down there that they responded liberally." (7)

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Pastor Raymond Timmel was the chairman of the committee that the Michigan District Convention formed to propose a resolution for the mission's problems in Florida. One of the members of that committee, Pastor W. Koelpin, related the story of how the fund drive got started:

"THEY JUST SENT him down there because the General Mission Board was stalling on things like that. So somehow or other he didn't have any money. Bill was down there and he was being salaried, but not one cent did he have for putting up an ediface or for land. So they brought the matter to the Michigan District convention.

"'WE GOT PROBLEMS,' they said. 'We don't have any money for Bill Steih to get his land and get funds to build up equity so he can build a church!' So they put it in the hands of a committee, the chairman of which was Pastor Raymond Timmel of Toledo, Ohio, and I was the secretary.

"OUR PLAN DIDN'T FLY because there were too many who opposed it. They said, 'If we take a special collection to start a mission somewhere and to fund the building of it, why that would be provincialism and every district could do the same. It would be walking disorderly,' and so forth and so on.

"SO THEY SENT US BACK into committee, but we didn't know what to do about Bill Steih and his land and his equity for building. Pastor Timmel and I got the idea that, if the District doesn't want to be provincial and if we don't want to hurt the other districts and have everybody act on their own -- well still, Bill Steih needs money -- then we would make it a non-district resolution that we could send out litura-

ture and envelopes so that whoever would want to have a little special collection for Steih could do so.

"WHAT HAPPENED IS THIS, Timmel had a sense of humor and a practical knowledge too. He said, 'Let's draw up a resolution real fast during recess now and after we get back on the floor after recess, as soon as the session begins we'll have the president of the district do this.' He said, 'All these other guys, they like to smoke their cigars and sit under the trees, and they never come back in until five or ten minutes later, you know.'

"WE JUST REVISED our resolution to say that we have a special collection and all those that wish to participate can, and that we would draw up literature and send out envelopes to anyone who wishes to participate so it would not really be a district venture.

"THEY GOT IT ON THE FLOOR and there was maybe just a sprinkling of delegates and pastors there, so it went right through! Then Timmel asked me if I would draw up literature. I didn't know anything about Florida at all, so I got some that said they get a free newspaper in St. Petersburg any day the sun doesn't ever shine. Then on the basis of that I made the theme of the brochure: God's Sunshine for the Sunshine State and really blew it up that we were starting in Florida.

"MY CONGREGATION GOT MAD at me because I ran it off. I spent DAYS running off that literature. I didn't even have an electric mimeograph machine, but I've always played around with publicity. And I got women to help run it off. I highly illustrated it. I wish I had a copy of all that yet. Press was the District President, and I took all this stuff up to him and asked what to do with it. He said, 'Go ahead and send it out through-out the district.' He was in favor of it.

"I SENT EVERY CONGREGATION in the district a brochure with an accompanying letter that said that if they wanted to relegate it to the circular file, they could do that. Through that I think it was 16 thousand dollars that was gathered for Steih in Florida.

"LATER ON I WENT DOWN to Florida when Renz was in Tampa, later on in the late 60's. I knew Renz quite well, and I said to him, 'Let's go over to Steih's.' So we went over and Bill got out T-bone steaks, and Ed Renz said, 'I never get steak when I come over to Steih's!' And I said, 'Renz, you don't know the

story!'

"IT WAS AN UNUSUAL THING to get the money. Now it sounds like peanuts, but at that time it was a humongous sum, really a big sum. And that's how we got his money to get started down there, as far as land and the church is concerned. See, we never were farther east than Toledo, or farther south than -- oh, we weren't ANYWHERE south at all! So that was the big step at that time." (8)

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One last question needs to be cleared up. What does it mean that the Michigan District led the Synod in home mission zeal? Or what does it mean that this jump to Florida had a domino effect through-out the Synod? What it means is that "people didn't have such far-sightedness in mission projects as they do now-a-days," as Mrs. Steih said.

Clear evidence of this is in the fact that somewhere in Milwaukee someone panicked and sent Pastor Steih a letter to "Hold everything" after working only two months in Florida. Pastor Zink commented,

Yes, I guess at that time Synod did try to cut it back out, for some reason. I don't know exactly what the cause was, but it didn't work out. I don't know who wrote the letter or what it involved, but Synod had already given its OK, and only Synod could finally recind that, you know. But I guess after Synod got into it, some weaker guys or timid guys tried to back off again. They said, 'We're chewing too big a chunk!' But that wasn't the case. (9)

Leading the Synod in home mission zeal means that the Michigan District was bold enough to break new ground in the MIND-SET of how to expand into other states. Their leadership in home mission zeal consisted in changing

the thinking that we can't jump states. Pastor Daniel Gieschen witnessed this change himself. He described the way the mind-set was at that time:

The Michigan District has always taken, whether just or not, a pride in having what they call the Michigan Spirit, which innovated a lot of new programs. And they are the ones that pushed for the opening of the world missions. The Michigan District was the one that really pushed the expansion of home missions more than just being content to open one mission a year -- sometimes it was in a biennium. I served on the General Board and also on Dakota Board when it was nothing to open only one mission in the Synod for a year. Now we're opening 25 a year. That's our goal, and we could open more!

So I think they showed a zeal that, "Hey, it can be done!" And then the Synod, I think saw it could be done, even though they had to say, "Michigan, you didn't do it the way you were supposed to, with the proper authority, but it worked and it shows us that the Wisconsin Synod can be in the southern states."

I served on the General Board when the statement was made by the chairman of the General Board, "We can't go out in the east, that's too LIBERAL, there's too many lodges out there. Wisconsin Synod theology would never be accepted there." You know, that's what I mean about the... (self defeating fears).

So I think by starting in one of these places like Florida, which is considered a resort area and maybe more plush than our midwest, a place where the Wisconsin Synod could never get a mission started in something like that, that's how the Michigan District had a domino effect on the Synod's mission zeal. (10)

That's what spread like dominos -- the courage to jump states into fertile mission fields, as well as the DESIRE to "Go."

"That's right," Pastor Zink said. "After that, they really started jumping all over. That really got



the ball moving, and Synod really started going." After the Michigan District successfully jumped to Florida, other districts started jumping too. Pastor Daniel Gieschen's conclusion, therefore, expresses a truth worth remembering: "The Lord showed the district what could be done if we follow his command, 'Go.'" (11)

We need to remember to give the credit entirely to the Lord Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit that motivates us to want to do the Father's will because of what Jesus has done for us. Now if we finally "Go" according to his Great Commission, we must never try to glory in ourselves merely for doing what is expected of us.

This story of faith, nevertheless, is an inspiration to join them in going. This story needs to be proclaimed, certainly with a humble and repentant heart, yet it still can to be told for our encouragement.

Pastor Julian Anderson summarized this story in his introduction to the sermon he preached for the 30th anniversary of Faith Lutheran Church. This is a part of his encouraging sermon:

We are gathered here on this 30th anniversary and mission festival to celebrate a mission endeavor that turned out to be far more successful than any of the participants could have imagined in their wildest dreams. The founding or creation of Faith congregation was a true FAITH MISSION. That is, it was founded on faith and carried out largely by faith.

It was not a mission authorized and financed by the Synod when it began, but a

venture sponsored and financed by a little handful of congregations in northern Michigan... That was the beginning, and it was a small beginning, built largely on faith, as we have seen. But the growth and results were truly amazing. (12)

Even though three Pastors of one district had no authorization from the rest of the Synod to explore the Florida field for ripeness, they took that "giant leap" forward in faith to begin Faith with only a few congregations contributing toward the expenses of their exploratory work.

It was such a great leap in faith to go over a thousand miles away from the nearest WELS congregation when no district had done it before, that the congregation named itself "FAITH." Yes, truly an amazing story. We are the beneficiaries of this amazing grace of God. Let's continue faithfully to "carry the ball" that so many worked so hard to give to this generation, so that the work of our gracious Lord may be passed on to the next generation with ever more mission zeal.

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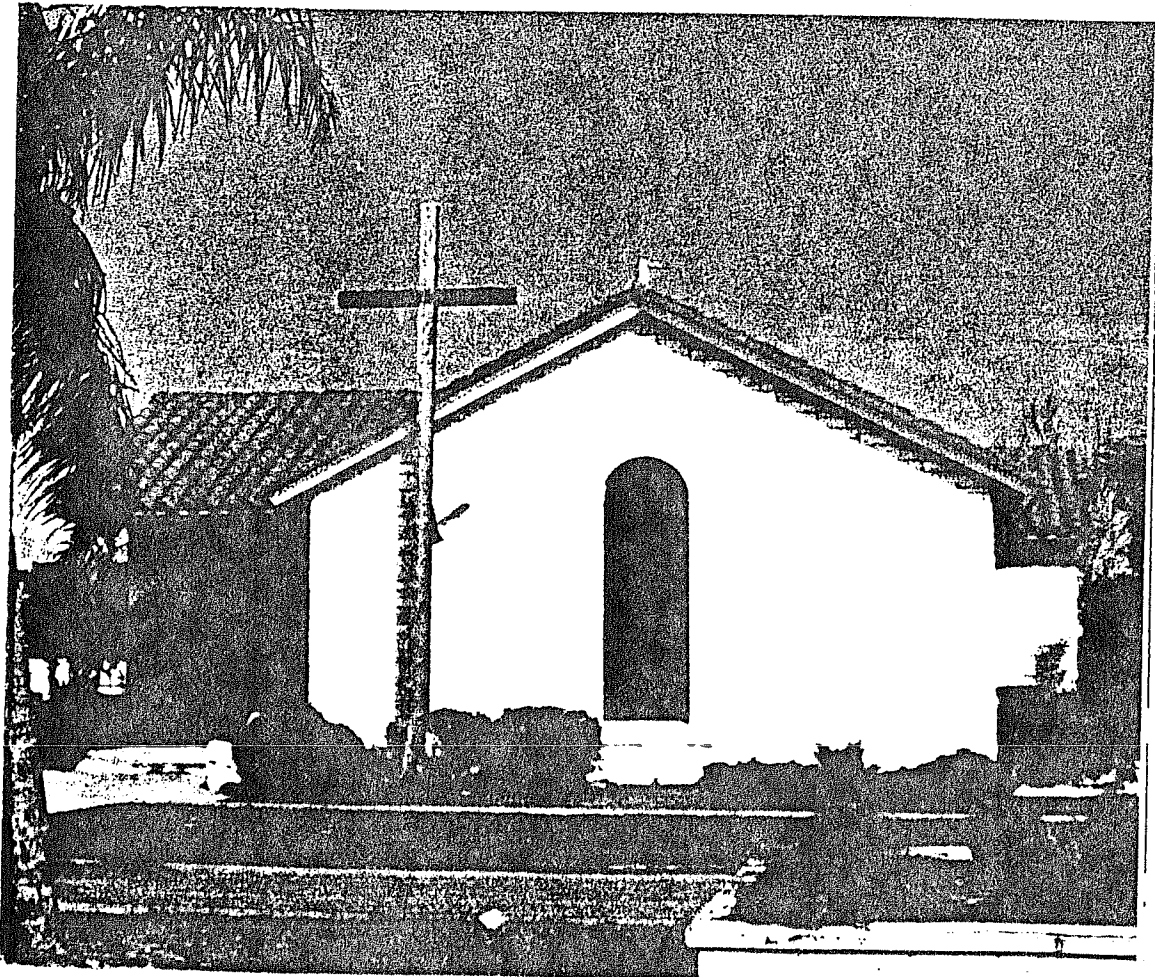
- 1 -- Karl Krauss, Michigan District History 1833-1970.  
by Michigan District, WELS. 1972. (page 1)
- 2 -- ibid. (pages 13,14)
- 3 -- Daniel Gieschen, Faith Ev. Lutheran Church, St.  
Petersburg, Florida 1955-1980. (Introduction.  
See Appendix A)
- 4 -- Mrs. Arlene Steih, Telephone Interview. (Recorded  
with permission. See Appendix B)
- 5 -- Pastor Daniel Gieschen, Telephone Interview.  
(Recorded with permission. Manuscript upon  
request)
- 6 -- Pastor Harold Zink, Telephone Interviews.  
(Recorded with permission. See Appendix D)
- 7 -- ibid.
- 8 -- Pastor Winfred Koelpin, Telephone Interview.  
(Recorded with permission. Manuscript upon  
request)
- 9 -- Pastor Zink. (Appendix D)
- 10 - Pastor Danial Gieschen, Telephone Interview.  
(Recorded with permission. Manuscript upon  
request)
- 11 - Gieschen. (Appendix A)
- 12 - Julian Anderson, 30th Anniversary. (Sermon  
introduction. See Appendix C)

Appendix A

# FAITH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

St. Petersburg, Florida

1955 — 1980



## Bringing the Sunshine of the Gospel to the Sunshine City

Thirty years ago no district of the WELS had the right to begin a mission outside the district boundaries. The Michigan District Mission Board had requests from various WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) members who wintered in Florida to look into the ripe mission field of Florida. The mission zeal of the Michigan District moved them to extend a call to Pastor William Steih. Pastor Steih, being the pioneer missionary type that he was, accepted the call. The General Board for Home Missions dutifully reprimanded the Michigan District for going beyond their territory without permission, but they did agree to pay Pastor Steih's salary. When the time came for purchase of land and buildings, the congregations of the Michigan District had a special collection, "To Bring the Sunshine of the Gospel to the Sunshine City." About \$15,000 was raised; to my knowledge, never before had district congregations voluntarily raised that much for one home mission venture. Opening a WELS mission in Florida was an inspiration to the Michigan District. The Lord showed the district what could be done if we follow His command, "Go." This had a "domino" effect on the home mission zeal of the Synod, and it did play a big part in preparing us for our rapid mission expansion of the "60's" after the break-up of the Synodical Conference.

Faith Lutheran Church of St. Petersburg will always occupy a unique and important place in the history of the WELS and thanks be to God, the congregation was used in a unique way for the expansion of our Lord's kingdom.

Pastor Daniel Gieschen  
Chairman, General Board for Home Missions

Appendix B

RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH MRS. ARLENE STEIH, April 1985

(What were the circumstances in Fl that started it all?)

"We had members from Michigan, the Michigan District, that were living in St. Petersburg. And they contacted one of the members of the mission board lived here during the winter. And they always went over to Grace, the Missouri Synod church. So they were a little dissatisfied and they contacted their Michigan District mission board and asked if they would take it upon themselves to send a man to Fl. Up until that time the farthest mission south was in Jenera, Ohio and Findlay. So this mission board member had often talked to Pastor Steih about it, and he was definitely interested in Michigan or Synod expanding farther south than just Ohio. Oh, that went on a couple of years.

And finally he preached a sermon in Saginaw on missions, and said that he thought that Synod should not be satisfied; with that song, 'O Little Flock Be Not Afraid,' and expand farther south. That was one time that he read his sermon. That could have been, he got the call in '54, that could have been that June or maybe the June before. They called a Pastor Arthur Wacker of Scio, Michigan. But he was a member of the mission board and he was not really interested in coming down here. And then Pastor got the call. And they reminded him that he had preached this sermon about expanding, of course jokingly. And he accepted the call.

He made the trip to Fl first for exploratory reasons and decided that St. Petersburg was the place to start. He went to Lakeland because there was a group there that had broken away from the Missouri Synod. And they wanted our Synod to pick up their little group. They had the land and the money to start building. But he said he was not sent here to pick up disgruntled members from that Synod for the reason that they broke away from their church. So that's why he concentrated on St. Petersburg. And that's where the folks lived that asked for, talked about someone to come down here. So that's how it happened that he got the call and, of course he always called himself "The Synod's Pick-and-Shovel Man." That's what he liked, just going in where there was nothing and working up something. At our first service there were about 72.

Some of these Wisconsin people had already joined the Missouri Synod church down here, but when they found out that there was going to be a Wisconsin Synod church, then they came to us right away. We did a lot of canvassing. And the people pitched in, they told their friends, and their friends told their friends. The southern people did not know a lot about the Lutheran church, especially the people that lived down here. There were only, I think, three Lutheran churches in St. Pete when we came. There was Grace, and then Our Savior was a mission, and an Augustana church. Oh there was one either ALC or LCA down town."

(What were the prominent churches?)

"Catholic, Southern Baptist, and a lot of people that broke away

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from somebody else and called themselves by another name, the same as they have now. That's how we started. Of course the first summer it dwindled down to a very few people, but as soon as fall came and after we got started, why, it was a little rough at first. For the first couple of years there were a lot of winter residents. That was what we had to work with. And then the summer group started increasing. This wasn't really a Synod subsidized congregation at first. It was under the Michigan District. And then after it got going real good, then it became, it was sort of turned over then to Missions."

(What was St. Bartholomew's in Kawkawlin, Mich like?)

"It had been there, I can't tell you how many years, 50, 60 years. We had a school. They opened a school while we were there. He taught school for 6 years and took care of his congregation. And now they have 4 teachers and they have a brand new school."

(How did you feel about going over 1000 miles away from the nearest WELS congregation?)

"Well, I'll tell you, you have to be an adventerous soul to do that. Well, everybody decided that's what father wanted to do and that was his calling, and we only took three of the children with us. The other three, Bob was in the service, and Herb was married. Herb and Sue were living up there, so they stayed. Of course it was rough for the kids, Bill was a Senior, Judy was a Junior, and Lois was in the 6th grade. So it was just like pulling up roots and transplanting. I think they helped a lot. Judy and Bill were Sunday School teachers and Lois was one of the pupils. And of course I played the organ, so we were set there."

(Why did Synod oppose starting in Fl?)

"I don't really know. I think maybe they figured that, ah, I don't know. I think maybe that it was the idea of expanding or possibly they thought that it wouldn't work or; you know years ago people didn't have such far-sightedness in mission projects as they do now-a-days, and I think that could have been something because when the executive board came down here, I know that Pastor Harold Eckert was on the board at the time, they were really pleasantly surprised at what Synod had done here. They came two or three years after we got started. But the mission board came down. Two of them came down every year.

Congregations in Michigan and individual people sent money to this congregation for, ah, to help them for things, some, well one congregation, I think it was in Minn sent money to the Sunday School to help buy SS materials. That's the way they got a lot of extra money. And then some of those people even loaned the money. We had wonderful support from the Mich Dist. It was their, they were the ones that saw into the future and realized that this was going to be a going thing..."

(How could they go against Synod policy when Synod denied them permission, as Pastor Gieschen wrote?)

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"Well, I don't know how it came about, but being it was Mich Dist that did the investigating and everything, I think that's how they worked around it. They didn't really deny permission. I don't think you could say that. But they didn't fund it at first. When everything worked out so well, I don't think that they were sorry that the Mich Dist went ahead. They can't be now!"

(How did the conflict affect Pastor's work in Fl?)

"Well, he just figured that it was going to be a going thing and let the mission boards do the battling."

(So it didn't really affect his work)

"No, not at all. The only thing it did was that the first Thanksgiving Day we got a letter, 'Hold everything.' And that sort of dampened our spirits. But one of the members of the Mich Dist board was coming down here shortly after that and they took it up. But I think that was mostly purchasing a house, because we had to purchase the house, they wouldn't sell it to Synod. And we ourselves purchased the house and then signed it over to Synod. Of course it was done with gifts, not Synod money, with gifts. Well we had to have a place to live! And, well it all kind of smoothed out real well. I don't know what kind of battle the Mich Dist had, the mission board had, but everything just smoothed out. But that didn't stop us down here. We kept on!

After they realized what progress was being made, they sat back and watched us. But I can't tell you when the Dist turned it over to Synod. That I don't remember. But it was started mostly with gifts given to the mission board and to the church."

(How much contact did you have with Mich?)

"Oh, we had telephone bills that were staggering!"

(So you had a pretty good idea of the enthusiasm back home)

"Well, I'll tell you, they were really enthusiastic because the people that were down here were so happy that they had their own church that their happiness spread back north to their home congregations."

(What brought the people down to St. Petersburg?)

"They came for health reasons, and like people do now-a-days, they wanted to get away from the cold weather. So they just came down. There weren't so many real older people. They were maybe in their 60's. And then the Browns came. They were a young couple with a boy, do you remember David Brown? Gradually, we did a lot of advertising in the newspaper. We always had an ad in the newspaper, and sometimes we had to pay it ourselves, but it was in there."

(Those who originally asked for Michigan to start work in Fl, did their jobs bring many of them down?)

"Most of them were retired folk that, well some moved here and bought homes, and some just stayed for the winter. But when they



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went back up north, why they just spread the good word and really the northern district got to finding out about the new missions in the south. In other years they would maybe be absorbed by these other churches. We had word in the NWL and things like that, and, well, it was a lot by word of mouth."

(What were the results of the newspaper ads?)

"It would bring in visitors and sometimes people that lived close by. Of course we, you had to instruct those people because they did not know much about the Lutheran church. We were a kind of a foreign church to them. They had no idea what a Synod was and how we were connected with a church body like that. And it took a lot of instructions and explaining. But we just grew, that's all."

(What were the blessings to the District by starting in Fl?)

"I think that it encouraged people. You know, people move around more now-a-days, and I think that it encouraged people to ask for their church to come into their area. Of course you don't just move to some place because one person moves there... I think people now-a-days ask more for help, and they are instrumental in getting more people, because people really, I know they did years ago, they really worked. And if they had friends that had no church, they brought them. And that helped a lot."

(Synod was branching out in other areas of the country, like California for example, so why not Florida?)

I don't think they knew too much about the south. It was just a lot of people were starting to come south for the winter. And I think that a lot of companies were beginning to move their people around too. Then the Service, because we had young men at Mac-Dill, and when we were at Cutler Ridge we served the Homestead Air Base. And that spread some of our boys out into other areas. That's the only thing that I can think of that people started moving around. I think that it was a lot of not being so mission-minded years ago as they are now."

(According to Karl Krauss, the Mich Dist has always been mission-minded.)

"Oh, they were, very much so, and especially at the time around 50 and 54. They were very mission-minded. And that's why they were so convinced that this would be a going thing. That's why our church got the name of Faith, because they said that it was a venture of faith. We only had 5 counsel members. And that's how we got the name of Faith. Guess you can't describe it any other way, can you?"

(Especially when you have everybody telling you it won't work!)

"Oh, 'it won't work,' but the Mich Dist said it WILL work, so it did. And I'm glad that it did."

"We had people that came, they contacted us and found out when communion Sunday was. We had people that came from Tampa, and there was a family that came from Orlando, who would come here on

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communion Sunday so they could go to communion. And the lady is still living and she lives in Cutler Ridge and is a member of that church down there now. We used to go over there and have evening services over there after a year or so. I don't know how long we did that. And then they called Pastor Vogt from Mt Olive in Bay City, Mich."

(But looking at the history of Tampa in those summary histories, you'd never know Pastor Steih had done any work there. So how many different cities or areas did he go to?)

"We went to Tampa for at least a year before they called a pastor there. And then after that there were 10 families from Faith that started the Bay Pines church, and then he went up there and preached there until they called Pastor Howard Kaiser. And then he took care of Tampa and Bay Pines. And then Pastor Vogt moved to Bradenton and accepted a call to the congregation that he started down there. Of course Pastor used to go with those men to canvass. He didn't go any farther than Tampa and Bay Pines, but he did go when they went on, two or three of the pastors, after they had more down here, then they would go into an area and do canvass work. He helped canvass in Bradenton, they helped canvass in Orlando, they went over to the east coast and worked over there. And of course by that time they were always picking up another extra man, and instead of two going, maybe three or four went. And that's the way they worked. I know that several of them went to Pompano Beach and worked over there. Of course you would get a call from somebody that lived over in that area, and then men would go over to investigate. That's the way it happened."

(So those pastors were a pretty close-knit group?)

"Oh, they were. Pastor Renz came, and then afterward there was Pastor Kaizer and Pastor Renz and Pastor Vogt, and Pastor Steih. The four of them were a good team, everybody got along fine. And when Pastor Kaizer left, Pastor Wiechman came and it was the same thing. They were always helping each other. Of course you know it gets so that that's your family, your relatives aren't here, so they are your family. Then Pastor Vogt started working in Sarasota because he had people that came up from Sarasota. And that's the way it went down the west coast. You know, he used to drive to N. Fort Meyers for services for some time, until they called a man. Synod started funding Fatih after we proved that it really was something that was going to work..."

(Getting back to the letter at Thanksgiving, was that the only time the conflict filtered down?)

"I don't know really what the reason was. I think, ah. They knew we were looking for property, but that was, it was a big damper, but that didn't stop us from having services or anything like that. That came from somebody in Milwaukee. We knew that this man was coming from Mich Dist shortly, so we contacted them right away and then I think he came down earlier that year to straighten things out. But we didn't stop having services or

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anything. Oh, another thing. One of the northern people loaned Synod their house for four months; we got here in Sept. and we had free rent until the first of Jan. That was one of those people that was anxious for Synod to come down for missions. So that was a big help, they didn't have to pay out any rent. Of course then they purchased the house and then we moved in before the first of the year."

(Was that the only time that the conflict affected you?)

"That was the only time. Well, you had a group of people that were all ready to go, so you couldn't tell them we're not going to do anything. You kind of take it on the chin and go ahead. Of course we hadn't started our first service yet, but they already were planning on organizing and things like that.

(So that letter didn't come after you had started services)

"That was just before. Of course we had been having counsel meetings up until that time. 5 or 6 men that were really interested sort of were going ahead and looking for property and things like that. After we were ready for the first services, we started advertising in the newspaper because that's the only way people coming to town would know. Of course they knew we were going to be there. We just made up our minds that we were here and that there wasn't any other place to go..."

(Were there times Pastor got discouraged and you had to encourage him, or the other way around, or not?)

"I don't know. If he got discouraged we didn't talk about it. And everybody had to take a positive attitude because Bill got awfully discouraged because he got so homesick. And Judy was just the opposite. She made a lot of friends and got out and just made the best of everything. And finally Bill came around and decided that if he wouldn't have come to Fl, he wouldn't have gotten the education he did. He had the opportunity to go to Junior College and to go to College here. And he's always been in congregations that are mission congregations. He's the one that should have been the minister of all the boys. So he works as a layman. Oh it isn't always, ah, it gets kind of rocky once in a while, but you just take everything and live one day at a time. That's the way to do it..."

(Review again where your children were)

"Our oldest son was in Mich working, our daughter and her husband were in Mich, Bob was in the service in Georgia, and the other three were with us. And Bob came to Fl after he got out of Service. Sue did too. Herb's the only one that stayed in Michigan. He's in our former congregation up there."

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Mrs. Arlene Steih lives in St. Petersburg and is a member of Faith.  
Pastor William Steih served Faith during 1954-67.  
Pastor Arthur Wacker served Salem in (Scio) Ann Arbor, MI during  
1936-62.

Appendix C

Pastor Julian Anderson -- December, 1984

FAITH 30th ANNIVERSARY

We are gathered here on this 30th anniversary and mission festival to celebrate a mission endeavor that turned out to be far more successful than any of the participants could have imagined in their wildest dreams. The founding or creation of Faith congregation was a true faith mission. That is, it was founded on faith and carried out largely by faith.

It was not a mission authorized and financed by the synod when it began, but a venture sponsored and financed by a little handful of congregations in northern Michigan. And the missionary - William Steih - was the pastor of one of those congregations. In September, 1954 he and his family arrived in St. Petersburg with the promises of those few congregations to support him. That took faith on Pastor Steih's part. He came to St. Petersburg because there were a few friends or relatives here of some of the members in northern Michigan. And the first few weeks were spent getting acquainted with those few families and such other families as they could suggest to him, and also canvassing in the neighborhood along north 49th street, which he selected as the most likely area for his work.

After 6 weeks, on October 18th, a mission group was organized; and 2 months later, on December 22nd, 1954, a congregation was formed and given the appropriate name - Faith Lutheran Church. There were 12 adults and one child.

The first service, with about 70 people present, was held on January 9, 1955 in the Mt. Vernon elementary school on 46th St. and 13th Ave. north. Shortly thereafter the Michigan District Mission Board approved the purchase of a parsonage on 49th St. and 25th Ave. North, along with the land fronting on 49th St. between 25th and 26th avenues. And in March, 1955 ground was broken for a small chapel, now the fellowship hall.

That was the beginning, and it was a small beginning, built largely on faith, as we have seen. But the growth and results were truly amazing. In 1957 a second congregation was begun in Tampa, and a second missionary, Pastor James Vogt, was called. In 1958 the congregation in Bradenton was formed by that second missionary. In 1959 a congregation was formed in Seminole, Faith's first daughter congregation.

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Then in 1963 a congregation was organized in Pompano Beach on the east coast;  
" 1964 " " Merritt Island  
" 1965 " " Miami - 7 in 10 years  
" 1967 " " Maitland (Orlando)

in 1967 a congregation was organized in Huntsville, Alabama - 1st north  
1969 " " Holiday, Fl - Faith's of Florida  
1969 " " Birmingham, Ala 1st granddaughter  
1970 " " Jacksonville  
" " Decatur, Georgia (1st there)  
" " New Orleans, Louisiana (1st there)  
1971 " " North Ft. Myers,  
" " Abita Spring, Louisiana  
" " Nashville, Tennessee (1st there)  
" " Lexington, So. Carolina ( 1st "  
1972 " " West Palm Beach, Fl.  
1973 " " Gainesville  
1973 : " Memphis, Tennessee

And then, in June, 1973, these congregations organized into the 10th district of the Wisconsin Synod - the South Atlantic District - 21 congregations in 6 states in 18 years time. All spring in one way or another from Faith Lutheran congregation in St. Petersburg, and faith in the hearts of God's people.

And now, 30 years later, there are

31		congregations in Florida,
5	"	Georgia
3	"	Alabama
4	"	Louisiana
3	"	South Carolina
4	"	North Carolina
3	"	Tennessee
<u>1</u>	"	Mississippi

54 congregations in all in the 8 southeastern states.

That is what faith has done in terms of mission work.

This was the introduction to the sermon, historical in nature. The rest of the sermon was a discussion of faith - what it is, how does one get it, and what it does for and in us.

Appendix D

Pastor Harold Zink. May 1985

(Can you explain the reasoning behind this rule that no district of the WELS had the right to begin a mission outside the district boundaries?)

Well, I guess the reason was that you could not jump state lines, because that would put a person alone and he would be more or less isolated and that way if we jump two states or let's say one whole state, he'd be by himself and he would be isolated that way and it would be kind of hard for him to carry on. That was the thinking at that time, I guess. But I wouldn't say that it really held good. But that was the idea behind it.

(According to Pastor Meyer, he experienced something like that when he started work in Atlanta. He said that the problem then was with transportation and communication not being as good as they are today, and therefore more easy to be isolated. Is there such a difference today?)

Well, I would say that there is a difference today. I think everything is a little more advanced and I think that it might be a problem. They are even sending missionaries into Indonesia all by themselves more or less you might say, and that's thousands of miles from anybody. So we've got a different thinking in our Synod now.

(What kind of permission was necessary?)

What actually happened, see, the Mich Dist Board, two other pastors and myself, there was Pastor Alvin Baer and Pastor Kenneth Vertz and myself, we decided that we would on our own go down there to make some exploratory thing down in Fl to see what's really cooking down there. So we didn't even ask the General Joint Synod at all whether we could at all go down, we just went on our own, and we paid our own expenses so they couldn't come back at us and say, Well you did something that you had no right to do. So our congregations here, individual congregation really, gave us money to go down there. It was 1954 we went down there, three of us. And we were down there, and Loui Ott was there. He was a member of the mission board, he was down in Fl at that time, he was a lay member, he also had a car down there and he took us around the whole state that time. We travelled about 11 hundred miles, and went all over from top to bottom looking over the state of Michigan (?) at that time. And then we had pretty good success. In fact esp. in St. Petersburg -- the last night one fellow when we stopped to visit him, he was so thankful he said, "Well thank God my prayers have been heard now, and that Wis is making some plans to come down here now." although at that time Wis hadn't made any plans, just the Mich Dist mission board who had, on its own venture down there. Well then after we came back, we went to Milwaukee, the three of us, and we met with the home mission board and we sold the home mission board on going to Fl. And then at the same summer at the convention, the Synod passed a resolution to go into Fl.

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Actually our fingers were never really slapped. They kind of said, well what we did wasn't really right, but they never really gave us a finger-slapping.

(In what way was opening a WELS mission in Fl an inspiration to the Mich Dist?)

Well, I'll tell you what actually happened. One of the members of my congregation here, one of my principle members, moved to Fl. He moved not too far from Orlando, but he had to go about 50 miles to go to church. And so he wrote to me a couple of times and asked me if we couldn't do something about it, you know, I mean down there. You got a good Missouri Synod church at that time, and we were still together with Missouri, and so I again and again spoke to the mission board: Well we should get on to Fl, I said, because I think it's a good field down there, and our members are moving down there and they have no place to go. And we three pastors should go down there and explore the thing. That's how that came about, because our members moving down there having no place to go.

(Wasn't Synod already doing mission work in California and in other areas out west? How can it be said that Mich Dist was leading the Synod in home mission zeal?)

You see, it wasn't only there, we were also leading into the Synod mission field by going into the eastern part of our country all over, Washington DC and all over. We started missions right and left there in the New England states and places like that. So that's why I guess he made that statement, Mich Dist was leading the Synod, and I still think that's true.

(Was that before or after they started in Fl)  
It happened pretty close together.

(Mrs. Steih said that the call had gone first to another man?)  
Actually I can't just remember. All I remember is that we sent a call to Pastor Steih and he accepted it. And he was the only missionary down there for some time, and then of course after a while, now we have about 50 congregations in that whole section down there, Fl, Georgia, and other places down there. So it really helped.

(If Synod was working in or starting out out west, I suppose they thought that was the more likely place to concentrate their energy on instead of Fl...)

At that time they had just gone into Cal a little while ago, of course they boarded Ariz, so they could go in there. See, it was a neighboring state and there was no hindrance. That they were allowed to do. And it was like for us to go into Indiana and there would not have been any hindrance either. But to jump from Mich all the way down to Fl was against Synod resolution at that time.

(So maybe the leading in home mission zeal was more in changing

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the thinking that you can't jump states?)  
That's right. After that, they really started jumping all over, you know. And that really got the ball moving, and it really started going. Actually, the main thing is that the Mich Dist mission board was the moving force behind going into it. They pushed it and actually, as I said, the Synod accepted our recommendations and adopted it. That's the whole thing, really...

Loui Ott was a laymember of our Mich Dist board. He had a mobile home down there. The four of us toured the state. There were 6 members on the board at that time. Two of our laymen didn't go down.

(Pastor Steih...) Well, he has a lot of credit coming to him, because he was the first one down there, you know how it is when a guy goes down there all by himself. We went down there regular to visit him, I guess every year we went down to see him. I know how he appreciated those visits when somebody came down from up north, you know, and gave him a chance to talk to somebody else a little bit.

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(2nd interview, not recorded)

(Was Pastor Steih sent before Synod passed their resolution to go to Fl?)

(He said that Mich waited until after the Synod resolution to send Pastor Steih, but that they went down to explore Fl without asking in order "to give Synod of push")

(Is that when they started funding it?)

(He said that the congregations collected money for helping the congregation in Fl, not for pastor Steih since he was paid and supported by the Synod, and that the offering from the Mich congregations was a free gift in addition to Synod's funding of pastor. He also said that there was nothing underhanded about calling and sending Pastor Steih to Fl. That was all above board.)

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(3rd call)

(How was Pastor Engel involved with starting work in Fl?)  
After a while, he had a lot to do the the Florida missions, but not with the starting of it. He came later on.

(and Pastor Harold Eckert?)

Pastor Harold Eckert really had nothing to do with it, he was chairman of the board of Trustees, I think that's all. Or he might have been chairman of the home missions board at that time, it could be possible, the general mission board for the Synod in gen.



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(Do you remember Synod writing to Fl that first Thnaksgiving and saying to hold everything?)

Yea, I guess at that time Synod did try to cut it back out, for some reason, I don't know exactly what the cause was, but it didn't work out.

(So the letter was more or less to quit everything and come back up?)

Well I guess so, I don't know who wrote it, I don't know what is involved, but Synod had already given its OK, and only Synod could finally rescind that, you know. But I guess after Synod got into it, some weaker guys or timid guys kind of tried to back off again. They said, Well we're chewing too big a chunk, you know. But that wasn't the case.

(You said before that you did wait until after Synod passed the resolution to go to Fl before Pastor Steih ever went down?)

Oh we wouldn't have never have called him down there unless Synod had given us the OK. That would have been contrary to the law of love, we to go on our own that way. Everything was done above board. Synod passed the resolution and THEN we called. The big thing was that the General Mission Board finally endorsed it and when they endorsed it, they carried the ball to the Gen Synod, and that helped a lot that they pushed the ball.

(When did Synod start paying his salary?)

Well as soon as he went down there Synod started paying his salary, and the Mich Dist board of course would pay his salary then, see, we would pay it. But the fund drive was mostly for the building and the land. I guess our Mich Dist people were so enthused that we're going down there that they responded liberarily. It's a good thing, maybe, that you're writing that, because history of that will be kept alive, otherwise it might be forgotten.

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Pastor Harold Zink served St. Paul's in Stevensville, Michigan from 1943 to 1976 and is now a member there.